

Beacon Lights

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*“He is in the way of life that
keepeth instruction: but he that
refuseth reproof erreth.”*

Proverbs 10:17

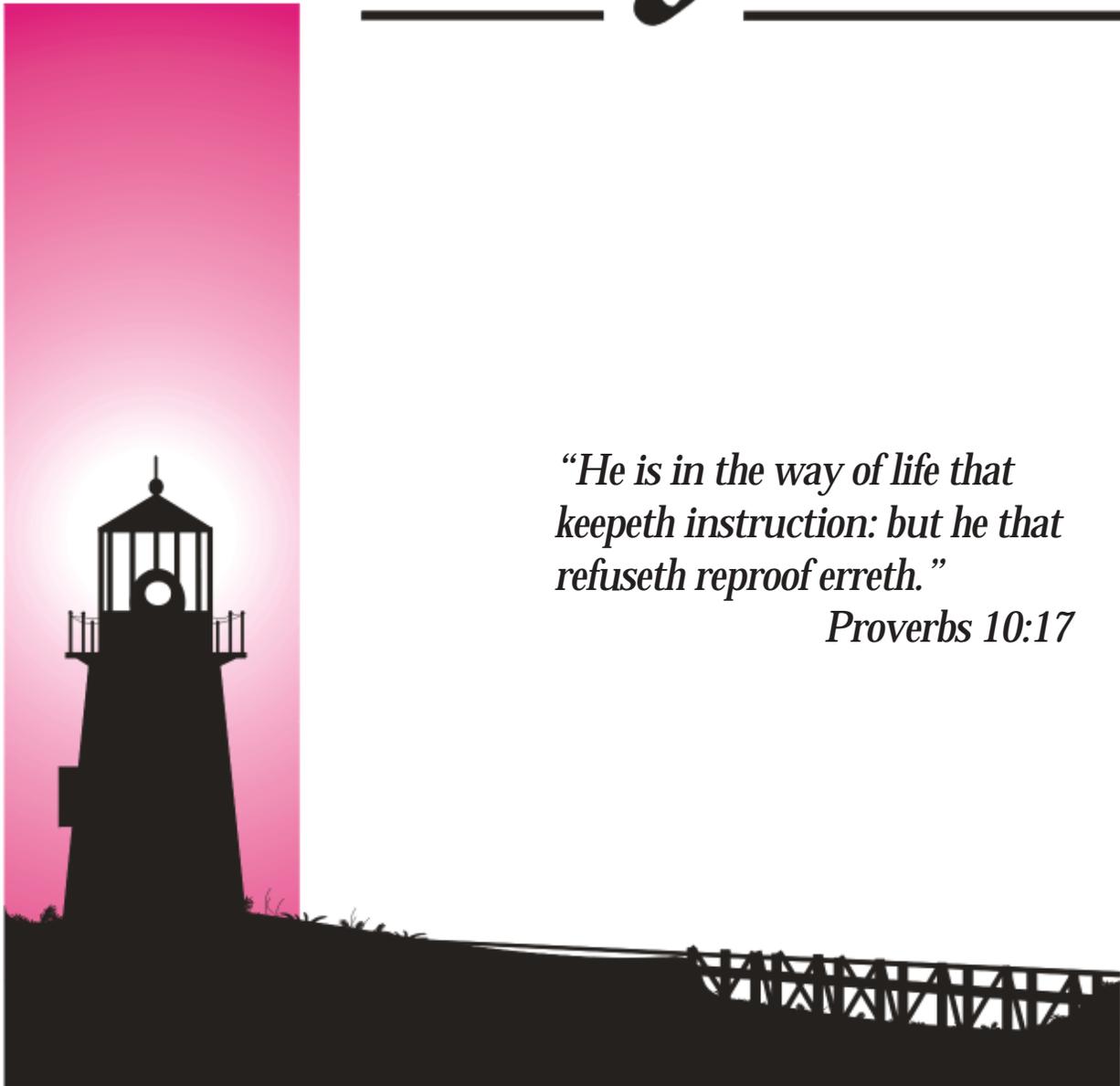


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Reverend

by Rev. Angus Stewart



Several readers have inquired about the propriety of using the title “Reverend” of ministers. One cited Psalm 111:9, which says of God: “holy and reverend is his name.” There are two reasons why this verse cannot be used against calling ministers “Reverend.” First, if “Reverend” cannot be applied to man in any sense, neither can “holy,” for the text says, “*holy* and reverend is his name.” But we know that Christians are frequently called saints (lit. “holy ones”) in the Bible (e.g., Col. 1:2). Second, the Hebrew word translated “reverend” is used of people (rightly) fearing a man: “all the people greatly feared [*revered*] the Lord and *Samuel*” (I Sam. 12:18; cf. Prov. 24:21).

Another reader asks, “Does the title ‘Rev.’ mean a revered person or a reverent person?” Although a minister must be reverent (i.e. “show reverence” to God), the title “Reverend” indicates that he is a revered person, one “deserving reverence” of man.

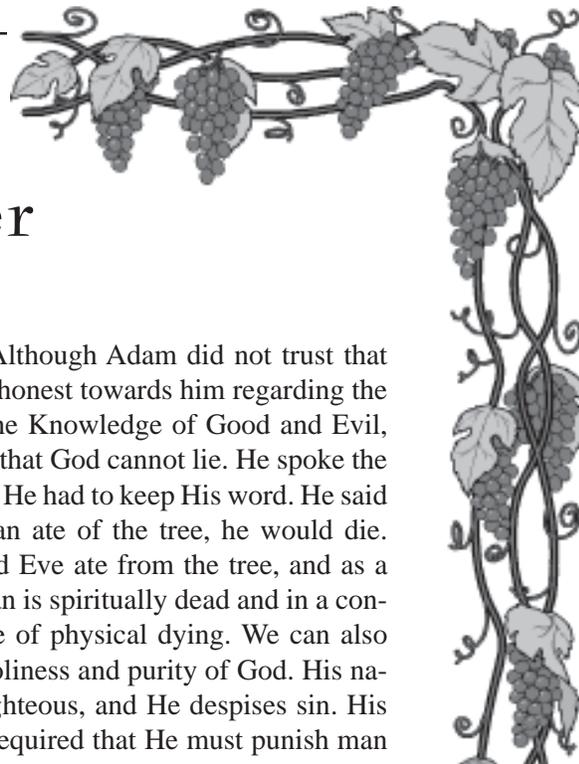
The Scriptures tell us that the ascended Christ gives pastors and teachers to His church (Eph. 4:11; Jer. 3:15) as His ambassadors (II Cor. 5:20), to be His watchmen (Eze. 3:17) and angels (i.e. messengers) of God (Rev. 2:1). These men are ordained (I Tim. 4:14) to this special “office” (I Tim. 3:1). Under Christ, ministers (and ruling elders) administer the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). Think of the importance of the office of minister! For “how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

Thus a faithful minister is worthy of reverence. We must not only “obey” and “submit” to (teaching and ruling) elders (Heb. 13:17), but we must also “hold such in reputation” (Phil. 2:29), reckon them “worthy of double honor” (I Tim. 5:17) and “esteem them very highly in love” (I Thess. 5:13).

This points us to the foundational truth that *God has created a world in which those in places of authority in family, church, state and business are to be honored* (cf. the fifth commandment). Children, wives, citizens and employees are to reverence their parents, husbands, civil rulers and employers respectively (Heb. 12:9; Eph. 5:33; Rom. 13:7; I Peter 2:18). Thus we give people their titles: Father, Prof., your Majesty, Prime Minister, Sir, Detective Inspector, Dr., etc. In a similar way, we believe it entirely appropriate to refer to the minister of God’s Word as “Reverend.” This is fitting since Scripture teaches that the *Triune God* has appointed ministers (and ruling elders and deacons) in his church and that these men must be “esteem[ed] ... very highly in love *for their work’s sake*” (I Thess. 5:13). And remember, in honoring church officebearers, we honor Christ, the head of the church. ❖

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Rev. Stewart is a minister of the Protestant Reformed Churches, presently working in Northern Ireland. This editorial was originally published in the Covenant Reformed News (October 2002, vol. 9, issue 6).



Bible Paper

by Lisa Baldwin

The Scripture principally teaches what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man. We are able to see this truth even in the first few books of the Bible. When we read Scripture, we should be able to see what the people in the Bible believed about God and what God required of them. Yet, this is not all that we should glean when we study the Word of God. When we read the Bible, we should also be able to apply these truths to our own lives. This paper will examine how these two truths are revealed in the Scripture from the Creation through the Tower of Babel.

