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*Take Me to the
Convention!*

Discussion Outlines Inside



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Off on the Right Foot

by John Huizenga



School will soon begin. As with the beginning of anything, how we begin is so important for how things end. In those crucial seconds before the gun sounds, a racer wiggles his or her toes into just the right place with every muscle ready to spring into action at just the right moment. It may make all the difference in the end. How you begin your year at school as students, teachers, parents, and anyone in the church who takes an interest in the education of the children, can make the year a success or a failure.

The apostle Paul describes the whole Christian life in terms of a race. He says of the Galatians in their new life as Christians, “Ye did run well.” Describing his own work he says, “I have not run in vain.” In Hebrews 12:1 we read, “let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” It would be a great shame to us if we stand before this all important race of Christian education with our hands in our pockets looking for someone in the crowd rather than “THE PRIZE” (I Cor. 9:24).

So what is the prize? Anyone with an ounce of ambition would agree that we are in a race in this life, but there are many different ideas of what the prize is. Many today will say the prize is whatever you want out of life. Some are dancing around the starting line of school waiting for the doors to open so that they can fight for top grades, top colleges, and big money with all the luxuries of this life. Others see they will not be able to compete well in that race so they seek the laughs of students and attention of teachers with their pranks. “If I can’t be the best kid, then maybe I can be the worst. Hey, I just want to have some fun.”

Money or fun or some mixture of the two seems to be the goal of so many, but God did not say there were “prizes.” There is only one prize. God has given to us Christian schools, and these schools have one goal and one prize at the end: the goal is the glory of God. The work we do at school, the grades we pursue, our friendships and social life, all the work and time parents and others put into the school must have one unified goal: the glory of God! If our goal is simply to have fun, to be the best, to be the worst, to just have a nice life, to wait for serious stuff till later, or whatever, the prize will be Hell, and nothing else.

The prize we seek is the “crown of righteousness.” We read of this prize in II Timothy 4:7-8. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” Running our race to the glory of God in Christ alone will bring us to this prize.

The idea that we can find our greatest peace, comfort, and blessedness in the way of giving glory to someone other than ourselves is totally foreign to the mind of an unbeliever. The fall of man into sin has turned his thinking one hundred and eighty degrees. The essence of sin is to do everything the opposite of God’s will. By the grace of God alone, He reveals to us in His word and opens our eyes to the truth. There is no peace in life, no joy, no pleasure greater than giving God all the glory. This is, after all, the purpose for which we were created. “And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory” (Romans 9:23). Living under the influence of our sinful nature will blind us to the great value of the prize that waits at the end of our race. Pray to God and listen attentively to Him as He answers in His word.

Running this race is not easy. All the temptations, pain and suffering that comes with the running could be the subject of another editorial. The point I want to make is that we must do our best to get off on the right foot. Meditate for a while on the goal you have before you: God's glory. Throw all the other goals that bombard you and bounce around in your mind out in the garbage. Think about the crown that is waiting for you: righteousness in Christ. Pray fervently that God will guide you, protect you and open your eyes to the great value of the crown. Pay attention to some of the details of starting the school year off on the right foot. Get some good supplies. Set your Bible out first. Find some passages of Scripture to focus on for the year ahead. Think long and hard about the attitude you have toward fellow classmates, teachers, and school in general. This is your race! Take it seriously. This race does not depend on your grades in themselves. Students who sail through with straight "A's" can fail and lose the race if their focus is on anything other than the glory of God. Students who just squeak by with "C's" or "D's" because they have not been blessed academically can win the race if they keep their minds focused on the glory of God. Do your best for His glory. Let's get started on the right foot this year. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). ❖

The Reader Asks

Indiscipline: Where It Comes From and How We Are Delivered From It

by Rev. James Laning

Dear Rev. Laning

I am a woman in my twenties; I have visited various Christian homes that lack discipline. First, I wanted to know if indiscipline is a character, habit, hereditary trait, environmental influence, or a spirit that dwells in individuals? Secondly, how can we become disciplined children of God? I see discipline as wisdom from God to His elect, and I also see it as a great control value in an individual's life.

II Samuel 11:2: "And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house. From his roof, he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.... David sent a messenger and she came in unto him and he lay with her." In my opinion, indiscipline brings about childishness. He arranged and killed Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. God was highly displeased with David. David was undisciplined, therefore

he paid for what he did. II Samuel 12:9-20 says that he despised God's commandment. It came to pass, and the Lord said "the sword will never depart from thy house." He wished he could have died instead of his son that he had with Bathsheba.

Indiscipline results in childishness of which we later face the consequence. Paul says, "when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Corinthians 13:11). We Christians need to graduate from babyhood. We allow anything to happen to us in our undisciplined state. In Galatians 4:1 ("now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all"), there is difference between a child and a full-grown adult who behaves like a child.

Tina Avah

From the Protestant Reformed Mission in Ghana,
West Africa

Dear Tina,

We are delighted to receive another letter from one of the saints in Ghana. We remember you and our other brothers and sisters in Ghana frequently in our prayers. We are very glad to hear of your love for the truth, and your desire to glorify our God in a life of obedience to His Word.

I will give my answer to your questions in the same order that you asked them. First, however, with regard to indiscipline, I am not sure what specifically you are referring to as “indiscipline” and “childishness.” You give as an example what David did when he committed adultery, and then murder. These were extremely grievous sins, sins that would often be referred to by much stronger words than merely indiscipline or childishness. So, since I am not sure what type of sin you are referring to, I have decided to attempt to answer your question by speaking about sin in general.

Indiscipline, after all, is simply sin. It is a refusal to subject oneself to God’s commandments. This sin, or lack of discipline, can be seen in the life of every human being, including those who are true believers and who desire to please their heavenly Father. We, of course, must recognize these sins not only in others, but also in ourselves. The law of God demands constant and perfect obedience from the heart, yet we cannot do even one work that is completely free from sin.

Now let us consider your first question. You ask about the source of this sin. The answer to that question is that all of these sins flow out of the very nature of sinful man. When Adam sinned, the judgment of God came upon him, and his nature became dead in sin. Before he fell into sin, Adam was alive, and he was able freely to do that which is pleasing to God. But after the fall, Adam’s will became dead and in bondage to sin. Now Adam had a sinful, depraved nature. And after God put the life of Christ in Adam’s heart and converted him, Adam still had to fight his sinful nature throughout the rest of his life on this earth.

This sinful nature is passed down from parents to their children. Corrupt parents bring forth corrupt children, so that we all come into this world with a sinful nature. Our sinful thoughts, words and deeds all arise out of this sinful nature. In other words, sin refers to not only what we *do*, but also what we *are*, that is, what we are in our sinful nature.

Having said this, a distinction must be made between sin that is willingly committed and sin that one is fighting against. We are all sinning, and our sinful flesh cor-

rupts everything we do. But the obedient child of God is fighting against these sins, asking God to forgive him and to deliver him out of these sins. Someone in the church who is willingly walking in a certain sin must be disciplined. If you or I know of such a person, we are commanded to rebuke him, showing him from Scripture that what he is doing is sinful and that he must repent of it.

The next question you ask has to do with how we experience deliverance from this sin in our daily lives. First of all, it is important to point out that God, in His love for us, causes us to experience a sorrow for sin, a sorrow that leads to repentance. God, in love, chastened David very severely for his sins. It was not David, but Christ Who later “paid for” what David did, when He sustained the wrath of God for the sins of David and of all His people. But God, as a loving Father, did discipline David, and brought David to repentance, as Scripture very clearly shows. We see this, for example, in Psalm 51, which was written by David after he had been graciously brought to repent of the sins to which you refer.

We are delivered from our sins more and more as we mature spiritually as believers. The more we grow in faith, the more we will also grow in obedience, since good works always proceed from faith (Lord’s Days 24 and 33). The central means that God uses to work more faith in us, and to cause us willingly to walk in obedience, is the preaching of the gospel. The more we hear and believe the *true* gospel, the gospel that sets forth clearly how God saves us from our sins through Jesus Christ, and how that salvation is entirely the work of God from beginning to end, the more we will grow in faith and walk as disciplined and mature children of God. This faith is then strengthened in us by the use of the two sacraments, which are baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are commonly referred to as *the means of grace*, and it is by these means that God causes us to grow and mature as believers, so that we more and more turn from our wicked and foolish ways, and walk in the way that is pleasing to our God.

These means of grace, however, are not a blessing to everyone. There are some who will actually get worse the more they sit under the preaching of the gospel. These people are pictured in the Scriptures as weeds. Weeds do not grow into beautiful flowers when they receive rain and sunshine. They just grow into bigger weeds. Similarly, impenitent unbelievers are not blessed by the

preaching of the Word of God. Rather, they go deeper into sin, going from bad to worse.

But we, God's people, must remember that it is only by God's particular grace that we are brought to repentance. Throughout our life, God graciously causes us to turn more away from sin and toward Him. Desiring this, we pray that God will grant us the grace to hear and to submit to His Word as it is brought to us week after week. Then, as we spend more time meditating upon the Scriptures, talking about the things of God with others, and praying to God for His grace and Holy Spirit, we find that God causes us gradually to grow into a beautiful fruit-bearing plant that glorifies His Name.

May the Lord continue to bless you, Tina, and the rest of the saints in Ghana. If there is something you would like answered more specifically, please write again. ❖

The Reader Asks

Do you have a question that has been on your mind? Something that came up at school or during a discussion with friends or co-workers? You can be sure that there are many more people reading these words who have had the same question and are looking for answers just like you. Rev. Laning of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan is waiting to answer them. Don't worry, if you would rather your name was not published with your question, we will honor your request. We do, however, ask that your name and either your home or email address be included so that Rev. Laning can respond privately if need be.

Please send your question to:

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Pastor Profile

Rev. Jai Mahtani

edited by Kris Moelker

In 1960, Rev. Mahtani was born on the island of Singapore in Southeast Asia. His parents, Murlidhar and Dhanwanti, had a Hindu upbringing in India and they moved to Singapore in the 1950s.

As a boy, Rev. Mahtani remembers collecting butterflies and leaves as a hobby. He also was a Boy Scout and enjoyed hiking, camping, and adventure. Now he enjoys nature, enjoys walking the beach or any rolling waters. He is always inspired with fresh sermon topics when he is taking a walk.

While he was growing up, Rev. Mahtani lived in several different locations on the island of Singapore. He received his education through the public schools in Singapore. He also attended the University of Singapore, but he did not complete his BA there. Instead, he studied under missionary Rev. den Hartog in preparation for his seminary training in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 1983-

1986. While Rev. Mahtani was in Houston, he completed a Doctor of Ministry in Missions from 1996-1998.

During his teenage years, Rev. Mahtani was converted. As a result, the pressures he experienced from his parents and friends were great. His parents were upset that he was a Christian, that he would not go with them to worship in the temple, and that he would not help with the family business on Sunday. His friends mocked him for his faith. Before his conversion, he was often with bad company, so they especially scorned him after he was converted.

At his conversion, when he was sixteen or seventeen, the Lord was leading Rev. Mahtani to the ministry. He wrote a letter to his dad explaining that he knew God was calling him into the ministry. All his past plans to either help in the family business or to study to be a lawyer were no longer to be. His upbringing in a Hindu home prepared him in many ways to be mission minded;



to look at those in heathen-dom with compassion and patience.

When Rev. Mahtani's parents learned of his desire to enter seminary, his dad especially was against the idea, but his mother was obliging. They encouraged Rev. Mahtani to complete high school, go through National Service (2 ½ years mandatory service in the army) and then enter college.

Concerning his years in seminary, Rev. Mahtani exclaims, "Those good old days, I wish I could repeat them again!" He remembers going to Prof. Hoeksema to tell him that he would not preach the Heidelberg Catechism but only the Scriptures for practice preaching. Prof. Hoeksema gave him a paper to read and warned him that if he did not preach the Heidelberg Catechism, he would fail seminary. Rev. Mahtani was so upset, he drove to Dewey and Dena Engelsma's home and told them he was packing up to return to Singapore. Dewey invited Rev. Mahtani to play pool in their basement to vent his frustration. He then took Rev. Mahtani aside and explained to him why he should persevere. After that incident, Rev. Mahtani learned to love Prof. Hoeksema. In fact, Rev. Mahtani feels he owes it to Prof. Hoeksema that Heidelberg Catechism preaching has become so precious to him. Rev. Mahtani thinks it is Heidelberg Catechism preaching that unites the Protestant Reformed Churches more than anything else.

Twenty years ago, on June 25, 1983, Rev. Mahtani married Esther. The Lord has blessed them with a blessed marriage although they are from two different cultures:

he is Indian, and she is Chinese. The Lord has blessed them with six boys and two girls.