In Genesis One and Two, God created man and woman. In some ways, Adam and Eve knew God better than we do today because they walked and talked with God. Before the fall, Adam and Eve should have known that God cannot lie, and they should have trusted Him. They should have known that He would not lie to them about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead, they believed in the lies told by Satan. This disobedience was actually a result of their trust in themselves. They believed that they could be sovereign, and that they could be gods. Yet, they learned through their sin the perfection of God. They knew that they could no longer be in His presence as they had destroyed the perfect fellowship they had with God, and they hid themselves. Although they should have known before the fall to trust God, they did not. As a result, man fell, and created the separation between man and God.

Before the fall, man still had the duty to work. Man was made to work, and even in a state of perfection, Adam's duty was to work. He was put into the garden to tend it and cultivate it. God brought the animals to him to name and classify. When God created man, He gave creation mandates. He commanded Adam to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth, and to have dominion over the animals in the earth. Beyond these physical duties, the Lord required another moral duty. Adam and Eve were not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Man was created with duties towards God, and that has not changed for us today.

Through the story of the Creation and the fall of Adam, people today are able to learn about the character

of God. Although Adam did not trust that God was honest towards him regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we know that God cannot lie. He spoke the truth, and He had to keep His word. He said that if man ate of the tree, he would die. Adam and Eve ate from the tree, and as a result, man is spiritually dead and in a constant state of physical dying. We can also see the holiness and purity of God. His nature is righteous, and He despises sin. His justness required that He must punish man for His sin. From the sin of Adam and God's resulting actions, we can see God's honesty, purity, and justness.

From the account of the Creation and the fall, we are able to gain insight into the duties that God required of man. Many of the requirements for Adam have not changed for us today. The creation mandates have not changed, and we are still told to be fruitful and multiply, to have dominion over the animals, and to labor. Today, man is still made to work, and the example God set of working six days a week is still applicable. One creation mandate that is greatly ignored and not observed is the observance of the Sabbath. The Lord instituted the Sabbath and we are commanded to observe it, as a duty toward God. Similar to Adam, we have moral duties, and God orders us to follow His commandments.

In the account of Noah we have an incredible example of a man who knew and who trusted in God's faithfulness. He knew that not only would God be faithful in preserving himself and his family, he knew that God would be faithful in His promise of the destruction of the world. Unlike Adam before the fall, Noah believed the warning given to him by God. He realized that God could not lie and that God would fulfill what He had promised. Noah demonstrated that he believed what God told Him because of his obedience and action.

God gave Noah many duties. He was told to build an ark of specific dimensions and properties, to gather the animals, and to bring provisions for all the animals. Not only did Noah obey God's commands, he obeyed them exactly as God had specified. Genesis 6: 22 says,

“Noah did everything just as God commanded him.” Noah did not add any modifications and he did not make his job easier by making the ark smaller or by leaving behind some animals. Instead, he worked for 100 years building the ark, and in seven days he gathered the animals together. After the flood and he was on dry land again, the first thing that he did was praise God by offering a sacrifice. He understood that it was through God’s power that he was preserved and he recognized his duty to worship God.

From Noah’s account we should recognize the absolute holiness and perfection of God. His holiness demanded that sinful man pay for his wickedness and His perfection set the standard of that payment. God’s justice demanded that the world be destroyed. God’s righteous judgment of earth is a necessary part of the history of the world, as it displays His holiness, hatred of sin, and perfect wrath against evil. We should also learn from the account of Noah that God will preserve His people. Not only is God a righteous, holy, and just God, but He is also a merciful God. No matter the circumstances, God will protect and care for His children.

Noah is an inspiring example of godly obedience. We can learn from Noah’s example that not only are we to obey God’s commands, we are to obey them exactly as He has given them to us. We should obey God’s commands even if it means being different from everyone else. We should obey God’s commands even if it means giving years of our life to obeying them. We should obey

God’s commands even if it means that we will no longer be accepted in this world. Our life should be dedicated to God’s service, and we should be willing to conform to His commandments.

Noah is also a wonderful picture of submission and praise. He submitted to God’s instruction without grumbling and complaining. He worked for 100 straight years without challenging or growing angry with God. Today, in our own lives, we can learn from Noah’s example and endeavor to obey without whining. We should obey the authorities placed over us without arguing. Noah is a wonderful example of praising God because of his immediate response upon exiting the ark. After spending a year and ten days on the ark, the first thing that Noah did was build an altar and sacrifice to God. This is an amazing example to us. Not only should we not grumble in obeying God, we should praise Him in everything.

The Old Testament is just as profitable for us as the New Testament. As it says in II Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Not only can we learn about God’s character, we can also learn what we are to do in order to glorify Him. Just from examining these two well-known Bible stories I have been able to attain a wealth of knowledge. ❖

Lisa is a tenth grade student at Covenant Day School in Charlotte, North Carolina. She wrote this essay for Bible class.

Gem of the Month

Purify Your Hearts

*The Lord commands us in His word
Our hearts to purify.
This task seems insurmountable;
I pray: O how can I
Fulfill this admonition, Lord?
I am so weak, yea, dead,
Unable to accomplish aught,
But violate instead.
Yet since He has commanded it
(I know His faithfulness)
He also will supply the means;
In mercy He will bless.*

*The feeble efforts that I make
He'll transform wondrously;
The pow' r, the willing, come from Him,
Not one bit comes from me.
I thank Him that He works within
To turn me to His ways,
That I may joy in seeking right
And render endless praise.
Lord, keep me and encourage me
Until the day I die,
To use my heart, my hands, my all,
Thy name to glorify!*

Thelma Westra

A Look at Machines Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

We have machines to wake us up, machines to cook our food, make our clothing, and shelter us. Machines take us from one place to another and carry our voices around the world. Machines surround us and even work within our bodies. Something that has so profound an impact upon our lives certainly is worthy of inspection through the spectacles of Scripture.

What is a machine? Books will tell us that there are six simple machines: the lever, the wheel and axle, the pulley, the inclined plane, the wedge, and the screw. Really these could be simplified into two basic machines—the lever and the inclined plane—because a wheel and pulley can be described as a series of levers radiating from a central axis and the wedge and screw can be described in terms of an inclined plane. The basic idea of a lever is illustrated by a pole jammed under a rock with another rock under the pole to provide a fulcrum. Push down on the pole, and the rock can be moved a bit with little effort. We use an inclined plane to roll a barrel that is too heavy to lift up into a truck.

These two simple machine can help us in three ways: multiply the force applied to them, change the direction of the force applied to them, or multiply the speed or distance that the applied force moves something. For example, the lever in a pliers multiplies the force you apply to the handle so that with the strength of your hand you are able to apply sufficient force to twist some wire or loosen a bolt. A claw hammer not only multiplies force but also changes the direction of the applied force by pulling a nail up and out as you apply force in the opposite direction. A screw is an inclined plane wrapped around an axis and allows the mechanic or woodworker to bring parts together with hundreds and thousands of pounds of force. A simple fly swatter multiplies the speed of your hand. This multiplication of speed, force, or distance is called “mechanical advantage.” Simple math equations and proportions allow one to calculate exactly how any given machine affects speed, force, distance, and direction.

Years ago, the only force available to build cathedrals and pyramids was muscle power. This force was applied to various forms of the lever and inclined plane so that the mechanical advantage gained would allow the movement of heavy stones. Today we are able to release the energy of fossil fuels and other energy sources to do much work, but that energy is often made more useful by applying it to combination of simple machines. A more complex machine such as a lawnmower can be broken down into a combination of levers and inclined planes. I am tempted to argue that every machine we have today can be boiled down to an assortment of levers and inclined planes, even a computer. We don't have room to go into that in detail, but when one studies the interaction of molecules and atoms, we often find the principles of simple machines at work.

Machines are so popular because they are very helpful to man. God has designed our bodies to do many wonderful things far beyond the capacity of any other creature. In fact, God has designed the interaction of our muscles and bones using the principles of levers. God has also given to man a mind that is able to apply the principles of the lever and inclined plane so that the wonderful abilities of man can be enhanced and magnified. The ability to control the muscles of the fingers is enhanced by the levers of a piano to produce beautiful music. When man imagines something, it is only a matter of time before he figures out a way to build upon the machines available to build a new machine that helps him realize that dream.

When we look at machines through the eyes of sinful man, we are only delighted with the possibilities and amazed at the ingenuity of man. Look at what man is able to do! Even with the bare bones simple machines of a crude wooden lever and earthen inclined plane he is able to construct pyramids and cathedrals which to this day are described as wonders of the world. With the discovery of how to release the energy of fuels, and new materials such as steel and silicon to make refined versions of levers and planes, the mind of man was applied

with renewed vigor to machines that would be able to use that energy. The only limit, it seems, to what man can do is his imagination. All praise and glory be raised to the mind of man!

Through the spectacles of Scripture, this very wisdom of man is revealed to be foolishness because sinful man fails to see that the mind and body of man is a creature of God. God created the world so that man could use the lever and inclined plane. God created man so that he would be able to use these machines to the glory of His name. God commands man to subdue the creation (Gen. 1:28). To heap praise upon man is utter folly because man is only discovering what God intended for man to discover, but he deliberately refuses to see the hand of God in it all. Sinful man “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 1:25).

As we scan through the history of inventions and survey the great mountains of inventions of the past 100 years, we do not see anything evil in the machines themselves. God blesses the use of the many implements of agriculture such as the ax, cart, fan, pruning-hook, etc. Noah used simple machines to build the ark. The children of God today use the latest inventions in their service to God.

One thing that catches our attention, however, is that it is often sin and violence that inspires the great advances in using machines. King Uzziah was admired for his great war machines. We read in 2 Chronicles 26:15 “And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name

spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.” War, pride, and dreams of glory still motivates us to devote huge sums of money and ingenuity to develop cutting edge technology.

The spectacles of Scripture penetrate as a searchlight through the darkness of sin to reveal that any problems with all the machines we have does not come from the machine itself, but from the corrupt mind of man. One of the first major projects after the Flood that required the latest in mechanical inventions was the tower of Babel. The Lord looked down and said, “Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Genesis 11:6).

Even though it seems today that nothing is restrained from man which he imagines, we must live by faith knowing that all these machines serve the will of God. Often they are used to fill the cup of iniquity to the point where God is ready to execute His just judgment. It is the power and grace of God alone in the hearts of His children that brings about any good and righteous use of these machines by man. May we thank God for everything we have, and may we praise Him for His wisdom. He has created all the wonders of this world. We give Him praise as man uncovers these treasures as he subdues the earth. We look forward to a new heavens and earth where all that is to be known, discovered, and used will not be corrupted with sin and will be used for the glory of God alone. ❖

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

Pastor Profile

Rev. Richard J. Smit

by Rev. Richard J. Smit

Like many other second generation Dutch Canadians, my story would not be complete if I did not begin it with the immigration of my parents from “the old country.”

In 1951, a young fellow of 17 years and his mother, left the island of Terschelling in Friesland, the Nether-

lands, to immigrate to Canada. These were the years when there was a large post-World War II immigration from the Netherlands to various cities across Canada. Willem Smit and his mother settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba, among relatives and other Dutch immigrants in that eastern prairie town. In 1952, Nienke Pals with her parents

and her brother immigrated from Schiedam to Canada and settled in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Some years later, the Lord in His own mysterious way led Willem and his mother to move to Vancouver, British Columbia, so that by July 21, 1961, Willem and Nienke eventually met and were joined together in the unbreakable and blessed bond of holy marriage. They were active and faithful members in the Christian Reformed Churches in the Vancouver area and also for a few years in Prince George, in northern B.C. He served as a deacon and then as an elder in the First Christian Reformed Church of Richmond, B.C.

When the family lived in Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver, my parents were blessed with the birth of Richard John on May 17, 1969. I was baptized in the Christian Reformed Church in Richmond, and the family lived there until I was four. In the summer of 1973, the family moved to the beautiful city of Victoria, B.C.

However, as beautiful as Victoria and Vancouver Island were, the spiritual and doctrinal condition of the First Christian Reformed Church of Victoria, in which we were members, was not good. I can still remember to this day sad examples of doctrinal and liturgical departure from the traditions of the Reformed Faith, both in the church services and in the local, parental, Christian Reformed school. This sad state of affairs in that particular congregation and in the denomination as a whole greatly troubled my parents, who were forced to seek a church whose marks were faithful to the Reformed Faith and Scripture as required in the Belgic Confession, Articles 28 and 29.

The Lord in His mysterious way finally brought us into contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches. After a couple of visits by ministers who gave stirring lectures, the synod of our churches approved the sending of a missionary to Victoria to work the field there. Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, Michigan) was appointed the calling church, and she promptly in the Lord's providence sent us Rev. Robert C. Harbach. For two years, he with his wife faithfully served us. I have many fond memories and stories of those days meeting and worshipping in a small rented hall, near downtown Victoria. Indeed, those were spiritually rich years. Even as a young boy, I can still remember that Rev. Harbach preached in the afternoon services a series on I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. I remember his vivid and



clear catechism lessons on the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their wanderings through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. I can still remember that Rev. R. Van Overloop, who visited the field with Mr. Jon Huisken, preached on that short verse in I Thessalonians 5, "Rejoice evermore." Of course, these vivid memories and this enthusiasm even as a boy was in large part due to the spiritual joy in the family for God's goodness, having led us to the riches of faithful preaching and exposition of the Word. The Lord was indeed good! We had and still have many reasons to rejoice evermore!

However, we learned that to be a disciple of Christ, one must count the cost. There are sacrifices required and self-denial demanded by Christ for faithfulness. This is what was required of my family when it was clear that the mission field in Victoria would soon have to be closed. My family faced the difficult decision and sacrifice to leave the beauty and the convenience of Victoria and to move to a town closer to one of our churches. For the sake of the truth, we had to move lock, stock, and barrel to a place closer to our churches.

Although in the Lord's providence immigration to the United States or moving to our church in Edmonton, Alberta, were not possible, yet the Lord opened the way for my father to take a transfer within his company so that he could work in Vancouver. This meant we could live as close as possible to our Lynden congregation, and he could still commute about 40 miles (one way) to his office. We moved to Aldergrove, British Columbia, which was just north of the Lynden church and our PR grade school. The time to drive from our house to church and school across the Canadian and USA border was usually twenty minutes, if there were no annoying border crossing line-ups, of course.

We joined our Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington, in 1979. I along with two of my siblings were enrolled in our Covenant Christian School. I continued in CCS until grade 10, and I finished my high school education at Credo Christian High School, a Canadian Reformed secondary school in Langley, B.C.

The years growing up in Aldergrove and Lynden made for an interesting boyhood. Not only is it difficult for parents to uproot and move their family, but it is also not easy for the children to leave familiar surroundings and

friends and then to adjust and blend in as quickly as possible in the new setting. Besides that, living on the opposite side of the border from church and grade school added to our life its own nuances and difficulties. Nevertheless, it seems that my boyhood years were typical. I enjoyed camping and numerous fishing trips. I enjoyed hiking into the surrounding mountains and fly-fishing with my younger brother in the alpine lakes. It seems that we were never at a loss to find something to keep us busy. I kept busy with chores around the house, including tending to our small flock of chickens and raising my rabbits. And, as you would expect, like most Canadians, I usually found time for ice skating and hockey.

I had in these years the privilege to sit under the preaching, teaching, and catechetical instruction of Rev. Dale Kuiper and Rev. Carl Haak, as well as Rev. Cornelius Hanko and Rev. Herman Veldman for months at a time when Lynden was vacant for a couple of years in the mid 1980's. Their pastoral examples and faithful preaching were used by the Lord to prepare me for my work today in the ministry.

After graduation from high school, I had planned to study in college towards the goal of becoming a teacher. Hence, I enrolled in Trinity Western University for that purpose. However, it was by the end of my first semester in college that I decided to work towards preparing for entrance into our seminary.

The thought of preparing for the ministry of the Word had been on my mind and heart earlier throughout the summer of 1987. In fact, Professor R. Decker was in Lynden for three consecutive weeks in that summer. The last sermon which he preached during his stay in Lynden was on I Samuel 1 about praying Hannah. In the course of the sermon, he pointedly applied the passage to the acute need we had then for students in the seminary and the need for ministers in our churches. After the service, I asked Prof. Decker a few questions about seminary, but left it at that. I had made up my mind I was going to be a teacher.

However, by December 1987, it was clear to me that I had no rest until I had decided to prepare for seminary. Thereafter, a day hardly passed when I did not think about that goal. After five years of course work at Trinity Western University and Simon Fraser University, I was ready to enroll into our seminary at the young age of 23. Through those years in college, I was fully supported by my family and the fellow saints in my home congregation of Lynden.

With the congregation's and family's encouragement, I made another big move in my life to Grand Rapids in

the Fall of 1992 to begin my seminary training. Through the years in seminary, the student body was fairly large in comparison to earlier and current years. In my days, the seminary enjoyed a very international flavor with men from Australia, Canada, Singapore, and the United States. There was hardly a dull moment, especially with the Aussies around.