After graduating from seminary in 1986, Rev. Mahtani returned to Singapore where he was ordained as pastor of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. He served Covenant ERCS until 1993 when the Lord called him to return to the United States and become the pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas. In 1998, when his work at Trinity had finished, the Lord called him to his present work as Eastern Home Missionary now working in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

As he labors in Pittsburgh, Rev. Mahtani has the privilege of teaching five catechism classes with children and young people from several different backgrounds. In the last couple of years, an African American family with eight children joined the group. They come from a Baptist background and catechism instruction is a new thing for them. It has been very rewarding for Rev. Mahtani to see the development in love and zeal that the children and young people evidence for catechism instruction.

As a missionary, the most rewarding thing for Rev. Mahtani to see is the saints of God not only loving the truths of God's Word and teaching them to their own children, but also living their lives and testifying to all men of their faith, inviting others to the preaching and welcoming strangers to church.

Regarding our view of missions, Rev. Mahtani remembers already when he was in seminary the accusation hurled by outsiders that the Protestant Reformed Churches are not mission-minded, but all they preach about is election. Rev. Mahtani also remembers that in their living room in Singapore he entertained guests from all over the world: New Zealand, Australia, Japan, United States of America, Canada, and many others who would falsely accuse the Protestant Reformed Churches. After listening to their accusations, he would ask: "How do you know?" Well, it was all hearsay. Then he would go on to tell them of his experiences in seminary, his attending Southwest Protestant Reformed Church and then Grandville Protestant Reformed Church, and how the preaching was warm, personal, inspirational, doctrinal, and faithful to the text. He would then hand out tapes or tracts reminding them that while the Protestant Reformed Churches are not perfect, those accusations were evil and false.

For young men who are considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Rev. Mahtani has this ad-

vice: “Avoid the extremes in advice you hear: 1) Never enter (the) ministry because it is the worst, the hardest (calling); or 2) Every one should consider the ministry. The former is true in a sense, but the Lord Who calls also gives many blessings and joys unspeakable; and latter, well, God gives all of us a calling, whether it be in the ministry, or in a secular calling, or at home. I do advise men who believe God is calling them to the ministry to realize that while preaching must be (the) central love of their lives, there are many realities they must face: love for people, patience to labor with Christ’s sheep, and wisdom to deal with colleagues and those supervising their labors—those are sometimes the hard things in the ministry.”

When asked about the changes he would like to see in the thinking, attitudes, and behavior of the young people, Rev. Mahtani said, “I think we have a good group of young people. There are many pressures in the world to be enjoying rock music, drama, and I think we par-

ents and elders need to engage the younger with Biblical perspectives and not short answers of right or wrong so the young people will grow up with stronger convictions in those areas—realizing it is not a matter of do’s (and) don’ts but a matter of love for God and love for holiness, for truth, for wonder of His grace in Christ.”

Rev. Mahtani hasn’t had the opportunity to get to know our young people very well. He must say that if he would judge them by those who have visited Houston or Pittsburgh, he would have to give them high marks! No, our young people are not perfect. There are always going to be complaints about them being worldly, having bad mouths, or other things, but Rev. Mahtani is encouraged that our young people do seem to have a sense of who God is and who they are. ❖

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

Where We Stand

Arminianism (7)

The Determiner of Salvation: God or Man?

by Aaron J. Cleveland

By setting forth Reformed doctrine in the Canons, the Synod of Dordrecht destroyed the altars, broke the images, and cut down the groves of the Arminian heresy. The Synod clearly made known that the god of the Arminians was not to be worshipped and the sovereign power of the one true Jealous God was set forth (Exodus 34:13, 14).

The Arminians brought “another gospel” opposed to the true gospel. It was not the case that there were a few differences which had to be ironed out between Calvinism and Arminianism. Rather, the two systems were and still are opposed. Calvinism exults God as completely sovereign in the salvation of man. Arminianism exults man as the one on whom salvation is ultimately dependent. The two cannot coexist.

Neither is it the case that as one learns doctrine he begins as a baby drinking the milk of Arminianism and then as he matures he eats the strong meat of Calvinism. Arminianism is not a pleasant, easy to swallow system of doctrine which is taught to children and used in our personal day to day witnessing. It is deadly poison. Our fathers at Dordrecht used phrases such as “repugnant to the entire Scripture” (Head I, Par. 5) and “invented regardless of the Scriptures” (I, Par. 2) to describe various elements of the Arminian heresy.

We will begin a comparison of Arminianism and Calvinism where the Canons do, with the doctrine of predestination. The Reformed truths which were clearly set forth in the Canons have commonly come to be known as the Five Points of Calvinism. We begin with the “U” of TULIP, unconditional election. It is impossible in one

or two articles to fully explain all of the differences between the Arminian and the Reformed view regarding predestination. We will highlight the main elements of the Arminian error and then set forth the truth in response.

We begin with three statements concerning predestination from the Arminian side. The first of these statements is the position of Arminius himself and can be found in the “Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius, delivered before the States of Holland.” Says Arminius, God has four decrees concerning the salvation of sinful man. According to Arminius, the second and fourth decrees are as follows:

The Second precise and absolute decree of God, is that in which he decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe, and, in Christ, for His sake and through Him, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end; but to leave in sin and under wrath all impenitent persons and unbelievers, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

To these succeeds the Fourth decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing grace, believe, and, through his subsequent grace would persevere,—according to the before-described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere (*The Works of James Arminius*, Vol. I, pp. 653, 654).

The second statement concerning predestination is taken from the Remonstrance of 1610. Remember, the five articles of this document were the work of more than 40 ministers who formed a confederation shortly after the death of Arminius. We quote their first opinion which summarizes their view of predestination.

1. That *God* by an eternal and immutable decree has in Jesus Christ his Son *determined* before the foundation of the world *to save* out of the fallen sinful human race *those* in Christ, for Christ’s sake, and through Christ *who* by the grace of the Holy Spirit *shall believe* in this his Son Jesus Christ and persevere in this faith and obedience of faith to the end; and on the other hand to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath and condemn them as alienate from Christ (emphasis mine, AJC) (*Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dordt 1618-’19*, p. 208).

The last statement is found in the Opinions of the Remonstrants. They are the opinions of the Arminian party given at the Synod of Dordt. Articles 7 and 8 of the Opinion of the Remonstrants dealing with the decree of predestination read:

7. The election of particular persons is decisive, out of consideration of faith in Jesus Christ and of perseverance; not, however, apart from a consideration of faith and perseverance in the true faith, as a condition prerequisite for electing.

8. Rejection from eternal life is made on the basis of a consideration of antecedent unbelief and perseverance in unbelief; not, however, apart from a consideration of antecedent unbelief and perseverance in unbelief (*Essays*, pp. 223, 224).

After reading these statements one may wonder what the great difference is between the Arminian and Reformed view regarding predestination. One way to see the difference more clearly is to examine the second statement. The heart of the first article of the Remonstrance of 1610 is this: “*God determined to save those who shall believe.*” When we put this statement alongside of Arminius’ position that “this decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God,” we can more clearly see the Arminian error.

The central Arminian error regarding predestination is a denial of the sovereignty of God. First of all, the Arminians deny, as Rev. Hoeksema states, “that God’s counsel is sovereign and independent.” Rather, the Arminian says that God’s counsel is “contingent and dependent on the faith and unbelief of man” (*Ready To Give An Answer*, p. 43). According to the Arminian, God must look into the future and see if a man has faith and perseveres in the obedience of faith. If a man fulfills these conditions, God elects him. If the opposite is true, and God sees that a man does not believe and perseveres in his disobedience, God will reject him. Therefore, whether a person is elect or reprobate is not determined by God’s sovereign counsel, but is determined by man’s faith or unbelief.

In the second place, the Arminians maintain that man must fulfill certain conditions in order to be elected. This is clear from article 7 of the Opinion of the Remonstrants. There the Arminians maintain that faith and perseverance in faith are conditions that man must fulfill in order to be elected. Before God elects a man, that man must have faith. Once again, according to the Arminians, the determining factor in man’s salvation is not God’s counsel, but whether or not man fulfills certain conditions.

Thirdly, in the Arminian system, God is not sovereignly free to deal with his creatures as he pleases. They deny that God deals with His creatures according to His own good pleasure. He must elect based upon obedience, and reprobate based upon disobedience. The Arminians deny the clear teaching of Romans 9 verses 11 and 21 that God's election and reprobation in no way depends upon any "good or evil" that He sees in a person. God sovereignly, freely, and independently makes vessels unto honour and vessels unto dishonour.

The Arminian position concerning election, writes Prof. Hoeksema, puts God in "the position of the weather forecaster" (*The Voice of Our Fathers*, p. 180). God is not the Determiner, but "he is Himself determined by the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the conditions of election by the creature of His hand, men" (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 180). Further writes Prof. Hoeksema, "the Arminians teach that man is the sole author of his own salvation, while the Reformed position is that salvation is solely of the Lord" (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 182).

Another serious element of the Arminian error which is very much related to the others involves the whole idea of conditions. The Arminians claim that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are the conditions which must be met in order for a person to be elected. The Reformed position is that these are the fruits of election. "Men are chosen *to* faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects" (Canons I, Art. 7). This difference clearly shows how far apart the two systems are.

Article 7 of the First of Head of Doctrine (Of Divine Predestination) of the Canons states the Reformed truth regarding election over against the Arminian error. The first paragraph of that article reads as follows:

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation.

Prof. Hoeksema in his commentary on the Canons lists seven truths which are set forth in this article which

clearly distinguish the Reformed from the Arminian view. They are as follows.

- 1) Election is the unchangeable and eternal purpose of God.
- 2) The objects of this election are a certain definite number of fallen men, fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction.
- 3) The source of this election is the free, or sovereign, pleasure of God. Election is pure grace.
- 4) Election includes Christ, Who is eternally elected and Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation.
- 5) Election finds absolutely no reason or ground in its object why they should be elect: they are neither better nor more deserving than others by nature.
- 6) Election includes not only the end, that is, final salvation and glory, but also the means unto that end, that is, union with Christ, calling, faith, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification of the elect persons.
- 7) Election is theocentric: it is for the demonstration of God's mercy and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace (*V.O.O.F.*, p. 158).

The Reformed believer is comforted by the Canon's explanation of election. Election and salvation are all of God. God is unchangeable and His "purpose" regarding election is unchangeable. Therefore, our salvation and every means necessary to bring our salvation about will surely come to pass. No imposing conditions are placed before us that we must fulfill in order to be elected. Neither do we have to fear that we might no longer be able to persevere in fulfilling those conditions. God works in us "both to will and to do" his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Our salvation is completely of God's grace with none of our works. We are in our proper place with no boasting and God through Christ receives all honor and glory.

Those who hold to an Arminian view of predestination cannot have this comfort. Their god is not sovereign. He has no sure purpose concerning election. He waits upon the will of fickle-minded man. Further, the Arminian is faced with many imposing conditions to fulfill. And will he persevere in the fulfilling of those conditions or will he walk in unbelief? Nothing is sure. All is in doubt.

While there is much more that could be said regarding these opposing views of predestination, we will have to be content because of space to stop here. Thanks be to God who has led our fathers by His Spirit of Truth to clearly set forth the biblical truth about election in the Canons. And thanks be to God that He still puts this confession upon our lips today. ❖

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Church Family

The Responsibility of Teachers and Ministers in Their Pursuit of a Higher Education

by Shari Deemter

College is not simply about receiving an education. College is, or should be, an experience. When young people make a choice about which college they will attend, the decision is one of significance and will greatly affect their future. Their choice will bear fruit in later life, strengthening or altering their views on the world, themselves, and people around them. Those preparing for leadership through either teaching or preaching have a calling when making such a decision. For each individual this calling is different and needs to be evaluated personally.

Because the time spent at a university or college is an experience rather than purely an academic endeavor, one must consider what they are presently being called to. Being in college offers the believer a host of opportunities to witness for Christ. If that believer is truly “ready always to give an answer to any man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15), their college experience at either a secular or Christian institution will be an edifying one.

Students who choose to attend a Christian college such as Calvin, Hope, or Trinity will have opportunities to interact with many other believers. They will encounter many styles of worship, belief systems, and varying expressions of both. They will hear the testimonies of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and be encouraged by the body of Christ in an atmosphere quite unlike anything previously experienced. The believer’s experience at a Christian college can be amazing, eye opening, and conducive to spiritual growth. God commands in I John 4:1, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The Christian is called to exercise this discretion at both types of colleges.

While the Christian college can work as a catalyst for the Christian faith, that does not necessarily mean that a secular college or university functions in the opposite fashion. The God-given opportunities presented to the believer at a secular university will be different. Attendance there does not leave room for assumptions

to be made about people's belief systems or backgrounds. At a secular school one will find that the practicing Christians have a sincere sense of calling and commitment to Christ unique and fitting to the experiences they face. Christians bond together in the face of trials and the allurements of sin. Countless opportunities to witness and show that they are sanctified will inevitably crop up—people will always be wondering what makes the Christian different from anyone else or why their lifestyle is set apart. The Christian's calling in the world is this, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:15).

It is also true that neither choice provides a simple route. Along the educational path at both a secular and a Christian college, there will be unexpected twists and turns. The Christian will be confronted with issues they were not prepared to deal with and possibly never believed they would have to. Homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, drinking, involvement in the drug scene, and the introduction of other religions are all things which occur on nearly every college campus. Christian colleges are not exempt from spiritual struggles. Believing the campus of a Christian college provides a spiritual safe haven is naïve at best. Students face the same struggles, long for the same fulfillment, search out the same goals, and often reach the same conclusions. It is God, working sovereignly in both environments, who gives His people strength, blesses them, and enriches their experience. It is not *where* we are that is of primary importance, but *who* we are and what we stand for in that place. The believer should bring glory to God's name in any school they attend. God faithfully sustains His own. Believing it is God who "so preserves me that without the will of my father not a hair can fall from my head," children of the living God are capable of functioning boldly in the world.

Higher education is not only about the present. It very obviously pertains to the future. Individuals are equipped for their calling in life through their pursuit of an education. Each individual, whether striving for the position of teacher or preacher, is going to be used in the lives of those they are teaching in a particular way. Each individual will have their own interests, passions, and enthusiasm that they will inevitably share with those around them—students, faculty, clergy, and congregation alike. The college student is prepared to do so largely by the circumstances they face while in college. God

cultivates their gifts through both the secular and Christian school systems to prepare His servants for the work He has in store. Some individuals would find life at a secular university difficult to face on a daily basis. Possibly it would wear at their resistance and weaken their faith. Others may thrive under the constant testing of their beliefs. At a Christian college there may be some that grow in leaps and bounds because of the spiritual edification they receive while others may grow lax because they are not challenged enough.

Those who attend a Christian college have a specific experience that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. They will have certain gifts imparted to them that they will be able to share with those around them. What a blessing! Those who attend a secular university, particularly if they live on campus, will have a vastly different experience. They will discover a lot of things about themselves, grow closer to God, and gain a wealth of knowledge that they will be able to impart to those around them. What a blessing! God places each of His children in their particular circumstances in order to perfectly equip them for the future as well as do the work of the kingdom presently. He has led His own to their decision, assists them presently, and is equipping them for a future of service. It is amazing to see His hand guiding and sustaining His people. What God told Joshua rings true today, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

While making this important decision, many students will struggle with the issue of whether to attend a private or public university. "Where is God calling me to go?" "How will I be able to afford it?" "Will I be strong enough to stand up for what I believe?" "What kind of people will I encounter?" There are many differences between the two types of colleges that must be taken into consideration; the most important of which will determine where they can walk in close fellowship with God and be equipped to serve Him fully. It is poignant to remember that God is a God who works in the lives of His people by means He chooses to build up His Church. He will work in ways never thought of. "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jer. 33:3). ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Richard Moore
Devotions for August

August 1 Read Romans 4:1-16

In this series of meditations we will begin by taking a theme as it is set forth in Romans 4:13. We find that the apostle speaks in the context of the possibility of the forgiveness of sin being not found in our works. In contrast to works we are given the assurance of righteousness and salvation by faith. One thing that we all have to contend with is sin, and it is a daily struggle for us in this life. We therefore have a daily need to know of the forgiveness that is ours in Christ. But in order to escape the testimony of our sin against us, it is necessary that we look outside of ourselves and our works to find peace in our daily lives. And this is so important if we are to rightly wait upon our Lord and trust in Him. So let us pray for grace to hear what the Lord says unto us as we consider the truths of His Word in this connection. Sing Psalter 69:1-4.

August 2 Read Romans 4:1-13, Galatians 3:29, 4:7

As we continue our consideration of the truth found in Romans 4:13 we understand that God's children are called heirs of the promise in the context. Do you consider yourself an heir of the promise of God? We by faith surely consider ourselves to be such heirs, do we not? Or do we only consider what we are heirs of in this world? God's child trusts that he is an heir of the promise of God. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). And in Galatians 4:7 we are told that as sons we are heirs of God through Christ. To think that any of us can walk in the hope of being an heir of the promises of God, or to be called an heir of God is absolutely amazing. The amazing grace of God as we shall see! May God grant that we see ourselves as heirs of God or heirs of the promise. Sing Psalter 87.

August 3 Read Romans 4:1-13, Ephesians 1:1-11

Today we must see we have become heirs of the promise, only as it has been God's good pleasure. And for the true child of God this is a relief, for if we would have to do something in order to become heirs of God's kingdom we would always fail. And would never be heirs. But in Ephesians Paul points out to us that we are become heirs of the promise and of righteousness because God in His good pleasure has chosen us in Christ from before the foundation of the world. And this is true in order that we might be holy and without blame before Him. We are adopted according to God's decree of election to be redeemed in Christ and to become children and thus heirs of the promise of God. This also is the teaching of Paul in Ephesians 1:11, when we read, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." At the outset we must understand that our hope of sal-

vation is rooted alone in God's eternal good pleasure. Praise the Lord! Sing Psalter 98.

August 4 Read Romans 4:1-13

We do see in our text in verse 13 that Abraham and his seed are heirs of the world. You who are heirs of the promise, heirs of God are heirs of the world. We must take a bit to understand this. In the first place we should take time to read Genesis 17:4 and 17:8. We are taught in these verses that God establishes His covenant between Himself and Abraham and his seed in their generations, to be a God unto them. Further God promises to give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and promises I will be their God. The teaching of the Word here is clear that God promises to make Abraham's seed heirs of an everlasting inheritance and means that they shall be heirs of everlasting life. Now according to Paul in Romans 4 we are become such heirs in Christ, of Whom God spake as He made this promise to Abraham, our spiritual father in Christ. What a tremendous thing for us to hear who are in ourselves sinners. Sing Psalter 263.

August 5 Read Romans 4:1-13, Hebrews 11:13-16

Our text that we have been considering speaks of Abraham as being the heir of the world, and this of course also speaks of we who are God's children in Christ as being heirs of the world. We understand that this does not mean we look for a worldly kingdom and earthly kingdom, but that we look for this world to be renewed and brought into heavenly perfection. Too many times in this life we look only to the earthy, but Paul is not here telling us that this is alright. No here we are strangers and pilgrims in the midst of this earthly land. Even this, we read, the saints of old also realized in a passage such as Hebrews 11:13-16. May we count ourselves pilgrims and strangers in this life, and yet we are heirs of the world in Christ. Of this more in tomorrow's meditation. Sing Psalter 229 1-3, 6.

August 6 Read Rom. 4:1-13, Eph. 1:3-5, Rom. 8:21-23

We are heirs of the world as we understand in the first place that God gave His only Begotten Son to come in our flesh to die upon the cross that He might be raised as the Saviour of God's elect as they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Now the whole world of this brute creation is become partaker of the redemption that is ours in Christ as we read in the passage of Romans 8 that we were to read. We are heirs of this world as it is redeemed in Christ; moreover we should remember that this world serves our redemption and thus its redemption with us. And we know that all things in this world shall serve our good, our salvation and our eternal heritage. When this comes to pass we shall live in God's presence in Christ and He shall be our God. Glory be His blessed Name! Sing Psalter 295.

August 7 Read Romans 4:1-13, Ephesians 1:5-7, 2:1-5

Now how is it that we become such heirs that we may live in this hope? Certainly if we are true to ourselves, we know that it is not because we are worthy in ourselves to be such heirs. And we are not worthy of living with such a hope in our hearts for we see ourselves as sinners. Nor was Abraham any more worthy. All in our lives declares by nature it is the opposite: we are heirs of hopelessness, of darkness and of judgment. This we are in our father Adam and this we are in our own sin. Now this means that it is only according to the divine good pleasure of God that we become sons and worthy heirs of life with God. We are become the purchased possession of Christ, and as such we have sonship and are become the heirs of the promise of God. We then ought as young and old to live as the possession of the Lord and heirs of the Kingdom. Sing Psalter 283:1-3.

August 8 Read Romans 4:1-13, Galatians 3:10

Beloved readers the law could only condemn Abraham and can only condemn us as we stand in our own strength. I am not sure we always think of this enough in our day. So often we hear prayers in today's world and even too often in our own circles that make no mention of the need of the forgiveness of sin. Have we forgotten that our great enemy is our own sin, or that we are dead in sin by nature, and that that sin keeps us from all blessing? Surely it is not because there is no testimony of the Scripture that speaks of our condemnation apart from Christ. The law condemned Abraham and us apart from Christ (Galatians 3:10). We do not keep all of the law as we ought and of needs repent. The promise that came to Abraham and comes to us does not come to us through the law. Indeed we must and do keep the law by grace in thankfulness unto God. But even in this we find it in this life but very imperfectly. And we cannot look in any way to the keeping of the law as the reason for our being heirs of the promise. Keep this in mind and heart! Sing Psalter 273:1-5.

August 9 Read Romans 4:1-13, Galatians 3:23-24

Now the law brought those of the old dispensation to Christ, and still the law as we stand in sin brings us to Christ. Not to what we can do to be saved, but points out what we cannot not do and leads us to look to Christ only for salvation. Only in this way could Abraham be justified, not by the works of the law, but by faith in the promised Seed. So it is that we can only be justified by faith. And remember that faith is the gift of God not of man, lest we should boast (Ephesians 2:8, 9). For Abraham this meant that it was not the circumcision according to the law that led him to receive the promises. Salvation is not to be found in the mere outward membership in the church, although it is necessary for believers to be joined to the Body of Christ, and that as instituted on earth in a local congregation. But it is because the church elect in Christ have been given faith to cling to Christ. May God grant us that faith daily. Sing Psalter 428:1-4.

August 10 Read Romans 4:13-16, Romans 4:5

The promise that we are heirs of the world is become ours through the righteousness of faith, so it was for Abraham, and so it is for us. Not the righteousness of keeping the law, but the righteousness of Christ that is accounted to us through faith. Thus Paul says in the 16th verse "it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." If even a little of our righteousness was of ourselves, then the promise would forever fail of being realized for us. This is the vanity of the free

will gospel—do not be led astray. Faith is not a work as we are told in verse five, but we must emphasize it is the gift of God. Christ gives us His Spirit whereby we believe He is our righteousness. Herein lies our peace. It is by faith we are united to Christ and His work, His death, and His resurrection, and His ascension as our Lord. Praise the Lord! Sing Psalter 409.

August 11 Read Romans 4

By faith such sinners as we are united to Christ and His work, we see that He has borne our guilt by His death in obedience to God on the cross. He was accounted guilty in our stead, so that we may have the confidence that God's judgment is satisfied and we are declared by the Heavenly Judge to be free of all guilt. His blood cleanses, His broken body heals, and by faith we believe God's promise is sure in Him. Does not your faith rest alone in Christ? If it does not then you have no hope. But as the children of God, chosen in Christ, we have the testimony of His word in our hearts that we are heirs of His kingdom and shall dwell with Him everlastingly. Sing Psalter 243:1-3, 6.

August 12 Read Romans 4:1-25, Ephesians 1:1-12

We reach the end of the consideration of our text from Romans 4. We do so by emphasizing that the end of the teaching of Paul in this section of Scripture is not only the assurance of God's people; and it is that. But the end is that God receives all the glory for the blessed assurance we have. How can it be otherwise when we as sinners consider the wonder of our righteousness before God in Christ. How can we be heirs of the world and of the eternal fellowship with God? By grace through faith, how blessed. How wonderful, the gospel of our salvation. May we live in gratitude, striving to serve Him in harmony with all His Word, confessing our sin, repenting and turning to Him, and living with joy in our hearts as we hear His promise. Hallelujah and Amen. Sing Psalter 217.

August 13 Read Psalm 111:1-10

In this Psalm we are lead to understand that as the people of God we have so much for which to be thankful. We are to reflect upon the many blessings that we have as the party of the living God. We are His people and as His people must look to all that God does in our behalf, as we stand in the fellowship of the saints within the church for Jesus' sake. In fact according to the second verse, we are taught that God's children seek out the works of God, and we must dwell on the greatness of His work in our midst. Do we do this as individuals; do we do this as congregations? Do we find our pleasure in the works of God, and not in the works of man? By His grace we must. Sing Psalter 123.