The training in the seminary was demanding, and thoroughly sound, particularly in the course work which molded and honed us to be faithful pastors. Four years of training may seem like a long time, but looking back it really was not. The professors often wrestled with the clock trying to fit in so much material that could be taught into seemingly so little time. And, for me personally, the time in seminary did pass quickly because we were kept busy in preparation for the workload of a pastor. Having been given, as much as possible, the foundation and the tools in my training, I was prepared to continue their development in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

As I mentioned, there were always the lighter moments in seminary, too. I recall such memorable stories as the day of "The Great Pulpit Exchange" or the day when one of the profs was lumbering about with camera in hand, outside in the freezing cold, in six inches of snow, and without a coat, searching for a rare bird of some sort in the bushes behind seminary. Laughter about another coffee break story was common. However, when class time came, it was back to the serious work of the church and the ministry of the Word.

With the demanding workload, I did find time to get out and to find a wife. I dated Tricia Dykstra, member at the time of our Faith congregation and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Dykstra; and, about mid-way through my seminary years, Tricia and I were joined by the Lord together in the bond of marriage on December 23, 1994.

After a memorable three week visit to the saints in the small congregation of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas, in June 1995 for pulpit supply, I served in the last half of 1995 a delightful and profitable six month internship at our Southeast congregation with Rev. Dale Kuiper as my mentor. I believe that the internship program was an extremely valuable part of my training, and it has served me well in the ministry.

After enduring the synodical examination in June, 1996, I was declared eligible for a call to the churches. After a short vacation back home to Lynden and Canada, my wife and I travelled to Doon for their summer pulpit supply because Doon was vacant at the time. On the first Sunday there, following the afternoon service, the congregation voted on a trio for a new pastor. Since I did not

attend the meeting, I was surprised to find out that I had received the call to be their pastor. Later, I accepted the call, was examined by Classis in our Randolph congregation, and on Monday, September 9, 1996, I was ordained and installed into the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in our congregation of Doon, where I continue to serve the saints here.

The Lord blessed my wife and I richly in our marriage. He blessed us with some adversity in our early years, and He has blessed us in Doon with five children: John, Rebekah, Jay, Irene, and Rosalyn. We have certainly tasted and seen the unmerited and undeserved goodness and faithfulness of our Jehovah to believers and their seed.

You might wonder what kind of hobbies that I might have time to do with a busy family and a busy congregation. Because of my busy schedule and many nights out of the house, I try to have hobbies in which I can include my children. We all enjoy camping and fishing. Of course, being a Canadian, I am faithfully teaching my children to rollerblade and to play hockey. I even have found time during the winter months to dabble with building some radios from electronic kits. If you visit the parsonage on a Monday morning, you might even find me under the hood of my vehicle changing the oil, wrestling under the vehicle with my grease gun, or doing some other light maintenance.

I continue to enjoy the work of the Ministry and the fellowship of the saints here at home in Doon. Perhaps you have heard that the work of the minister can be summarized as follows: preaching and teaching, baptizing and catechizing, marrying and burying. Indeed, the Lord has given me the privilege of doing all of that here in Doon. I have been called to wait on the Lord each week and work with the Scriptures faithfully in order to produce two sermons to bring to the congregation. I have been called patiently to teach the youth the essentials of the Scriptures and doctrine. I have been called to walk with some of the people of God down into the valley of the shadow of death, only to be left behind while they have gone on to glory. I have been called to weep with the saints at the graves of their elderly loved ones or their little infants. I have been called to rejoice with the young saints in their marriages, in the birth of their covenant children, and in the baptism of their covenant children. I have been called to bring the Word of mercy and comfort to the saints in their adversity. In addition to the work in the congregation, there is also the important work of being involved in the foreign mission work of our churches. Yes, it is all demanding work. But, it is the most rewarding and spiritually blessed.

One of the most rewarding experiences in the ministry are those times when the Word preached addresses a need which I had not been thinking about or about which I did not know at the time. Elders have asked if I had preached a sermon with this or that reason in mind. Often, I have had to answer that I honestly did not know, nor thought about that during all the preparation and delivery of the sermon. That has always emphatically reminded me over and over that Christ is the great Shepherd of these His sheep, and we preachers are only tools in His Hand by which He is pleased to call His sheep unto Himself and to build His Church.

There may be those young men reading this article and considering the question whether they ought to train for the seminary and eventually for the ministry of the Word. To you, I would like to give some advice. Admittedly, I have not much to say because I am only a freshman minister, but I would like to mention a couple of things to consider in addition to what the seasoned ministers have advised previously in the *Beacon Lights*.

First, you must remember that it is imperative that you be humble in the ministry. (John 13:1-17; I Peter 2:22-23) The ministry is not the place to make a name for yourself. Your goal must not be the praise of men for wonderful sermons, but that they praise our Father and Christ for His faithfulness in using weak men as a tool to preach Christ crucified and His glorious Gospel. You must be like John the Baptist who declared that he was content to let himself to decrease, and for Christ to increase steadily before the hearts and minds of God's people.

Second, you must remember that your strength to prepare for the ministry of the Word and to labor in the ministry faithfully will never be found in you. You must learn to live and breathe this text, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:2) That is important to remember in light of the reality that the work of the ministry is humanly impossible. No man of himself is sufficient for faithfulness to Christ in this work. Only the strength and humility of Christ is sufficient to be a faithful pastor among His blood-bought sheep.

For those of you young men who know that in the Lord's providence that you will not be ministers of the Word, do not forget that there are two other offices in the congregations that need faithful and godly men. I urge you not to neglect proper preparation for serving the Lord in the other offices of the church. Do not wait to prepare for the work of deacon or elder until the time you are informed that you have been nominated. Now is the time

to learn and to ask questions about the principles and the work of the offices of elder and deacon.

And, you young women, must remember also that the officebearers of Christ's church need faithful and godly wives. That means that you also must prepare yourselves and cultivate the virtues of godliness, modesty, honesty, and faithfulness to your Lord in doctrine and daily life. The church of Christ is also served by the faithfulness and godliness of those wives who sacrifice and support their husbands who must bear the weighty responsibilities of the special offices of the church.

Such a provision of faithful officebearers and faithful officebearers' wives continues to exist in our churches only by the grace of God. The Lord continues to bless us with spiritually minded young adults who seek to marry in the Lord, to bring forth the seed of the covenant, and to rear them in the fear of Jehovah and in the Reformed doctrines as maintained in our churches. There is generally continued interest among our young people in Reformed doctrine, spiritual things, and antithetical living. They also enjoy and show their appreciation for a sermon which gripped them and for the Word which fed them.

Nevertheless, we may not become self-complacent. We must continue to nurture and maintain that spiritual

interest in Reformed doctrine and in an antithetical life. Our young people need to continue attending our church services faithfully, and to continue bombarding our ministers in catechism, in young people's meetings, at conventions, or at young adult retreats with the questions of the "whys" and the "wherefores" of doctrinal distinctives and our ways of doing things. Because of your covenant instruction and catechetical training, you young people have been blessed with a broad knowledge of the Scriptures and the Reformed Faith. However, to whom much is given, much is also required by the Lord. Hold fast to that which you have been taught!

It is my prayer that the Lord will continue to keep us faithful to His truth through both times of prosperity and also times of sharp adversity. May he keep us faithful in the midst of increasing ungodliness in the world and increasing apostasy even in the Reformed and Presbyterian church world.

May he grant to His pastors, myself included, the grace to be faithful in serving God's Church throughout the earth for His glory and for the coming of His glorious kingdom in the swiftly approaching day of Christ. ❖

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

Church Family

The Sixth Petition

by B. van Herk

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

This sixth and last petition is part of the most perfect and intimate prayer in the whole of Scripture. The Lord Himself taught this prayer to his disciples, as recorded in Luke 11:1-4. In this passage we have the shortened version of the Lord's Prayer. In company of His disciples, the Lord was engaged in prayer to His Father. Having his followers with Him, they observed the intensity and power of His prayer. They were struck by the amazing solemnity of every word uttered by their Master. We read that at this point one of His disciples made the request to be endued with that spirit of prayer as it flowed from the lips of the Lord. In my own mind the name Nathanael comes often to the fore, although I

am fully aware that the identity of this disciple must forever remain unknown.

There is no doubt that this prayer served as a pattern to all the Apostles after Pentecost. They received it firsthand, in a language readily understood by every one of them. However, after Pentecost the written word moved and spread among people who were not able to understand it. From thence we enter the era of New Testament Bible translations. Translators were faced with the awesome responsibility of reproducing the Scriptures into the indigenous language of the people involved. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we see especially that God raised up people with acute minds and of a

spiritual disposition who were able to dedicate themselves for this momentous task.

First we have the German Luther Bible, which came in two stages. The new testament in 1522 and the old testament in 1534. Our own English Bible, the Authorized Version, is from 1611, and the Dutch Staten Bible from 1637. These three translations have survived the onslaughts of new translations which have flooded the church world for well over a century. It shows that there is still an affection for those time-honored translations, for their sheer beauty and dignified language.