August 14 Read Psalm 111:1-10

That which makes us blessed over all men, is not something that begins, or is carried forth, or that is brought to an end by us. But that which makes us blessed is God's work in us and for us. This great truth is carried forth in Psalm 111. Also as we bring forth covenant seed are the people of God made aware of this. We must remember this as we seek for spouses as young people, and this we must remember as we bring forth our children. There are so many in the world today, that look upon children as something over which we must take control, as to whether we will bear them or not. The theory of man is that man can determine and ought to determine when and if he has children. What a temptation it is for us to think that we should limit our families for this or that reason, and pretend to be wiser than God. Not so says the Psalmist as we shall see. Sing Psalter 304:1-3.

August 15 Read Psalm 111:1-10, 115:3, 127:3

Satan would have us think we can determine who lives and who does not, especially with respect to children. If it is not the right time to have a child then abort it, but continue to take pleasure in our flesh even though it means taking the life of a small life within the womb. So is the evil age in which we live. However, God's purpose shall be done, He is in the heavens and He does whatever He pleases. May we repent of sin when we do not acknowledge this truth. As children of God we see that our being joined in the union of marriage brings with it a most precious promise that God will gather His children from our seed. Then we see our children as the most precious heritage of the Lord. Praise the Lord. Sing Psalm 308.

August 16 Read Psalm 111:1-10, Acts 2:39

The Word in Acts 2:39 points out to us that God has made a covenant with us and our children. He says that the promise is ours and our children's, even to as many as God shall call. It is God therefore, irrespective of what man does, that causes that His church is born or brought forth. Some couples are given many children, and we must praise the Lord. Some couples are given very few children, or even none at all, but we do know that God's promise is that He shall give according to His will and He will call according to His will, and will cover our sins and those of His seed perfectly in the blood of His Son in Whom God has called us from before the foundation of the world. It is God alone that determines the gifts He gives to each according to His purpose. He has commanded His covenant forever (vs. 9). Sing Psalter 304:4-7.

August 17 Read Psalm 111:5, 10

Sometimes it is a fearful thing when one looks forward to marriage and to the rightful bringing forth of children. Especially also in light of the time of the year it is. For our children are about to go to school and this brings forth with it questions of how we shall rightly provide for our children and covenant youth in the economical situation of the day. Or we may have serious questions of raising our children, or of standing as covenant youth in a day when there is so much evil and temptation and sin around about. Yet in verse five we read God is ever mindful of His covenant. We see that the bringing forth and the care of covenant seed is God's work. He shall surely accomplish what He has begun, even through the weak means such as we are. Blessed mercy of God. Sing Psalter 360.

August 18 Read Psalm 111:3, 10

We believe with the Psalmist that all the works of God's hands are verity and judgment as we read in verse 10. We believe that they are done in truth and perfectly according to God's will. We know that His works are honorable and glorious as we read in verse three. It is not ours to question then His ways with us also with regard to the children we bear. But we do acknowledge even when bringing forth a child with Down's Syndrome that requires so very much care, and even if we believe we do not have the ability to care for such a one, that nevertheless God is a righteous and Holy God Who governs all things in perfect harmony with His holy and righteous will. And we have peace! Sing Psalter 30.

August 19 Read Psalm 111, 22:9-10

We have emphasized the bringing forth and care of children in this part of the meditations because God remembers His covenant according to our Psalm. With respect to our little ones, and our

covenant youth must remember this as well, we know and believe that they also are the objects of the comfort of the word of God. For God makes His own to hope upon Him from the womb. In Psalm 22:9-10 we are told that it is God who took the Psalmist out of the womb, and did make him to hope while he was upon His mother's breasts. We are cast upon God from the womb, and God is faithful to continue the work He has begun until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). What a comfort for us as we pass as strangers and pilgrims through this life. Sing Psalter 47:1-5.

August 20 Read Psalm 111:10, Psalm 22, Eph. 1:1-7

The Scripture in Psalm 22 teaches us that the elect as they are brought forth from the womb are come forth unto faith. Do we believe this? We must—it is the Word of God. It is a faith that God works in us from the beginning upon the basis of our redemption in Christ that is worked in our hearts by the Spirit. This is the reason that the godly mother from the time she brings forth the covenant seed is busy instructing her child in the things of God's kingdom. What a privilege this is to care for the covenant seed, the heritage of God. Sing Psalter 168.

August 21 Read Psalm 111:10, Ephesians 2:8-10

The only ground for this blessing that comes upon our children and upon ourselves is that God has commanded His covenant forever (vs. 10). The baptism form in our denomination makes it plain that it is not because of the worthiness of our children that they may have the hope of the promises of God, no more that it is so with us. They are without their knowledge partakers of our corruption and depravity, but it is because of God's covenant, that they are made worthy partakers of all the promises in Christ. We confess that it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and this not of works, lest we should boast. This is ordained by God from eternity. The promise shall stand. Sing Psalter 355.

August 22 Read Psalm 127, Psalm 46:1

God's covenant stands forever and ever. Herein lies our comfort as a family and as we are given children to care for. God is our refuge and our strength, an helper ever near us. We know that when God gives to us children which are his heritage, that He then will not forsake us when calling us to raise His heritage in the fear of His Name. And even though we struggle ourselves with sin, and yet must teach our children and covenant youth not to sin we must not despair. But we, even though weak and inclined to temptation, nevertheless, know by His grace God shall lead us in the warning of our children against the temptation of the devil, and He will give us grace to teach them, and God will apply the words of instruction, even through such as we are, to the hearts of His little ones. Praise the Lord. Sing Psalter 126.

August 23 Read Psalm 111, 27:1-3, Proverbs 3:7

We praise the Lord and as we dwell in the world we do so in His fear, serving Him. Our fear is not that which love casts out, but that by which love clings to God. It follows from and flows from our love of God. And we fear to offend our God Whom we love. Trusting in God we would not turn from Him. We reverence our God and flee sin. Oh, we do not do this as we ought, but it is our daily desire, and our daily prayer. And in godly fear we repent before our God for those sins whereby we have offended Him. Is this not your life? It must be if we are to stand uprightly as His children, praising and trusting in Him. May God grant us that grace daily. Sing Psalter 71.

August 24 Read John 14:13-14

Beloved readers do you pray often and sincerely unto God? Do you turn to God in your needs or do you turn to your own ingenuity? All too often I am afraid that we seek to get out of our difficulties in our own strength, with our own wisdom, and according to our own desires. But this of course is fruitless. I am sure you have experienced this in your life. We can only add to our troubles when we rely upon ourselves. Rather we must turn to our God in our time of need. We may do so with confidence for we read in John 14 that whatsoever we shall ask in Christ's name, that will Christ do. And He does so that Father God may be glorified in the Son. Christ says ask any thing in my name, I will do it. What a comfort. But we will consider further what He means in the following meditations. Sing Psalter 149.

August 25 Read John 14:15

The context in which the last meditation's text is found goes on to tell us in the next verse, verse fifteen, that if we love Christ, we keep His commandments. In fact, as Jesus teaches us to ask Him for those things that are necessary to this life, He also teaches us that He is speaking to those that love Him. We love Christ because God has first loved us as John also teaches us in His first epistle. The promise to give us those things we need is therefore a promise not to all, but to those who love Christ. And they are those that have been chosen in love and are filled by the Spirit of Christ, are made new in Christ. Then also we are commanded to keep His commandments. Our love of Christ comes to manifestation in our keeping His commandments. And again it is only by grace that we shall ever walk in His commandments. Now as we do so by His grace, we also have the assurance that we are Christ's and He surely hears and answers our prayer. Sing Psalter 227.

August 26 Read John 15:7

Once again Jesus teaches us that He shall hear our prayers. For the sinner what greater comfort is there for us than to know that Jesus, Who died on the cross to save sinners, hears our personal cries. We read in John 15:7 that as we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, we may ask what we will and it shall be done unto us. Tremendous promise this is. Now understand when by His grace His words abide in us, they rule our thoughts and will. So that what we ask is in harmony with that word and His will for us. And Jesus says that as we so ask it shall be done. Now if we ask amiss of course we shall not receive what we desire, but when His word abides in us, we shall surely also experience the blessings of His love for us and shall receive answer to our prayer. Sing Psalter 281.

August 27 Read John 15:16

How is it that the Word shall abide in us, and that we shall abide in Christ? Jesus answers this directly in the context of John 15 when in the sixteenth verse he instructs us further. He teaches us that we have not chosen Christ, but He has chosen us and ordains us that we should go and bring forth fruit. That is not only true of the apostles but is true of us in the office of believer. It is exactly because of Christ's choosing us to be His own precious possession that we are ordained unto life to be His servants. The result of Jesus' work and will is that we shall bring forth fruit. Not of us, but it is of our Lord. Then Jesus also teaches us that we may ask of the Father in the name of Christ. And the purpose of our asking is that Father may give it to us. How necessary, how wonderful. Sing Psalter 331.

August 28 Read James 1:5-6

But you may think that it is most precious that I may ask of God in Christ for what I need, but how shall I ask? What shall I ask that is right and in harmony with the will of Christ and of the Father? James reflects somewhat upon these questions. They arise out of the fact that we are so weak, and we so often do not even understand the ways in which God has led us, and then we are commanded of Christ to ask. How? Will not we get it all wrong? Or do we even know how or for what we are to ask? James answers: if you lack wisdom, ask of God. God giveth to all men, that is, those of whatever state who are His that which they need and that liberally. Surely He shall also give us the wisdom to face our trials, even to understand His will for us in them. He shall provide us what we need even to rightly pray. Blessed Father. Sing Psalter 362.

August 29 Read James 1:5-6

So often when we pray we may doubt whether God will hear us. This is especially true because of our own weakness and sinfulness. We may think that it is absolutely necessary that certain things come to pass in our lives, and so we ask Father in our prayer for them, but then it seems as though God does not hear. The problem of course is that we often do not want to hear God's answer to our prayer, we may want it our way. That is why the apostle continues, "but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. In the first place it is necessary that we ask in faith, not according to natural needs or reasoning, but in faith trusting that Father knows what is right and good for us. This must be our prayer. Faith always lays hold of the truth, and rests in God's care in harmony with His will. We must then so pray resting in His word and with His word upon our hearts. Sing Psalter 202.

August 30 Read James 1:1-8, Romans 8:28

Now, further, the instruction of James is that we must ask our prayers in faith from the point of view of trusting in God and having a hearty confidence that He shall be with us for Christ's sake and shall care for us according to His perfect will. Faith is being united to God in all of our life through Christ Jesus our Lord. Then when we pray we shall do so without wavering, without doubt, but shall trust that God shall provide perfectly for us according to all we need—all we need from God's perfect understanding and will. Praying in this way we also have the confidence that Paul would have us have when he teaches us in Romans 8:28 that all things work together for our good, even as He has chosen us according to His purpose. Praise the Lord! Sing Psalter 353.

August 31 Read I John 5:14-15

We conclude with the words of the apostle John this time as recorded in his first epistle verse fourteen in particular. We may have confidence in Christ, and having confidence in Christ because of His work and His redemption which He has worked in our behalf, then we may have confidence that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. The key here is of course "according to His will." We as children of God saved in Christ desire the will of Christ, and by grace principally live according to the will of Christ. As we do this we may indeed bring all of our needs before Him knowing that He will certainly hear us. This is our comfort and this is our trust. Blessed Word! Sing Psalter 312.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Richard Moore
Devotions for September

September 1 Read Psalm 37:1-3

Let us begin with this set of devotions on Psalm 37 by looking at the first few verses, centering the first devotions on verse three as it is found in its context. God's children are able to pass through this pilgrim's journey through this life only when we hear the Word of God as found in this text. There is so much in this life that would lead us to have no assurance or comfort or peace in this life. The Psalmist mentions evil doers and the workers of iniquity in the first verse. And we do find many of these in our lives, but besides this we understand that behind the wicked attack of these against God's children stands Satan the "worker of iniquity." And Satan is relentless in his attack upon us who are the people of God. The Scripture teaches us that he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). Important then that we learn to trust in the Lord! Sing Psalter 95.

September 2 Read Psalm 37:1-3

As children of God we are to trust in the Lord. Do we so trust in the Lord always? We must. The idea of the term "to trust" means that we are to remain steadfast, to be confident and sure or secure. We are able to do this when we take refuge in the Lord. In the New Testament we find the idea of walking in hope, many times is this term used as a foundation of our assurance. For example, we read in I Thessalonians 5:8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." Thus at the outset of these devotions we are told in verse three that our defense against the evildoer is a trust whereby we take our refuge in God and find that He is the hope that shall sustain us in this life. This is true of our young people with their many battles with the powers of darkness, and is true of the aged saint that still finds there are so many influences of darkness in this life that would draw him aside from a life of faith. Trust in Jehovah! Sing Psalter 96.