In reference to the sixth petition, there are two opinions to consider; whether we follow the line of the Authorized Version, which is: "deliver us from evil" or follow the line of the Revised Version which is "deliver us from the evil one."

From the original Greek text we must conclude that both interpretations are correct. Those who have spoken in favor of the R.V. interpretation have corroborated their stand by citing other parts of Scripture. One text is Matthew 5:37, "but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

If we place this text side by side with John 8:44, (Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.) then we must agree that in this instance the words "the evil one" would have been a more accurate interpretation. Likewise John 17:15 also very clearly points to "evil one" as the more correct interpretation. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." I have no scruples with those explanations. However, when the Authorised Version is compared and scrutinized in the light of the Staten Bible, then I am convinced that this approach is flawed.

Firstly, we notice that the construction of the sentence in Dutch, i.e. "verlos ons van den boze" does not translate smoothly into English, and likewise if "deliver us from the evil one" is translated word for word back into Dutch we have "verlos ons van den ene boze." This gives both sentences six words, but we instantly see that the translators of the Staten Bible would have never allowed this to pass. "Evil" and "one" taken side by side is incongruous in the Lord's Prayer because sin is not one, but universal in scope.

Heaven and earth are contaminated by sin. From experience I know that the Dutch words "den boze" have

a much wider connotation than the description "evil one." The Dutch saint in speaking of "den boze" invariably was pointing to his own chest indicating by this that the devil, the world, and his own flesh were all congregated in his own chest, or heart, for that matter.

It is my contention that this thought is absent from the phrase "evil one." I am convinced that the fathers of Westminster have prayerfully deliberated on this part of Scripture before submitting it to the printing press, not only on the underlying text, but also how to pass it on into the English language, and I am equally convinced that the Dutch fathers acted likewise, with both sides succeeding in having God's blessings and approval resting upon their labors.

In conclusion I am happy to note that all those who adhere to, and love, the Authorised Version will neither have a desire to change the Lord's Prayer, or make it into a truncated version with the loss of some of its familiarity. ❖

B.van Herk is from Wainuiomata, New Zealand.

The Reader Asks

Question Request

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:

Rev. James Laning

1550 Ferndale S.W.

Walker, MI 49544

E-mail: jlanning@msn.com

Watching Daily At My Gates

By Cornelius Jonker

March 1 Read II Timothy 1:12-14

For our meditations this month we will treat the topic of faith. This great gift of God has many aspects. We hope to define it, examine it, determine whom the objects are, what it produces, how it is worked, and in whom is this faith exemplified in Scripture. It is described in many ways and set forth in all our creeds. We speak of historical faith, temporary faith, miraculous faith and saving faith. Some speak of faith as a work which man performs, others a joint effort between man and God. Many, if not most people in the church world today, insist that faith is a condition to salvation. What do you say dear reader? Do you possess faith? We hope that together we may examine this marvelous gift of God, be instructed from Scripture, and receive comfort and assurance that though we are unworthy, we are the recipients of saving faith by the mercy of God. Sing Psalter 190.

March 2 Read Hebrews 11:1-3

What is true saving faith? Scripture and our creeds define it in various ways. It is the substance or assurance of things hoped for, the evidence or conviction of things not seen. According to the Heidelberg Catechism it is a certain knowledge and an assured confidence which the Holy Spirit works by the gospel in our hearts. It is also a living bond that unites us with Christ and is our conscious act of believing. Rev. H. Hoeksema describes it in his *Reformed Dogmatics* as “that work of God in the elect, regenerated and called sinner whereby the latter is engrafted into Christ and embraces and appropriates Christ and all His benefits, relying upon Him in time and eternity.” It is a gift of inestimable value, and because it is a gift, we see that it is not earned or purchased by us, but rather bestowed upon us by our Heavenly Father who loves us. A precious gift indeed! Sing Psalter 7.

March 3 Read Hebrews 12:1-3

In our last meditation we gave some definitions of saving faith. We saw in passing who the author was and who the recipients were. We wish to point out today more specifically who is the author of this faith. It is the work of the Triune God. Scripture abounds with passages to confirm this. We just read in Hebrews 12 that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. In Ephesians 6:23 we read “Peace be to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” And in Galatians 5:22, we read of faith being one of the fruits of the Spirit. Faith was one of the blessings that Christ purchased for us by His death. By the power of the cross we believe, which is the activity of faith. It is all of God, nothing of man. Hence, we can contribute nothing towards our salvation. How then can faith ever be a condition which one exercises to attain his salvation? But sinful man in his pride wants to maintain that position. Be thankful to God for preserving this precious truth for us and by

His grace hold it fast and teach it to our children. Sing Psalter 273.

March 4 Read I Timothy 1:17-20

Besides saving faith, we sometimes speak of historical faith. It is usually understood as an objective agreement or belief in certain truths and facts in Scripture without that belief grounded in a regenerated heart. Satan certainly has knowledge of the Scriptures, as we read in James 2:19, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” Now it is true of course that one who possesses saving faith also believes the historical truths of the Word. But paradoxically, the more one who is unregenerated knows about Scripture, the more his unbelief will become manifest and the greater his condemnation. Pray daily that the Spirit may give us contrite and sincere hearts that are receptive to the great truths of Scripture. Sing Psalter 334.

March 5 Read Matthew 13:3-6, 20, 21

Temporary or temporal faith is another form of faith that is not rooted in the principle of a regenerated heart. Those who possess it may believe that they have true faith, but it is grounded in their emotions. It is a self-centered faith in one who is swayed by a strong emotional preacher or an enthusiastic revival, and is fascinated from an intellectual point of view of the glories of the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom promises relief from earthly woes, and holds forth eternal happiness and bliss. But when persecution or tribulation comes their way they stumble and fall. It never was a genuine faith that when tried, worketh patience according to James 1:3. How do you react, dear reader, when trials and temptations assail you? Do you despair and become angry with your lot? May God give us the grace to know that also the sorrows and woes that befall us are really for our good and will serve to draw us closer to our Savior. Sing Psalter 272.

March 6 Read Matthew 8:5-10

We call your attention today to miraculous faith. It can be either active or passive. Instances of miraculous faith abound in Scripture. Just review for example the heroes of faith recorded in Hebrews 11. They certainly were convinced that God would miraculously keep His covenant promises even when the situation was humanly hopeless and impossible. Think about Abraham and Sarah who had faith in God’s promise that He would give them a son when they were too old to conceive, and later, when commanded to sacrifice that same son, Abraham obeyed “accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead”. In essence, saving faith must be a miraculous faith. It is a miracle indeed that we, sinful and carnal creatures of the dust, will be raised from corruption, enter the glories of heaven, and live for-

ever with our Savior Who loved us with an eternal love and redeemed us with His precious blood. Sing Psalter 71.

March 7 Read Ephesians 1:15-18

One of the aspects of saving faith according to the Heidelberg Catechism is a certain knowledge. Of what does that knowledge consist? It is a knowledge that “we hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word”. Because faith is rooted in Christ, and Christ is revealed to us in His word, we must have knowledge of that word. That does not mean mere intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures. A lot of people can quote from the Bible, and are familiar with much of its contents. But our knowledge must be different. By the grace of God we are given the Spirit in our hearts so that our knowledge of saving faith is a spiritual and experiential knowledge that makes us want to taste and see that God is good. We want to learn all we can about this Christ who saved us and intercedes for us. The more knowledge we gain, the more confident we are of our faith. Study the Scriptures, dear reader, with a prayer in your heart that you may grow in your faith in the crucified and risen Christ. Sing Psalter 336.

March 8 Read Ephesians 3:8-12

We have discussed in yesterday’s meditation that knowledge is an essential part of saving faith. Inseparably connected with that is a spiritual confidence. Confidence results from a true knowledge of saving faith. How could you or I have confidence or trust in something we know nothing about? That would be impossible. God by His Spirit works faith in our hearts so that we want to drink from the fountain of knowledge that in turn results in a confidence that no one can take from us. One of my favorite texts is Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (perfect) it until the day of Jesus Christ.” As you are privileged to hear the gospel of salvation preached from week to week, cling by faith to Christ who gave Himself a ransom for His people. Pray that your faith may be strengthened and that your confidence may grow strong and sure. Sing Psalter 191.

March 9 Read Romans 10:13-17

All of Scripture and our confessions declare that saving faith is a gift of God. If it is a gift, then it is certainly not earned or purchased. How then do we acquire it? We read in Romans 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This is God’s means by which His people receive the gift of faith and call upon His name. And how can they do that and believe in Him except they hear that word? That word is powerful, it is a two-edged sword that softens the heart of the elect and hardens the heart of the reprobate. God’s people must hear the voice of the Good Shepherd or they will not and cannot follow him. And that voice is the voice of a preacher who is called and sent forth officially as an ambassador of Christ. It is the chief means of grace that God uses to instill and strengthen that faith in our hearts. To despise that word is to despise Christ Himself. May we ever echo the words of the prophet Jeremiah, “thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart...” (Jer. 15:16). Sing Psalter 337.