September 3 Read Psalm 37:1-3, 49:6-7

The Psalmist's instruction to us as we dwell as strangers and pilgrims in the midst of the world is to trust in and take our refuge in the Lord. Our hope must be rooted in Him and in His will for us. Negatively, this means that if we are to have peace in the battle of faith, we must place our trust nowhere else or in no one else. That is true of our own heart; Solomon says he that trusts in his own heart is a fool (Proverbs 28:6). We must remember this also as we date, as we seek the goals of our business, etc. We may not trust in our own natural feelings, desires, or even intellect. The reason, of course, is that it is all rooted in the natural depravity that is of our old man which subjects itself to Satan. Further, we may not trust in our wealth for our earthly riches can redeem no one (Psalm 49:6-7). The reality is that all that is temporal perishes, and any hope in these things also perishes. Our only lasting hope must be founded in a trust in that which is eternal. Trust in God. Sing Psalter 136.

September 4 Read Psalm 37:1-3, 32:10

From the positive point of view, whether young or old, the trust of the believe lays hold of Jehovah. From the heart we are to lay fast hold

of the Lord (Psalm 28:7). This trust according to God's word is rooted in the mercy of God. We trust in the mercy of God for ever and for ever (Psalm 52:8). We read that when we trust in the Lord, mercy shall compass us about (Psalm 32:10). We believe that do we not? We are comforted by this. Our enemy may be so great, and our worthiness of blessing because of our sins is nothing. But God's mercy compasses us. He loves us even from eternity, and He delivers us from all evil, and all sin. So that as children of God, who have need of refuge, we cry unto Jehovah and He shall deliver us. This is the witness of the saints of the ages (Psalm 22:4-5). Now we see by this word of the Psalmist the calling to place our trust alone in Jehovah, with the promise God will have mercy upon us poor sinners in Christ Jesus our Lord. Sing Psalter 83.

September 5 Read Psalm 37:1-3, Ephesians 1:3-10

Having been instructed to trust in Jehovah, it is necessary to see what this means. The Psalmist instructs us that our trust must be alone in Jehovah. He is to be the object of our hope and confidence. Now the God in Whom we are to trust is according to His Name the Sovereign God. He it is that has made all things and unto Him are all things servants. In the first place, Jehovah has determined for eternity the creation and the purpose of the creation. It must serve Him and all creatures and all history must serve Him and His eternal purpose to glorify Himself in the saving of His Church (Ephesians 1:5-6). Secondly, we understand that the name "Jehovah" teaches us that He is the ever faithful covenant God. From eternity He has chosen a people in Christ in love unto everlasting life (Ephesians 1:3-4). This God has done not because of our worthiness, not because of our strength, but simply because it is His Sovereign will to reveal His covenant love by setting that love upon us from eternity. Thus He shall bring us into His precious fellowship unto the glory of His grace. Trust in the Lord! Sing Psalter 95.

September 6 Read Psalm 37:1-3, Colossians 1:19-22

That Jehovah is the Sovereign Covenant God in Whom we may trust is most wonderfully and clearly manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. For Jesus was sent of God for the people of His eternal love. In love God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and He comes in our flesh to redeem us to be the adopted children of our Father (again read Ephesians 1). In Christ we see God in the clearest manifestation possible as the merciful Covenant God Who is faithful to His promises, so that while we were enemies God sent His only Begotten Son to reconcile us unto Himself through the death of His only Begotten. So great is the mercy and faithfulness of God, that from the time of His lowly birth Jesus suffered in our stead, until He hung upon the cross and in the hours of darkness bear all of our judgment to deliver us from all our enemies, yea even from death itself. He sent His Son to suffer all the pains and anguish of hell that we may dwell with Him forever. Trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 100.

September 7 Read Psalm 37:4

We are to trust always in Jehovah. However, in this life there are many things that would prevent this trust. And it is no wonder, whether we be young or old, that we see that we have need of many repeated admonitions of the Scriptures to walk in faithfulness in this calling. We find in our lives so much of the saint Jacob in his life before he learned to trust completely in the Lord. We so often struggle with our own sinful pride, a pride that will prevent us from trusting in the Lord. This pride always hinders us from the true fellowship with our God. In the way of self-assurance there can only be hopelessness, because we have so much sin and weakness. Thus, how very often is it necessary to refer again to this Psalm and the many other passages of God's Word to be led in a true godly trust in the Lord. We must follow the activities of faith set forth here that we may be delivered from our own sin and pride. Trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 188.

September 8 Read Psalm 37:4-5, Isaiah 58:13-14

The Psalmist would lead us to trust in the Lord, by teaching us in the first place to delight ourselves in the Lord. To delight ourselves in the Lord is by His grace to make ourselves pliable to His way. It is to find our joy in God's law. The Psalmist teaches us that we are blessed as our delight is in the law of God. And he teaches us that in that law as God's children we are to meditate day and night. When we live all the moments of each day and night bound to His law and finding our delight in it, then our trust is indeed in Jehovah, and we find that He is our refuge in all that we do. We are then kept also from the enemy, whether that be the world, Satan or our own flesh. On the other hand, we hear Isaiah prophesy that when we do not our own ways, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words, then we find our delight in the Lord and we shall have the riches of God's blessing. How pleasant it is to trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 190.

September 9 Read Psalm 37:5

The activity of trusting in the Lord, which verse three of the 37th Psalm calls us unto, includes also that which is set forth in verse five of this Psalm. To trust in the Lord means that we shall commit our way unto the Lord. We notice that the Psalmist speaks of the way in the singular and thus teaches us that really we are to have only one way. There is not a time to sow wild oats while we are young and then say we will later serve the Lord. There is not a time latter in our life that we may let down our guard even for a moment for we shall fail to serve our Lord. Understand that sin is ever at our doorstep, and only shall we trust in the Lord when the whole of our way is committed unto the Lord. Our text in verse five says that we are to commit our way unto the Lord. And as we by grace do this, it means that all of our activity without exception is given over to our seeking God and His ways. To commit our way is to walk with a complete trust in God's hand to lead us in all of the right paths, yea even for our salvation. Trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 149.

September 10 Read Psalm 37:7, I Peter 5:7, Psalm 4

As we are called to trust in the Lord, the Psalmist now in the seventh verse teaches us to rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently. This is so important for us in this life. This life is filled with so many things that could cause us turmoil and anxiety. But understand that anxiety is against our trust in the Lord. If we are filled with care it means that we are not resting in Jehovah. What blessed words that we hear through the apostle Peter when he tells us to cast all of our cares upon God (I Peter 5:7). To rest in Jehovah means that we are silent before Him. That is possible because we by His grace find peace in His ways. It matters not when we wait upon God where those ways lead us, for we know that they are sent by the God Who loves us in Christ. They are sent by the God Who has sent His Son to die for us, and they are sent

by God Who is rich in mercy towards us. Finally, the path we are called to walk therefore being sent by the Sovereign God of heaven and earth serves our salvation, our good. Trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 7.

September 11 Read Psalm 37:3, 18

Returning to the third verse of the 37th Psalm we are reminded that to trust in the Lord is also to fulfill the calling to do good. The eighteenth verse of this Psalm speaks of our calling to be upright, really a part of the same teaching. In this Psalm we are led to the idea that is emphasized, that to trust in the Lord means that we stand before God uprightly, finding our delight in His law. To do good is to trust in the Lord, but we cannot find this good in ourselves, for by nature there is in us no goodness at all. We all know this by grace; we have experienced this in the most heart wrenching ways. To sojourn in the midst of this world of darkness as one whose trust is in the Lord is an impossibility as we stand by nature, for we of ourselves are dead in sin and trespass. That the Psalmist calls us to trust in God and to do good, then, is blessed, for it speaks of the work of God in us. By grace alone shall we begin to so walk. May God grant us grace to trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 1.

September 12 Read Psalm 37:3, 18, 23; Deut. 6:24

The last time we saw the Psalmist teaches us that to trust in the Lord requires also that we do good, and that this is impossible apart from grace. Understand that the only good flows alone out of the living God. We are taught that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord (Psalm 37:23). Now this good becomes manifest in our lives as a godly fear. That is, we are led to walk according to God's commandments as the author writes in Deuteronomy 6:24. Again and again we are led to the Word of God are we not? God's child has delight in the truth of the Scripture, and finds his way there. The Psalmist directs us to the activity of a living faith, a faith that is the gift of God to His own and which unites us to Christ. Dear readers, one cannot be united to Christ by a living faith without at the same time manifesting that life in our activity. It is an activity of believing the Word and walking in obedience to the same, confident that God will guard our ways and lead us in all paths to the richest blessing we can imagine. Trust in the Lord. Sing Psalter 101.

September 13 Read Psalm 37:9-11

As our God gives us grace and as He nourishes us by His word leading us to trust in Him, we have a blessed promise that becomes our conscious possession. In the text in Psalm 37:3 we are told that we shall be fed as we dwell in the land. The saints of the old dispensation knew that to dwell in the land of Canaan was to receive the blessings of Jehovah. It was there that God dwelt with them in the temple, and they enjoyed the blessings of the land as they walked in obedience to His word. Also, as they trusted in Him, God gave them victories over all of their enemies no matter the strength of those that came against them. And the promise still stands today for us. We are assured that we do and shall stand with God. Now as we pass our pilgrims journey here below, and soon in the perfection of the everlasting and heavenly country in fellowship with our God in Christ with the saints. This confidence ought to be ours as young people and as older members of the body of Christ, and by His grace, the more our trust is alone in God the more we shall have this comfort. God grant us grace to so trust in Him. Sing Psalter 302.

September 14 Read Revelation 21:1-5

As the Psalm was written which we have been considering, not only did the saints of the day believe that they would be blessed in the land of Canaan, but as we are told the saints of the old dispensation looked for a more full realization of the hope in their hearts, that is, that they would enjoy God's everlasting fellowship in a heavenly coun-

try. Thus we read in Hebrews 11:13-16. They saw that Canaan was typical of a much better country with a much more wonderful temple. They longed for the days when they would have enemies no more. A day when nothing would inhibit their trust of Jehovah. Is this not also our longing? Too often our thoughts are alone on this daily life, but, my readers, trusting in Jehovah our hope goes well beyond this life. For in Christ we know that the mercy of God is upon us and we shall be His people and He shall be our God, yea even forever. So also does the holy writer finish this chapter, read it. Oh! The blessedness of trusting in the Lord. Sing Psalter 317.

September 15 Read Psalm 62

In this Psalm we read several times that God is our rock and defense. While I write these meditations we have been in the midst of God's great creation, near many majestic mountains. These mountains of course God can move, but man cannot. That God is our rock and defense means that even stronger than the mountains is the God in whom is our trust. For any of us there is no enemy nor any trial that is greater than God's living care of His chosen children in Christ. Christ has perfectly served God's will and stands as our sure defense always. None can defeat us or take us from our refuge in Him. Sing Psalter 128.

September 16 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-10

In the devotions that follow we continue somewhat on the same theme as the first fifteen days, however we will turn to look at our trust in God from the perspective of the general idea set forth by the holy writer in Ecclesiastes 3:1 and its context. We read that there is a time for every purpose under heaven. This statement is very broad as is evident of the list that follows the first verse, a list that is representative and not comprehensive. The holy writer tells us basically that there is a purpose for all things that come to pass in this life. Do we believe that and live as though it is true? Hopefully we will see that it is absolutely necessary for us as the children of God to hold to this truth. It shall lead us to a confidence in our walk as people of God. Therefore we shall be led every day of our lives to give thanksgiving and praise to God in all things. May God so grant us the grace to so live. Sing Psalter 204.

September 17 Read Eccl. 3:1, Psalm 115:3, 13-18

The purpose that the text in Ecclesiastes 3:1 speaks of is the purpose of God not of man. God is He Who makes the determination of all things. This sadly is not always the way we think. So often we want to say we are the author's of our own destiny. We may say to Mom or Dad, I can take care of myself, I know what is best for me. And as parents we think often that we will set our own goals according to our own reasoning as to what is right and good for the family. But God's is the purpose with all things. He is the Creator and we must confess with the Scripture He is the sustainer of all things. It is God Who created all things (Genesis 1), surely He did so according to a holy and perfect purpose. The God who created, has determined the end of all things and all that goes between. This we confess. But do we live in this confession? The Psalmist said, "Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth" (Psalm 115:15). Sing Psalter 308.

September 18 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1, Col. 1:16-18

It is well that we understand for a moment what basically is this purpose of God with all things? And we immediately should think of our Savior Jesus Christ. And this brings to us at the outset to have great comfort. God determines all things in harmony with His creation, and He tells us in Colossians that by Christ and for Christ all things were created. Further, also from this passage in Colossians, we read that Christ is the Head of the Church and that it pleases God that in Christ all fullness should dwell. Do you believe that you belong to

your faithful Savior Jesus Christ? Then you believe that all things work together for the glory of God in His Son. Must not all things then serve our salvation for us who are members of His body? Already we begin to understand the blessedness of the text in Ecclesiastes 3. For God brings to pass all things according to His Divine purpose. Rejoice in your God. Sing Psalter 310.

September 19 Read Eccl. 3:1, Psalm 107:28-43

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:31). God governs and upholds all things according to His purpose. The Psalm we were to read emphasizes this with a view to all areas of our life, and all things that take place. We read in Proverbs 21:1 that even the king's heart is in the hand of God. Especially in the days in which we live, with all the activities of the governments of this world and their wars and peace activities, we can take comfort and assurance from this truth. Further, in our chapter from Ecclesiastes we learn in the 14th verse that whatever God determines to be done, nothing can take away from it, for God does it. God's will and word comes to pass always. His purpose is accomplished. Thus no one, no enemy, no sickness, no sin can come upon us by chance, but it serves our Father's covenant purpose and will. Hallelujah! Sing Psalter 297.

September 20 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1, Eph. 2:8-10

We believe and confess that God's purpose determines all things, also our salvation. And just as God's purpose does not change with respect to the things we have mentioned before, so we confess it is true with salvation. Now we understand that our God has chosen His own in Christ before the foundation of the world, and that all things were created by Christ and for Christ unto the gathering of His body. This is comforting for us is it not, for it means salvation is determined by God and not by us. It is by grace that we are saved and not of ourselves. We are God's workmanship not our own. Thus, my readers young and old, we may be assured and confident of this very thing, that He that has begun a good work in us will perform it until Jesus Christ comes again (Col. 1:6). Praise the Lord, our salvation was determined from eternity by God and the whole of creation serves the purpose of our covenant God to bring to pass our salvation! Sing Psalter 407.

September 21 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Now our attention is upon the times set forth for us in our text. To everything there is a season, a time set by God for all things coming to pass. Now we could use this text in an evil way in our lives. We may even have an inclination to so view our text; certainly it would stand in harmony with our old man. We could sinfully reason that there is a season and purpose for all things in this life. This is true whether we kill, or dance, or hate, or even sin. Now this text does teach that even the sin of the church is determined by God, but it does not do so to afford us an excuse for our own sin. We may not say, well we sinned because God placed us in the situation and would use us in our sin for His purpose, and therefore we were really serving God when we walked in sin. How very evil is such reasoning on our part. It is true that God determines even the sin of man (Acts 2:23), but this never becomes an excuse for our disobedience before God. Hold fast the Holiness of God, confess your sins. Sing Psalter 291:1-4, 11, 12.

September 22 Read Ecclesiastes 3, Isaiah 57:15-21

It is not so that we are the ones that determine the time that is right for this or that. Man does not have the right to decide when we get sick, or when we have peace, when we have loved ones taken from us or when we have the time of earthly comfort and ease. It is God Who brings this all to pass. It is ours rather to wonder at the wondrous works of God as He leads us through the trials and joys of this life. As

God's children we have been given the blessed gift to see that God for Christ's sake governs and upholds all things for our salvation (Romans 8:28). This fact makes separation between the elect believer and the wicked. The wicked has no rest (Isaiah 57:20-21). They have no rest because they do not trust in God nor do they believe that He brings all things to pass according to His will. But for us there is precious peace in the ways of God. Believe and live it. Sing Psalter 280.

September 23 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1, Psalm 9:7-11

As we do contemplate the wonder of the sovereign care of the living God for us in all things, we must confess not only with the mouth and believe with the heart this truth, but we must also live in its teaching, and this in confidence of His care. The question is again do we do this? When the Lord leads your boyfriend or girlfriend to leave you behind, when the Lord is pleased to take your infant to glory before he or she is born, when you have a child that is severely handicapped to care for, when you lose your job and have tuition bills to pay and food to put upon the table, when you are informed of cancer that will destroy your body, do we confess that for all things there is a season and purpose? A season and purpose that serves the perfect will of God for us. Do we hear the Psalmist, when he says "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee" (Psalm 9:10)? Sing Psalter 17.

September 24 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1, James 1:1-7

As children of God we do indeed confess that there is a time and purpose for all things in our life. This is not easy from our point of view, for it is difficult to understand the purpose of God for us when things take place that cast us into severe trials. And yet by the grace of God we know that the Sovereign God Who loves us, sends all things upon our path. Thus by God's grace we can understand and believe that we may count it all joy when we fall into diverse trials (James 1:2). Thus the Word leads us to begin each day with the conviction that we may place our way consciously in the hands of our God, and know all things are well. We may say with the Psalmist, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23-24). Sing Psalter 203.

September 25 Read James 4:6-8

We will close our meditations this month by reflecting upon the way we experience the comfort of trusting and waiting upon Jehovah. We will consider who shall experience the great comfort of knowing God sends all things for our salvation. In James 4:6 we read that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. The comfort and peace of soul we have been talking about is not for the proud. This is a warning to us, for so often we can be proud, of which pride we must repent. For God says clearly in our text that God resists the proud. Yet the text in James teaches us that there is grace given to the humble. By grace may we strive after this humility in all of our life. Sing Psalter 228.

September 26 Read James 4:6-8, Ephesians 2:8-10

Many times we as Protestant Reformed young people and older children of God have spoken of and had expounded unto us the grace of God as a most precious gift of our God. And it is, and we do not grow tired of hearing about the amazing grace of God towards us. Grace is defined, and scripturally so, as undeserved favor, or unmerited favor of God in Christ shown to the people of God. In the Old Testament times we read at the time of the destruction of the first world that, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." And it meant salvation for Noah and the church of all ages, as on the basis of God's eternal love the church was saved and Christ continued to come. This same grace that saves is the portion of the humble and by God's mercy is our portion. Sing Psalter 166.

September 27 Read James 4:6-8, Eph. 2:8-10, Acts 15:11

As we implied in the last meditation, grace is not given to us based upon our merit or goodness. We thank God for that, for we are weak and all too often fall into the paths of sin. Our worthiness of receiving this grace is non-existent. Is this not your confession? We are sinners, but when by grace we see this then we have the assurance also that grace is the gift of God, and is not of ourselves. But rather we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. We may walk as children of God and in true humility because God is pleased to make us His in Christ, and He delivers us from our sin to be a Father unto us. Receiving grace of God we are saved, for in the many references in the Bible to the term grace, it is always used as saving. Thus we read, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (Acts 15:11). Hallelujah! Sing Psalter 30.

September 28 Read James 4:6-8, Proverbs 3:34

The precious grace of God given His people in Christ saves and does so without exception. What a blessed truth for the elect sinner. When I am in this life, how I must hear this word, for sin is my constant enemy. This grace that saves according to our text in James is not for all men, nor intended for all men. The proud shall not receive it. The proud man is natural man, and in a sense we are all proud. So many times way too proud, sinfully proud. Of this we must repent and shall by His grace. However, those that live and die in their pride shall only taste the wrath of God. Our text teaches us that God resisteth the proud. This is the same truth we read in Proverbs 3:34, speaking of God the writer points out that, "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but giveth grace unto the lowly." Those who walk in pride of needs are scorners of God and His people. May we have grace to turn from this evil sin. Sing Psalter 69.

September 29 Read James 4:6-8, I Peter 5:5

God gives grace to the humble! And this abundantly, sufficient for all of our trials and life. The humble are not such of themselves, but are those made humble by the testimony of our Lord's Word. To be humble is to acknowledge we have nothing of ourselves, but that we are dead in sin and trespass. It is to know and confess that we are but dead sinners and to look completely away from ourselves to the God of all grace for salvation. This also becomes evident in our lives as we take heed of the Holy writer's words in I Peter 5:5 and submit to our elders and to one another, being clothed with true humility. This is the precious gift of God and the reason also that He leads us through the severest way of trials often while we dwell here as pilgrims and strangers. For the humble are those called of God and as He has called us unto eternal glory, we have the assurance we shall obtain it after we have suffered a while, that we may be made ready for it (I Peter 5:10). Sing Psalter 111.

September 30 Read James 4:6-8

The rich blessing of grace is multiplied unto the forgiven and repentant sinner. Our text emphasizes this when it says, "But he giveth more grace." There is grace for grace, to those God quickens, to them He gives grace for grace, as they are made low by the Word, He lifts them up to serve Him and to worship Him aright. There is a divine influence upon the heart of the elect sinner that leads His children to humble themselves before their God and to give alone all praise to His Name. This affects all of our lives so that strife is driven out of our lives and the selfish thoughts are cast away, and we love one another in the Lord and strive together to serve the living God. Receiving the grace of God we shall resist the Devil, and shall fight the battle of faith, and we shall be more than conquerors through Christ Jesus. There is peace as God draws near unto us! Sing Psalter 221.

2003 Young People's Convention Discussion Outlines

Is It Cool to Be a Christian?

by Rev. Charles Terpstra

I. Introduction

- A. For some time now there has been a popular trend relating to the way in which modern Christians display their faith and advertise Jesus to the world.
 - 1. That is by making use of some of the means of contemporary (“pop”) culture.
 - a. Walk into any Christian bookstore and you will find the merchandise that can be used to witness of one's Christianity and make Jesus popular. Everything from T-shirts and baseball caps with catchy phrases on them (“Jesus, He's the Real Thing”—using the Coca-cola colors and theme), to bumper stickers and coffee mugs (Remember the popular wrist bands “WWJD?”
 - b. You have probably seen these items worn and displayed by fellow Christians at school, etc. And perhaps you have used these things yourselves, or at least wondered if you ought to.
 - 2. One of the most popular forms of this “witnessing” is CCM—Contemporary Christian Music.”
 - a. An entire type of “music” has been developed by Christian “artists,” who use all the modern forms of music found in the world—rock, alternative, rap, country, etc.—in order to promote Jesus and Christian faith and “values.”
 - b. Many Christian young people listen to such music and attend the concerts of such “musicians,” inviting their friends and schoolmates to listen and learn about Christ and the Christian religion.

B. By means of this trend it is now “cool” to be a Christian.

- 1. Young people are not ashamed of their faith and their Savior.
 - a. They do not hide Jesus but openly advertise their faith in Him, since these means make them look like and popular with the world.
 - b. Such openness can make us look weak in our faith and poor in our witness. We feel guilty and ashamed if we do not show our faith in these ways. We feel pressure and wonder if we ought to get “with it.”
- 2. But our Reformed and biblical “antennae” indicate that something is wrong here.
 - a. We are uneasy about using these means, and raise questions about whether or not it is valid and proper to witness in this way.
 - b. Hence the main question we want to face: Is it really cool to be a Christian? What do YOU think? How would YOU answer this question? And why?

II. Let's face these specific questions together.

- A. First of all consider these questions critical of this trend:
 - 1. What do you see wrong in the above-mentioned means of promoting one's faith?
 - a. Is the use of popular culture to promote Christianity always wrong? Is this simply worldliness or world conformity? Cf. Romans 12:1, 2.

-
- (1) How do we know which means are good and which are bad?
 - (2) Where do we draw the line?
 - (3) Does Christ ever want us to try to make Him and our faith in Him “popular?” Cf. Matt. 16:24ff, John 6:60ff.
 - (4) Do you see any evidence in the New Testament that the early Christians used popular forms of their culture to communicate the gospel and reach the lost?
- b. The area of so-called contemporary Christian music is a highly sensitive one, because this type of music is so popular and so appealing. But be objective.
- (1) What do you see wrong with this type of music? Why?
 - (2) Can we distinguish different kinds within this class? I.e., types that are legitimate and others that are not?
 - (3) Is it true as M. McLuhan said that “the medium is the message?” In other words, that the very form of music already communicates something bad?
- c. What biblical principles reveal the errors involved in these matters?
- (1) Does Jeroboam’s use of the golden calves apply to these modern means? If so, how?
 - (2) Does the antithesis speak to this (“in the world but not of the world”)? Cf. II Cor. 6:14ff, Eph. 5:8ff, I John 2:15-17 (you may find other passages!).
 - (3) Does the principle of Christian liberty also apply to these things? Cf. Rom. 14.
2. What are some of the practical consequences of using popular culture to advance Jesus and the Christian faith?
 - a. Do these means make Christ “cheap” and “trivial?” How so?
 - b. Do these things in fact hide the true Jesus and the true gospel? How so?
 - c. Will the use of such means make “worldly” Christians? Will they make anyone a Christian?
 - d. Do such popular means say something negative about you as a Christian if you use them? E.g., that we are proud, obnoxious, insensitive, etc.?
- B. Secondly, now consider these questions that guide us in a positive direction:
1. What are proper ways to witness of our faith and bring the gospel to those about us?
 - a. Is it more our life and walk that must display Christ, or external “tools?”
 - b. Cf. Matt. 5:13-16; Gal. 5:22-24; Acts 8:4; 11:19; I Peter 3:15, 16.
 2. How can we use good Christian music as a means to show forth Christ to those about us?
 - a. Are biblically-sound psalms and hymns really effective in communicating the gospel in our modern age?
 - b. Are you embarrassed by such music, or would you invite a friend to one of our services or to a singspiration or a good program?
 3. Now a personal question: Are you sure of your faith in Christ, so that you are not ashamed of Him but determined to live unto Him and witness of Him on a daily basis? ❖

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Dressing Modestly

by Rev. Garrett Eriks

INTRODUCTION

Why do you pick out and buy the clothes that you wear? When you picked out a bathing suit this spring,

why did you pick one and not another? Did you pick one because of how it makes your body look or because you

were more concerned about modesty? Does the way you dress reflect at all that you are a Christian? How?