March 10 Read 1 Peter 1:3-7

Saving faith is an extremely valuable possession. Most of us own objects of value and some perhaps even of great value. But

these all fade into insignificance compared to faith. Scripture describes faith as precious, more precious than gold that perishes. This is a genuine faith that has been tried in the furnace of affliction. Just as gold emerges from the fire as pure and lustrous, so our faith shines forth in all its power as the work of God and it glorifies Him. The apostle Peter addresses his second epistle to “them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” It is precious because of the cost. To bestow the gift of faith to His people, a terrible price had to be paid. Faith means to be engrafted into Christ and to possess His righteousness. Nothing but the blood of Christ could accomplish this amazing redemption. We may be poor in earthly possessions, but when we have Christ, we have riches unimaginable. Praise God for His unspeakable gift! Sing Psalter 163.

March 11 Read Jude 1-4

Do you believe the truth of the gospel as revealed in Scripture? Is it precious to you and worth fighting for? Jude exhorts the church to earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. To contend means to engage in a contest or struggle against a rival. The truth of the gospel has always been attacked from the beginning of time, and will continue until Christ returns. We must fight earnestly for that truth. This truth as formulated in our Confessions is passed on from father to son and from generation to generation. The powers of darkness always seek to undermine and corrupt the faith of the saints. The enemy surrounds us constantly. He comes into our homes through the newspapers, television, books, and countless other means. How then must we fight this battle? Take up the shield of faith and grasp the sword of the Spirit believing that “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Sing Psalter 35.

March 12 Read Romans 5:1-5

The Bible plainly declares that we are justified by faith. What does that mean? Place yourself for a moment before a judge in a courtroom. Only this time the judge is God Himself Who judges our lives each day according to His holy law. The verdict will be either righteous or guilty. The question immediately arises, how can you or I who are sinners possibly be declared righteous or justified before God? Thanks be to God, the answer is that God beholds His own as righteous in Christ. Christ, our Mediator, kept the law perfectly in our place and fulfilled all obedience to the divine law. That righteousness becomes ours by faith. Since by faith we are engrafted into Christ, as a branch is one with the tree from which it grows, so we become one with Christ by faith. By faith we cling to Him and to His cross where He made perfect satisfaction for our sins. “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord” (Psalm 116:12, 13). Sing Psalter 311.

March 13 Read Romans 3:21-28

Yesterday we discussed the truth of justification by faith. Today we wish to emphasize that we are justified by faith alone. When Martin Luther saw that precious truth for the first time, the shackles of Rome with its doctrine of faith plus the meritori-

ous works of man fell from him and sparked the great Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. In the Apostle Paul's day there were Judaizing teachers who claimed that in addition to having Christ's righteousness, one must observe the Mosaic laws. Recently there appeared a sign in front of a local church of Reformed persuasion which read: "Salvation is free; but not until you accept it." Is not this a salvation based on the work of man? There is no comfort or assurance for us if our salvation is conditioned by something that we must do. Our comfort is that God is sovereign and by faith we are assured of our election which makes our salvation secure and safe. We turn to our Savior in whom we are eternally chosen and who purchased that salvation for us with His own blood. By faith let this be our prayer: "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling." Sing Psalter 241.

March 14 Read I Timothy 6:12-16

Article 22 of our Belgic Confession is entitled "Of Faith in Jesus Christ." The preceding article dealt with the death of Christ as a full satisfaction and atonement for our sins. The present article deals with the way Christ's death is appropriated by those for whom He died. That instrument is faith. Emphasis is made that those who possess Christ by faith have complete salvation in Him. This refutes the Arminian teaching that in actuality Christ is not sufficient, and that before a man can be saved, he must by his own free will choose to believe. It stresses that all our salvation is in Him. Faith is worked in our hearts by the Holy Ghost and by this means we embrace Christ our Righteousness. He imputes to us all His merits and by this upright faith we are richly blessed. We have living communion with Him and the assurance of forgiveness of sins as well as the certain hope of everlasting life. For this faith, many saints have fought, and given their very lives. May we truly appreciate this precious gift. Sing Psalter 204.

March 15 Read II Peter 3:14-18

In the Canons of Dort in the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, our fathers expose the Arminian view of faith and set forth the biblical truth of saving faith in Article 14. Although they have to admit that faith is a gift of God, yet Arminians believe that the will of man in itself has never been corrupted and so by his own act or deed he is able to believe or not to believe. Read this short article for yourself, which emphasizes that this gift of God is not something that man can accept or reject at his pleasure, but rather that it is infused and breathed into him. Then it concludes: "he (God) who works in man both to will and to do...produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also." Only in this way can we as believers take comfort, knowing that it is not up to us, who are fickle and changeable, but up to our God Who is all powerful and Who sovereignly works that faith in us. Sing Psalter 112.

March 16 Read James 2:14-22

We have maintained that we are saved by grace through faith and not because of any works that we perform. In our passage today, we read that faith without works is dead. Is this a contradiction? On the contrary James is speaking of a dead faith. A person may claim to have faith, have knowledge of the Scriptures and attend church regularly. However, the sermons make no impact, he has no desire for spiritual things and throughout

the week he fellowships with the world and seeks their pleasures. No one sees the fruit of a living faith in his life. He is no different from the world. Contrasted to that is true faith which manifests itself in good works. That living faith walks in obedience to God's law. That faith works a godly repentance day after day. It keeps itself unspotted from the world. It is not merely lip service toward God and the neighbor, but shows that it is genuine by heartfelt worship and by deeds of love and mercy. Dear reader, do you see the evidence of that working faith in your own life? Then rejoice and praise God for His gracious gift. Sing Psalter 69.

March 17 Read Matthew 18:1-4

What a lesson Jesus gave to His disciples when they disputed among themselves who of them would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He placed a little child in their midst and explained that they must be converted or turned with a childlike faith to enter that kingdom. It is true that Scripture speaks of the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, but is not the gospel also very simple? This may not excuse us from studying God's Word, but the fact remains that without a childlike faith we shall not enter into the kingdom. A young child will believe his parents or teachers without reservation. In similar fashion we must take God at His Word. We may question what man teaches, but when we hear Christ say "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," we come, just as a little child comes to his own father in simple faith and trust. Although the disciples were certainly regenerated, they needed a lesson in humility. May we by grace cast away all pride and say with the publican in Jesus' parable "God be merciful to me a sinner." Sing Psalter 142.

March 18 Read Luke 22:31-34

Without faith we cannot be saved, and without faith we cannot please God. Because faith is a gift of God we are passive in receiving it. We did not receive it because we asked Him for it or because we are willing to receive it. God by sovereign irresistible grace bestowed it upon us. Our response is that we actively embrace it with a believing heart. Sometimes, however, due to our sinful nature, our faith becomes weak. Take Peter as an example who could demonstrate a strong faith, yet when he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink into the sea. Jesus' response was "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" We too fall into the same sin. Sometimes we sink into the depths of despair when we face trials in our lives. None of us is exempt from sorrows and hardships. Must we then murmur or complain? On the contrary, we cry out as David did, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation". Pray for a season of richer grace and diligently use the means God has given us, namely His comforting Word, the fellowship of saints, and the avenue of prayer. Sing Psalter 73.

March 19 Read Matthew 15:21-28

Not only does Scripture give us examples of weak faith, but it also relates many instances of strong faith, and encourages us to grow and abound in that faith which is pleasing to God. In our passage today we read that a Gentile woman pleaded with Jesus to help her and was not deterred when Jesus told her it was not proper to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. In an

amazing demonstration of her faith, she said “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” Are we so hungry for the gospel that we will do everything to hear it? Strong faith manifests itself in many ways. We will mention just a few: We must know and love the truth; we perform deeds of kindness with humility; we serve God willingly in His church and kingdom; we live lives of thankfulness and obedience; we pray sincerely and earnestly, especially when trials come; and we encourage and build up our fellow saints. Does that come naturally to us? No it doesn’t, but the more we lean on God and His promises, He will give grace for grace. May the Lord make us strong in that faith to His glory. Sing Psalter 354.