These are some of the questions we face when we discuss dress from Scripture. Some might wonder if the area of clothing falls outside of the Christian life or God's Word. God's Word does have much to say about how we clothe ourselves. Scripture does not give to us a list of do's and don'ts as far as dress is concerned, but Scripture does give us clear principles that we must put into practice. In this discussion, we are going to look at these principles and apply them.

At the convention, the young men and young women will be split up to discuss this topic.

I. The scriptural idea of modesty, clothing, and nakedness.

A. True modesty is rooted in properly knowing ourselves in relationship to God and then outwardly reflecting this in humility and purity out of love for Christ rather than self-glorification.

1. True modesty is set forth in I Timothy 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety..."

a. Modesty is an issue of the heart.

1) Only those who love God and want to obey Him will be concerned with modesty.

2) The purity and humility of a regenerated heart will then express itself outwardly in dress that is modest.

3) Modesty knows nothing of self-glorification in dress (dressing to impress others or to draw attention to self).

b. Modesty is an issue of Christian character so that our dress should make the same confession we do.

c. Modesty also has to do with self-control, decency, and chastity.

2. The words of Paul in I Timothy 2:9 apply to more than wearing luxurious, expensive, and immodest clothing when the church gathers for worship.

a. This is definitely an important part of what Paul is saying here so that the dress of the women does not lead the men of the church to sin.

b. Paul is forbidding the excess and sensuality.

c. The woman who dresses modestly does not call attention to herself in a wrong way.

1) Her dress will not say, "Sex, pride, and money."

2) Her dress will say, "Purity, humility, modesty."

d. The same is true for the men of the church.

3. Questions for discussion:

a. Is dress something that God's Word speaks about or are we left to ourselves to determine how to dress?

b. May we dress (regular clothes, swimsuits, etc.) to call attention to us or parts of our bodies?

c. Why do you choose the clothes you buy and wear? To impress the opposite sex or to glorify God by dressing modestly?

B. When God clothed Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21, God covered their bodies and not just the private parts of their bodies.

1. God created Adam and Eve naked in the Garden of Eden and they were not ashamed.

a. Although Adam and Eve were naked, they did not feel public humiliation because God created this good.

1) But this changed when Adam and Eve fell into sin.

2) When sin entered, shame entered into the picture, which is evident from the fact that Adam and Eve tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves after they sinned.

b. As a result of their fall into sin, God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skins.

1) This was a beautiful type of God's grace and mercy.

a) Those bloody skins were a picture that pointed to the blood of Jesus Christ as the only salvation from their sins.

b) The work of Adam and Eve in covering their loins with leaves was not acceptable in God's sight.

c) They needed the covering that the Lord provided.

2. We see also in this history that God covered Adam and Eve with "coats."

a. Throughout the Old Testament, this word refers to a robe-like garment.

1) It usually had long sleeves and extended from the neck to the ankles.

2) The simplest robe had no sleeves, but still extended from the neck to the knees.

b. It is important for us to remember that God did not cover their private parts, but their *bodies*.

1) God set this standard for modesty.

2) When we decide what clothes to buy and what clothes to wear, we must do this according to the standard of God's Word: neck to knee.

3. Questions for discussion:

- a. After hearing how God clothed Adam and Eve, what is your response to this?
- b. Look up Revelation 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14. Does how we will be clothed in heaven, as John sees this in a vision, have anything to say about how we should dress today?
- c. If clothing is to cover our bodies from neck to knees, what does this mean for swimwear?

C. Scripture forbids nakedness.

1. There is shame in nakedness.

- a. Nakedness is the uncovering of private parts of the body, but is not limited to this.

- 1) Peter was naked in John 21:7 simply because he did not have his outer robe on, but only his undergarment—he was not without any clothes.

- a) It was not wrong for him to be in this garment while laboring with fishermen.

- b) But he was naked if he was in the presence of the Lord that way.

- 2) Nakedness is more than having no clothes on, but even to expose what should be covered.

- b. Isaiah 47:3, “Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen.”

2. Nakedness was also part of pagan religion.

- a. Slaves and athletes constantly went without clothing.

- b. A naked body was common in paganism, but God’s people covered their bodies in public.

3. Questions for discussion:

- a. How do we evaluate the trend today of having underwear showing?

- b. Should you wear an item of clothing to the beach that you would be sent home from school or church for wearing?

II. Another principle we must discuss is that God demands spiritual separation from the world.

A. The fashions created by the designers of this world are not based on the Word of God.

1. There is much evidence to support the premise that designers used swimwear to change the world’s perceptions of modesty and immodesty.

- a. As swimming and beaches grew in popularity, designers saw a need for clothing that would allow greater movement for the body.

- 1) This required uncovering the body.

- 2) Early swimsuits looked awkward because designers still tried to uphold the modesty of society yet they needed to be practical for swimming.

- 3) Designers then began to create fashionable swimwear that revealed and aroused.

- b. There are numerous books on the fashion industry, which support these claims.

2. Now it is socially acceptable to wear swimsuits that are skimpier than most underwear.

- a. Now the fashion world says to us: “This is what is fashionable to wear.”

- b. Now the human body is on display in swimwear and in normal everyday clothes (today what is in is more skin. Skin is on display in the world).

- 1) The fashion industry does not believe that the purpose of clothing is to cover the body, but the purpose of clothing is sexual attraction.

- 2) This is promoted by the world with all of its advertising and especially by Hollywood.

B. God demands that also in our dress we be different from the world.

1. God warns us against worldliness. Read these passages: I John 2:15, I Peter 1:13-16.

2. God also says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

- a. The Heidelberg Catechism states in Lord’s Day 41 that God forbids all “unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.”

- b. Men and women must not be enticing each other to adultery by what they wear.

- 1) Some might say, “But I don’t try to tempt or entice.”

- 2) But if you wear clothing that is not modest you do tempt whether that is your intention or not.

- c. In its explanation of the 7th commandment, the Westminster Assembly’s Larger Catechism says that God demands “modesty in apparel.”

3. We must examine what we wear and our motives according to the Word of God.

C. Questions for discussion:

1. What does the clothing or swimsuit you wear say about you in your relationship with God?

2. How can your dress and specifically swimwear show that you are different from the world?

III. Positive Principles.

A. I Corinthians 6:20: “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

1. The world says, "This is my body and I will do what I want with it."
2. Scripture teaches that these bodies are not ours, but they are God's.
 - a. You are bought with a price, the blood of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Therefore, your body belongs to Him.
3. We must adorn these bodies remembering this is blood-bought property.
- B. Let us strive to glorify God and not ourselves in our dress.
 1. Because we love God so much let us return to modesty in our dress.
 2. Let us do this to the glory of God (I Corinthians 10:31).

- C. Questions for discussion:
 1. Young men, what kind of a young woman are you trying to attract with the way you dress your body?
 2. Young women, what kind of young man are you trying to attract with the way you dress your body?



(If you are interested in doing more reading on this subject, there is a pamphlet that addresses the issue titled, Christian Modesty and the Public Undressing of America, by Jeff Pollard. It is published by The Vision Forum, Inc., which you can contact at www.visionforum.com or 1-800-440-0022.)

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Taming the Tongue

I. In relation to our God

- A. What are God's purposes in us using our tongues?
 1. I Corinthians 1:18, Acts 8:12
 2. Psalm 19:14, Psalm 106:1, Ephesians 4:15
 3. Others?
- B. What is meant in Ecclesiastes 5:2, 3?
 1. What does it mean to be rash with the tongue?
 2. Are all the words we say uttered before God? When are/aren't they?
 3. Why must our words before God be few?
 4. According to verse 3, why else must we limit our words?
 5. Proverbs 17:28

II. In relation to ourselves

- A. What are the reasons for the evil use of our tongue? Is there a root cause?
- B. What effect does the tongue have on our entire body?

III. In relation to others

- A. How do we offend with the tongue? What is being double-tongued?
- B. What problems does the tongue cause in the family?
- C. What problems does the tongue cause with our friends in the church?
- D. What problems does the tongue cause as we live among those of the world?
- E. How can our speech benefit others?
 1. II Corinthians 1:4
 2. Others?

IV. Conclusions

- A. What is our motivation for controlling the tongue?
- B. What is the only possible way our tongues can be controlled? ❖

Acknowledgement is given to Rev. Haak from whom some questions were gleaned in his Studies in James booklet.

Study Proverbs This Society Season

Are you looking for a Bible study guideline for your Young People Society this year? Here is an idea for you. Study Proverbs using the guidelines and questions that we plan to publish each month. One of our ministers prepared this for his Young People's group. Some of the societies have used this before and it seems to have gone well. What follows are the first four study guides along with an introduction explaining how they are intended to be used. May the Lord bless your society this season.

Introduction

We will now start studying the book of Proverbs, but in a different way than you may be used to. We plan to take texts that speak about the same subject, and study them all together. This is the way we will do it:

1. Each person will be asked to read one of the texts listed, and then make some comments about the text. We will go around the room, so that each person takes a turn, and each person gets used to speaking about God's word.

2. There will be questions at the end of each list of texts that all of the young people will be expected to speak about.

3. The leader prays that you will find profit from this study of God's word, and grow as young saints in God's church.

4. I will hand out the followings weeks discussion paper at each meeting so that you can prepare for the next meeting. If we need to we will discuss the same topic for two weeks.

5. The topics for discussion will be: 1) *Reverence for God*, 2) *Study of God's Word*, 3) *Rebuke and Correction*, 4) *Anger*, 5) *Warnings about Drinking*, 6) *The Strange Woman*, 7) *Greed and Covetousness*, 8) *Hatred*, 9) *The Hateful Talebearer* (gossip), 10) *Prayer*, 11) *Friendship*, 12) *Pride*, 13) *Stewardship*, 14) *Work Habits*, 15) *Christ in Proverbs*, 16) *Self-control*, 17) *Rebuking your Neighbor*, 18) *Respect of our Parents*, and 19) *Review*.

Study for Week #1:

Reverence for God

Texts from Proverbs: 1:7; 2:1-5; 3:7, 8; 8:13; 9:10, 11; 10:27; 14:2; 14:26, 27; 15:16; 15:33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 24:21; 28:14; 31:30.

Discussion questions: (Try to look at these texts as you think of how to answer the questions.)

1. What *is* reverence for God?
2. How will reverence for God *show* in the life of young people?
3. How does Proverbs say that we "*find*" the fear of the Lord?
4. What is it that *hinders* young people from really fearing God?
5. What can young people do to help each other to *want* to reverence God?

Study for Week #2:

Study of God's Word

Texts from Proverbs: 3:1-4; 4:2; 4:20-22; 6:23; 7:2, 3; 8:32, 33; 10:14; 13:13; 19:20, 21; 22:17, 18; 28:5; 28:9; 30:5.

Discussion questions: (Try to look at these texts as you think of how to answer the questions.)

1. What is the best way to study the word?
2. How can YPS be an aid to our study of God's word?
3. What can we do to help each other prepare for YPS? Are there other ways to conduct YPS that would help us study the word in a more interesting and profitable way?

4. What kind of Bible reading do you do? When? How much each time?
5. Discuss how to begin the *habit* of Bible reading?
6. Should we have *posters* of texts on the walls in our rooms (Proverbs 7:3)?
7. What rewards does God promise to those who study his word? Are you interested?

Study for Week #3: Rebuke and Correction

Texts from Proverbs: 1:20, 23; 1:29-32; 3:11, 12; 6:23; 9:8; 10:17; 11:12; 12:1; 13:1; 13:13; 13:18; 13:24; 15:5; 15:10; 15:31, 32; 17:10; 19:25; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 25:12; 27:5; 28:9; 28:23; 29:1; 29:15.

Discussion questions: (Try to look at these texts as you think of how to answer the questions.)

1. What *is* rebuke or reproof?
2. Proverbs is written for young people especially (see the repeated phrase that Solomon uses, “my son...”). Why do young people need *so many calls* to hear reproof?
3. How can you tell a wise young person from a foolish one, even though both are sinful? (Answer in terms of reproof and rebuke!)
4. Is it *possible* for young people to reprove each other? (Look up Romans 15:14.)
5. What are *some of the risks* we take when we rebuke a friend? (See 9:8, 15:12.)

6. Why is it *so* hard to hear reproof? (See 15:10.)
7. What are the *results* of hearing or refusing to hear rebuke? (See 1:29ff; 13:13, 18; 15:10; 28:9; 29:1; and 9:8; 28:3!)

Study for Week #4: Anger

Texts from Proverbs: 14:17; 14:29; 15:1; 15:18; 16:14; 16:32; 19:11; 19:19; 21:19; 21:24; 22:24; 27:3; 27:4; 29:22; 30:33.

Discussion questions to help “the word of Christ dwell in you richly:”

1. How would *you* explain what anger is? Do different people have different views of what defines anger? Do different backgrounds and families affect that?
2. How does the Bible define anger?
3. Is *all* anger wrong? (See Eph. 4:26, 27.) What does Proverbs mean when it warns about anger?
4. *What kinds of things* may Christians be angry about?
5. How should a Christian *express* his anger?
6. What are the real *dangers* with respect to anger?
7. What are the advantages of “deferring” anger?
8. How should a Christian *handle* an angry person? What are some difficulties in this?
9. What does a Christian have to do to “rule his own spirit” (16:32)? ❖

More Mailing Volunteers Needed

The *Beacon Lights* is in need of a few more volunteers willing to help one night per month with the mailing of the magazine. Our new mailers, Bill and Francine Leep, would like to have a few volunteers willing to help label and package the issues for mailing. Those, in the Grand Rapids area and ideally in the Hudsonville, Holland, Zeeland area, willing to help please call either the Leeps at 895-6251 or Aaron Cleveland at 667-4053.

George M. Ophoff (10)

The Kind of Man He Was

by Prof. Herman Hanko

George Ophoff was ordained into the ministry on January 26, 1922, just on day after his 31st birthday. He was ordained pastor in an evening service in the Hope Christian Reformed Church. The congregation had been in existence since 1916—somewhat less than six years. During this period the congregation had been supplied by classical appointments from Classis Grand Rapids West, as well as students and professors from the Seminary. But in all these years the congregation had never had a pastor of its own.

The congregation was a small rural church. At the time Rev. Ophoff took over the work of shepherding this flock, it numbered between thirty and thirty-five families. It had grown to this number from the original seven families at the time of organization. The members were farmers from the area for the most part, and had always been members of other Christian Reformed Churches. It was not a “missionary” congregation.

The church building was an old one-room school house located where Riverbend Public School now stands on Kenowa Avenue at the end of Riverbend Drive. It had a hitching rail on which to tie horses, for those who could not walk took horse and buggy. It had a shed where horses could be tethered and fed some hay if the weather was bad. And it had a pot-bellied stove which heated the interior in cold winter months.

I remember a similar stove in the small catechism room in what was formerly our Oak Lawn Church; and, in fact, one of the houses we lived in while in Oak Lawn was heated by the same type of stove standing in the middle of what we would probably call the dining room. These stoves did not do too good a job of circulating the heat. Anywhere from five feet and upwards from them,

the room was very cold. Alongside of them it was so hot that one side of a person fried while the other side froze. It was not a comfortable situation.

For Rev. Ophoff it was the beginning of a life’s work. Perhaps most of his early life he had looked forward to this moment. It is certain that he had never seriously considered any other vocation. His heart had been set on the ministry for years. There had been many hardships and interruptions of his schooling along the way. There had been times when the goal seemed unreachable and years when he wondered whether the Lord had really called him to this task. But now the time had come to assume his labors as a pastor of one flock in the sheepfold of Christ.

However, the ways of God are far beyond our understanding. In fact, even when we look back over the years of our own life or over the years of the life of another whom we love and have come to know, although we can see indications which clearly show the Lord’s purpose in bringing certain events to pass, we can only see these things dimly. There is a wisdom in our lives which is past finding out. Only when we are finally in glory, will we be able to see the total perfection of God’s way with us. Asaph confessed in Psalm 73: “Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel....” But for Asaph, as for all of us, this is a matter of faith, not of sight. We sing: “All that I am, I owe to Thee; Thy wisdom, Lord, has fashioned me....” and, “My life in all its perfect plan was ordered ere my days began.” We know with certainty that this is true. But the mystery of the ways in which God leads us remains beyond our understanding as long as we are in this world where we see through a glass darkly.

We have tried to show, in the articles which have preceded this one, how Rev. Ophoff's early life, training, and experiences were used by God to prepare him for his life's work. But our understanding of these things is always very limited and imperfect. There are times in our lives when, looking back upon a particularly unusual experience, we can say: "I see why the Lord led me along this way." But even then we see only in part. For the most part, however, the wisdom of God is hidden from us. Looking back over another's life, this is more than ever true.

Rev. Ophoff himself could hardly have had any idea of the many ways God had shaped and formed him for the work he was called to do. He was at the very beginning of his life's work. He had attained a goal for which he had long labored. But he had no idea what the future had in store for him. If he could have known he would have trembled. He could not have seen the terrible struggle of 1924, the whole new direction the Lord would give to his life as his labors became more and more concentrated in the work of the Seminary, the troubles that would multiply in the years preceding the schism of 1953. He could not have known the bone-wearying hours of incessant labors as day and night he worked for the cause of the Church—labors which in the end left him a broken man. He could not have predicted the friends which turned against him, the bitter hatred which was hurled repeatedly in his direction, the slander of malice manifested in those who loved not the truth.

One thing is sure: when he took up his work in the peace and quiet of a small rural church far from struggle and strife, this too was really part of the preparation which the Lord would use for a far greater work. Rev. Ophoff was not, in the first place, a pastor. He would be many things. He would have work to do which is of greatest importance in the history books which God keeps in heaven. But this work was not the pastoral ministry. He was not appointed to the ministry for this. He was not even ideally suited to this work. His early years in Hope were a hiatus, a brief lull before the real work would begin. At the time Rev. Ophoff thought that the pastoral ministry was indeed his calling, but God knew better.

We have to look at his years in Hope Christian Reformed Church from that viewpoint. If we do not, we shall fail to understand the unique place God gave him in the Church and the unique work he was called to do.

I have made these introductory remarks because the time has come to say something about the kind of man Rev. Ophoff was. I take on this part of the task with a

great deal of hesitation. There are various reasons for this. I might, for example, mention the fact that I knew Rev. Ophoff personally only after I had begun my studies in the Seminary in the Fall of 1952. Prior to this I had seen him only from a very great distance. But Rev. Ophoff had been ordained over twenty-six years before this. He had changed in many respects, for change is foreign to no man, and with age comes a certain mellowing.

I might mention as reason for my hesitation that Rev. Ophoff had "warts." Warts have to be painted in the portrait. But can you appreciate the difficulty of this? When one is painting the portrait of one whom you deeply love, it is hard to force the hand to brush those warts in. Love would rather leave them out. But even this is not all. Can one ever really be sure that he gets the warts right? Can he be sure that they are not too large? Or, too small? Or, in the wrong place? Or, of the wrong kind? That is, can one ever be sure he really knows someone else? Can this ever be true even of one whom we know most intimately? Can a husband ever be sure he really knows his wife? That if he were to describe her so that others would know what she is like, he would do it just right?

The task is really an impossible one. Yet, an attempt has to be made. It has to be made because if our readers are to get to know this stalwart and courageous warrior in the battle of faith, they have got to know more than a vague and ill-defined skeleton. They have got to know a man of flesh and blood. And here is the difficult part. There are, I think, people who knew Rev. Ophoff better than I knew him, who knew him longer than I knew him, and who are going to say after this is all written: "This is not quite the Ophoff that I knew. He really wasn't quite that way. He was somehow different from that." And no doubt some will say that we do him injustice in these articles, while others will say that we give him more credit than he deserves.

But God used a particular kind of man for a particular work and a particular calling—a work and calling which could have been done by no other. We cannot see this in all its beauty as God shapes and molds, uses and works through human instruments; but what we can see we must acknowledge, for it is the work of our God to Whom belongs all our praise. ❖

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

2003 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention

Date: August 14-19, 2003

Location: Estes Park, Colorado

Host: Loveland Protestant Reformed Church

Theme: "Surrounded by God"

Theme Text: Psalm 125: 1 & 2

Theme Song: Psalter #354

Speakers:

Prof. Russell Dykstra "God is Our Protector"

Rev. Doug Kuiper "The Character and Responsibility of God's People"

Rev. Ron Hanko "The Preservation of God's People"

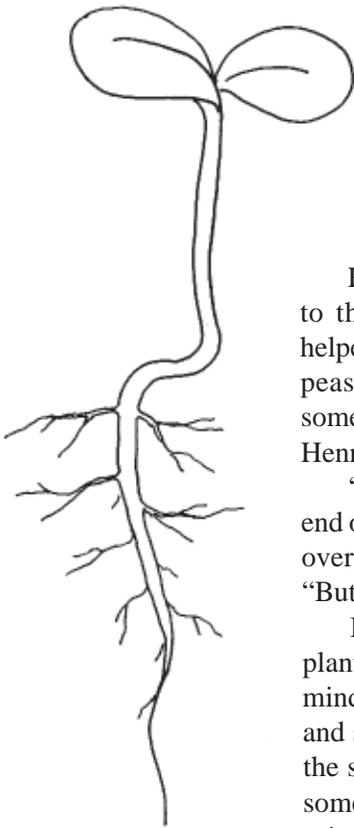
We are now accepting applications
for those interested in chaperoning.

Look for more information
regarding this years convention at
www.prca.org

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer



Plantings

Henry followed his father to the garden. Last week he helped his father plant a row of peas. Now they would plant some corn and beans together. Henry held the hoe and seeds.

"Let's plant the corn on this end of the garden and the beans over there," directed his father. "But first, let's check the peas."

It had rained since they had planted them, but Henry didn't mind the mud. He set the hoe and seeds down and walked in the softened earth. "Hey, I see some green!" Henry was surprised.

"Yes, it's always a wonder, isn't it? We put those dead, dry, shriveled seeds into the ground, and now here are these living, little plants. Look, some are just pushing through the soil."

Henry bent down to look at one of them more closely, but his father took it out of the ground and handed it to Henry. "Dad, you pulled it out!"

"Don't worry, they have to be thinned anyway. See, look at how the root grows down even as the stem and leaves grow up."

Henry held the tiny plant in his hand and examined it closely. Then he looked at all the grass, plants, bushes and trees that were growing around the garden. "They all started like this?"

Henry's father nodded. "God said, 'Trees,' and there were trees. God said, 'Peas,' and there were peas. He created them all with their fruit and seeds—so they could keep being planted and grown. He gives even these little peas their life."

Henry was about to toss the seedling away when his father stopped him. "Look at that little plant," his father said, "and then look at your heart."

Henry did so and looked down at his chest. "But I can't see my heart!"

"No, but if you could, you would see life beginning there—spiritual life—just like that seedling is beginning to grow. God planted that life in you. When He regenerates the hearts of His children, it's no less a wonder than is creation."

Henry's father picked up the hoe. "Let's get those seeds in the garden while the soil is warm and moist. And we can think about all the wonders that God works too—even in us." ❖

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

Find the underlined words from Article 12 of the 3rd and 4th Heads of the Canons of Dordt in the puzzle below:

"And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture...a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead..."

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

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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Allisa Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gunnink—
Byron Center, MI
Erica Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris VanGinkle—
Doon, IA
Rosalyn Dawn, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Richard Smit—
Doon, IA
Anna Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Kortz—First, MI
Ethan Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dean Bekkering—
Georgetown, MI
Joseph Timothy, son of Rev. & Mrs. Mitchell Dick—
Grace, MI
Joshua Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dale Vink—Grandville,
MI
Chloe Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Decker—
Holland, MI
Chayce Nicholas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Cleveringa—
Hull, IA
Hope Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Brown—
Peace, IL
Troy Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Ophoff—South
Holland, IL

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:

Carmen Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Joseph Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Richard Sleda—Grace, MI
Jeff Baatenberg—Holland, MI
Ashley Griess—Loveland, CO
Lisa Poortinga—Peace, IL
Daniel Wiltjer—Peace, IL
Jamie Aalsma—Randolph, WI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Daryl Brands and Miss Cathy Daling—Holland, MI
Mr. Nathan Pastoor and Miss Ellen Zandstra—
Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Steve Westra and Miss Tonia Keizer—Hull, IA
Mr. Nathaniel Bol and Miss Rebecca Poortinga—Peace,
IL
Mr. David Vermeer and Miss Jessica Hanko—Peace, IL
Mr. Tim Bleyenbergh and Miss Kate Wassink—Trinity, MI