March 20 Read Matthew 17:14-20

Faith cannot exist without prayer. In our preceding meditations we have mentioned the element of prayer in our experience of faith, but we call special attention to the importance of the prayer of faith. In the epistle of James we read “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” and also in the same chapter we read “and the prayer of faith shall save the sick”. We know from the context that this is a spiritual sickness, which calls for the elders of the church to come and pray. In our Scripture passage today we are told, by Christ Himself that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, we can move mountains. We must understand that this does not refer to literal mountains, but as it were “mountains” of trials and difficulties. Our Heidelberg Catechism defines prayer as “the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us: and also because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of him, and are thankful for them.” Be earnest in prayer, dear reader, to grow and develop in your faith. Sing Psalter 210.

March 21 Read Hebrews 11:1-3

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” But that’s not what the world teaches and believes. Their celebrated scientists and geologists spend a lifetime developing and defending their godless theory of evolution. Without faith, man is a fool. He will not and cannot believe in a God to whom all men are accountable. If the Genesis account is not true, we have no Christ, no salvation and no comfort. Psalm 33:6 declares “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” All creation continues to exist by that powerful word. What a comfort for you and me to believe that word. By faith we look forward to that new creation that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor. 2:9). Sing Psalter 37.

March 22 Read II Timothy 1:8-12

Let us examine today the object of our faith. It is totally different from the so-called faith of multitudes in the world today. There are those who trust in their riches, others in science or man’s ingenuity, while still others hold to a worship of idols and false gods. In Psalm 20:7 we read: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” The object of our faith, dear reader, is the Triune God as He is revealed in Christ. No man can come to the Father except

through Jesus Christ the Mediator. Our faith is a personal faith that has for its object Jesus Christ Himself, Who is the way, the truth and the life. Many in the church world today claim that there are many ways and different roads that lead to the same heaven. Don’t believe it! “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” declares Jesus. He is the object of our faith. He made the way possible by taking our sins and nailing them to His cross. Believe in Him by faith and walk in humble gratitude and obedience to Him. Sing Psalter 198.

March 23 Read Hebrews 10:19-23

In verse 23 of this passage we are exhorted to hold fast the profession of our faith. Many other verses in Scripture express the same admonition to the recipients of saving faith. Is this warning really necessary, you might say, since only God’s people possess this faith? Yes, we may well heed these words since we have sinful natures and only a small beginning of that new obedience. Satan, the world, and our own flesh are enemies who constantly tempt us to sin. We fail to hold fast our profession when we forsake the truth, fail to defend it, live as the ungodly world, or when we waver between truth and error. To hold fast is to cling to Christ, know and love His Word, put on the whole armor of God, and pray unceasingly. We cannot do that in our own strength to be sure, but read again the last part of this verse, “He is faithful that promised.” All glory and thanks to God for preserving us in our faith. Sing Psalter 27.

March 24 Read I Peter 1:8-10

The end of our faith is the salvation of our souls. Can any words be richer than that? This does not mean that our faith ceases at death, but rather that faith is our avenue to salvation. Some have a carnal and superficial concept of salvation that pictures a beautiful heaven that their fleshly lusts crave and which is decidedly better than a hell. Salvation for the child of God has already begun in this life. We are told to work out our own salvation for God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. When God completes His work in us, we are made holy, perfectly consecrated to Him, hating our sins and being delivered from them. We will be so filled with the love of God that with all our faculties we shall serve Him perfectly and unceasingly. That glorious salvation is the end of our faith. All thanks and praise to Him alone! Sing Psalter 399.

March 25 Read Genesis 4:1-7 and Hebrews 11:4

The very first of the great cloud of witnesses listed in Hebrews as a hero of faith is Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve. God established the antithesis in Paradise putting enmity between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. It comes to manifestation very soon in the lives of Abel and his older brother Cain. Abel was given faith from God that caused him to bring the choicest of his flock as a sacrifice. He knew by the power of that faith that blood must be shed upon the altar. Cain also brought an offering, but it was the fruit of his own labors. He cared nothing for the need of forgiveness of his sins. The wrath of God always abides on the unbeliever, and because God had no respect for Cain’s offering, he became furious and murdered his righteous brother. Dear reader, we are told in II Corinthians 13:5, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.” Do you see the works of faith in your own life? Do you

love God, repent of your sins and strive to walk in holiness? Pray that God will continue to strengthen you and give you that confidence of faith. Sing Psalter 228.

March 26 Read Hebrews 11:5, 6

Enoch is one of many throughout Scripture, and specifically in Hebrews chapter 11, in whom faith is exemplified. Enoch lived in an age when the Church and the world began to amalgamate. Wickedness prevailed. By faith he walked with God. He lived a life of godliness, was fervent in prayer, and a fearless witness against the ungodly world and their deeds as recorded in the epistle of Jude. He was undoubtedly fiercely persecuted by those against whom he testified. His faith was rewarded in that he did not “see death” as other men and was instantly translated to glory. Can it be said of us as well that we believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him? We do not expect to be translated to heaven as was Enoch. But he is an example that we are to emulate. We are called to be living testimonies of our faith to all with whom we come into contact. If we are persecuted, don’t fear but commit your way in faith to God who is pleased with us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 260.

March 27 Read Hebrews 11:7

We read in Genesis that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and that he, like Enoch, walked with God. We must not think that Noah found grace because he walked with God. But rather he walked with God by the power of faith because God bestowed His favor upon him. Noah lived in a time of great wickedness on the earth, so great in fact that God determined to destroy all flesh by a flood with the exception of Noah and his family. For 120 years he was busy building the ark according to God’s specifications. He was mocked and scoffed at by the ungodly world, and not only did he persist in building the ark, but we read that he was a “preacher of righteousness” who testified of his faith and condemned the wicked. It is never easy to stand alone when seemingly everyone is against us. Only by the power of saving faith could Noah walk in obedience to God, and only by that same power can we remain faithful to our calling to love God and keep His commandments. Sing Psalter 378.

March 28 Read Hebrews 11:22

This verse testifies of the faith of Joseph when he prophesied that God would surely keep His promise to bring the nation of Israel back to the promised land. Joseph was near the end of his life when he uttered this, and he gave specific instructions, confirmed by an oath, that he must be buried in Canaan. His life was a very eventful one, and as a young person he had to be hated by his brothers, be sold as a slave and be imprisoned under false charges, yet by faith he endured it. God preserved him and made him a ruler in Egypt. He testified to his brethren that although they meant it for evil, God meant it for good. Sometimes we wonder why God sends us trials in our lives. Perhaps a loved one is taken by death, perhaps we lose our job through no fault of our own, or a devastating illness overtakes us. By faith we look to God for grace to submit to His will and say “Thy will be done.” Then we have peace during our afflictions and find comfort through our tears. Sing Psalter 30.

March 29 Read Hebrews 11:23-29

This passage speaks not only of the faith of Moses but also of his parents, Amram and Jochebed. Moses was born at a time when the king of Egypt issued a decree that all male babies born to the Israelites must be killed. Defying the king’s command, Moses’ parents hid him for three months before consigning him to the river in a little basket of reeds. You all know the history how Moses was found by the king’s daughter, became her son and eventually grew up in Pharaoh’s palace. Yet, instead of enjoying the luxurious life of a prince, Moses by faith cast his lot with the people of Israel, “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt”. He had heard as a little child on his mother’s knees the wonders of God. By the power of regeneration and the gift of faith, he embraced those promises. Young people, are you tempted to use that college degree to obtain a lucrative position somewhere, but it takes you away from the pure preaching of the Word? Many of us perhaps could procure better paying jobs, but to do so would mean compromising our faith. Let us by grace be obedient to God’s commands and experience His blessing. Sing Psalter 97.

March 30 Read Judges 13:2-5, 24 & 25

Who hasn’t heard about Samson, one of the most unusual and outstanding judges in the history of the nation of Israel? God, in sovereign wisdom, raised up this man at this time, consecrating him as a Nazarite and gave him prodigious strength. By this miraculous power he single-handedly delivered Israel from the Philistines. Although it is true that his life was tainted with sin and he often used improper means in his zeal for God and his hatred of the enemy, yet Scripture includes him in the cloud of witnesses and describes him as a man of faith. We read that God blessed him as a lad and certainly prepared him not only physically for his calling, but also spiritually. God also gives us certain talents and abilities. Are we burying them in the ground or striving to develop them for His service? That is not only our duty, but a privilege as well. May we by faith seek His kingdom, clinging to the promise that all else shall be added to us. Psalter 400.

March 31 Read Hebrews 11:32-40

We conclude our series on faith and those who exemplified it by taking a glimpse of Samuel, the prophet-judge in Israel. He was born in answer to a devout and barren mother’s prayer. Even before his birth he was dedicated to the Lord who sovereignly raised him up at a crucial time in Israel’s history. He was given faith as a child when he ministered in the temple. He was not only a teacher and judge, but also one of the first and great prophets. During his tenure the transition from judges to kings took place. He is mentioned twice in the book of Acts as well as in Hebrews chapter 11, and also as an example of greatness in Jeremiah 15:1. Only by faith could he walk in humble obedience to his God given calling. Only by faith can we too ever be pleasing to our God. We have nothing in ourselves in which we can boast. Our only boasting is in our faithful covenant God who works faith in our hearts by His grace and mercy. Let us praise and thank Him who alone is worthy. Psalter 271.

Arminianism (12)

Singing Sound Doctrine

by Aaron J. Cleveland

“**B**e sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” That is the admonition of I Peter 5:8 to the believer in this world who is surrounded by lies and the very real threat of being deceived. One way in which the believer heeds this admonition is by being spiritually discerning. One who is sober and vigilant is aware of his surroundings and is careful of that which influences him. He is careful where he goes, what he watches, what he reads, and even what he sings.

The sober and vigilant believer is one who is aware of the many false doctrines which surround him. False doctrines, including Arminianism, can creep into the church and into the lives of individual church members in many ways. What one would not tolerate in the preaching or in writing, one would accept in other forms. One medium that the devil uses to transmit false doctrines and ideas into the hearts and minds of people is music. This is obvious not only from the vile garbage that many consider music today, but also a good share of that which one finds in many church hymnbooks. We, therefore, as Reformed believers, must be discerning with the music we sing and allow ourselves to listen to. Specifically, in this article, we will notice how we as Reformed believers should not tolerate music which promotes false doctrine, including Arminianism.

Our lives are filled with singing. An important part of our Sunday worship is singing. In our denomination there are various choirs and quartets which sing. In our schools and homes we sing. Parents and teachers recognize music as an effective teacher to communicate to children profound truths about God and His works. It is amazing how quickly children can memorize words when they are put to music.

We, as believers, recognize that our singing in praise to God is not a work which we are able to perform of

ourselves. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within us. When we are filled with the Spirit, we speak and make melody in our hearts to the Lord. We read in Ephesians 5:18, 19, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” God is pleased only with that singing which comes from the Spirit filled hearts of His people.

Further, we sing as those who have the word of Christ dwelling in us richly. How can we sing to God unless He puts that Word within our hearts? We read of this in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” How important it is that our singing shows that we have the Word of Christ, the truth, richly dwelling within us.

The Spirit filled believer, in whom dwells the Word of Christ, sings with understanding. This third aspect of our singing is found in Psalm 47:6, 7, were we read, “Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.” That we sing with understanding implies a couple of things.

First, in order to sing with understanding one must have both his heart and mind involved. I Corinthians 14:15 connects singing and prayer and points out that both are to be done with understanding. God is not pleased when we petition Him in prayer with that which we do not sincerely desire and believe in our heart. Likewise, when we sing, God is not pleased with words which flow from our lips which do not correspond to the thoughts of our hearts. God is pleased when we know what we are singing and desire it in our hearts.

Secondly, singing with understanding implies that we praise God with sound doctrine. By sound doctrine

we mean the truth about God, His attributes, His works, and His salvation. Sound doctrine also involves the truth about man, his true spiritual condition, sin, his relation to God, and his relation to the world. We sing with understanding to God when we sing the truth to Him and about Him. To sing the lie to God and about God is evil. As obvious as this principle may be, we can easily violate it in our singing.

There are a number of ways in which the principles of proper singing can be broken. The first and most obvious violation is the singing of blatant false doctrine. Never should it be the case that we are found singing obvious lies about God and His works.

Secondly, songs are not properly sung when they contain questionable doctrinal statements. By this we mean phrases which can be taken in a number of ways, some of which could be erroneous. When the meaning of the words we are singing to God is not clear to us, we cannot sing them with understanding.

Thirdly, we violate these principles by singing that which blunts the sharply defined edges of the truth. There are songs which speak of God, His attributes, and His works in a very vague and generic manner so that nearly everyone who calls themselves a “Christian” could take the words upon their lips. These are songs which do away with any kind of doctrinal distinctiveness. They are intended to be sung by those who hold to a multitude of differing doctrines.

A fourth way in which we can break the principles of proper singing relates more to collections of songs, like hymnbooks, than it does to individual songs. It is possible to sing from certain collections of songs which do not do justice to the truth as it is revealed in God’s Word. For example, it is possible to go through 400 pages of certain hymnals and find very few references to sin and man’s spiritual condition apart from God. Certain basic truths are almost completely ignored. There are many collections of hymns which completely ignore truths such as the antithesis, God’s justice, and particular grace.

And while some aspects of the truth are avoided, others are given a place beyond measure, as if the truth is not a united whole. Take, for example, the hymnbooks which contain song after song praising the attribute of God’s love. But try to find a song which extols His justice. Or, there are the collections of songs which exalt the “experiences” and responsibilities of man to the exclusion of God’s sovereign grace. Even though one may be singing the truth in the individual songs he sings, by

singing from a body of music which ignores the truth as an organic whole, he ultimately fails to sing sound doctrine. One who sings song after song about God’s love divorces this attribute of God from the rest and is left with an idol god.

A final temptation which we face in our singing is the manner in which we sing. Our singing in praise to God can easily turn into a “performance” calculated more for the pleasing of men’s ears than for the glory of God. The emphasis shifts from the words upon which we are singing from our hearts to the beauty of the melody and perhaps the skill of the accompanist. We must be very careful that our singing does not become patterned after the singing of the world and of those in churches which are departing from the truth. Our singing is a gift of God which He works in us to the praise of *His* name.

Renouncing the ways of the world and the apostatizing church, we pattern our singing after the guidelines found in God’s word. This means that we sing the truth. We sing about the dark reality of sin and death. We sing about the antithesis and the world’s hatred of the church and the believer. We sing about God’s hatred of sin and His terrible wrath which is poured out against the impenitent sinner. We sing about His love for His people and His salvation given only to His elect. We sing about His particular grace. We sing about God sovereignly preserving us in all of our afflictions.

And when we sing, we do so from the heart, as when we pray. We are confident that God will receive our praise and will grant all that we request of Him in faith. If we are singing in public, we remember that God does not judge as men do. God searches our hearts. He is not impressed with any attention that we may be drawing to ourselves, rather He despises any outward show.

While this article has concerned itself mainly with the songs which we sing outside of our worship services, it is important to remember that all of our singing is connected. The church has been given the Psalms to sing in worship. The versifications of the Psalms which we sing in church ought to have a primary place in our homes and schools. The children must know them and be taught them in the home and schools. It is always a danger that a generation arises which does not really *know* and appreciate the sound doctrine which is contained in our versifications of the Psalms. Should the children be taught doctrinally superficial and sentimental songs, Satan’s work will be easier in getting them to abandon their Reformed heritage as they grow older.

Let us sing those songs which most accurately reflect the faith we hold dear. Let us not be ashamed of our Reformed heritage by singing that which fails to confess the precious doctrines we believe. In our singing, let us sing the truth as those who reject the lie. May our

singing truly praise God and serve to build us up in the faith. ❖

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

From the Pastor's Study

The Ninth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Speaking the Truth

by Rev. Doug Kuiper



Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Exodus 20:16

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another...Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Ephesians 4:25, 29

Lying is an art that does not need to be taught. Even a young child knows how to lie. As he grows older, that child quickly develops in his ability to lie well. He knows better when to lie—when a lie will likely be to his advantage, and when it will only make matters worse. And he knows better how to lie—how to be convincing; and what *not* to say, to give himself away.

Lying does not need to be taught, because it is part of our nature. Adam, believing the lie of Satan, and eating of the forbidden fruit, became by nature a liar, and passed that nature on to you and me. Just as a healthy baby does not need to be taught to say “dada” or “mama,” and just as a baby does not need to be taught to crawl, so humans do not need to be taught to lie.

Speaking the truth, on the other hand, must be taught. We must be told what the truth is; we must be shown how to speak that truth; and we must be given the ability

to speak that truth, for we do not have that ability by nature.

Young people, those who walk the Way of Thankful Obedience know what the truth is, know how to speak that truth, and are given the ability to speak it.

But even for them, lying still comes so naturally! Liars Lane is easy to walk on, and we often find ourselves, and many of our friends, walking on it for a time! But . . . where does it lead?

God graciously gives us another pointer, to keep us on the Way of Thankful Obedience: do not lie. *Ever!* Speak the truth. *Always!*



The circumstances in which we might be tempted to lie are endless.

The ninth commandment speaks especially of a situation of judgment. It could be a courtroom that we are in; or a consistory room; or we could be standing before our teacher, or

our parents. It does not matter. What matters is that we have been required to “bear witness,” that is, to give testimony, to answer a question put to us, regarding something we saw or heard or did. Our answer will affect the outcome of the situation. Perhaps we or our friends are guilty, but if we lie, we can get away without penalty!



Or perhaps we are asked about the actions of a kid we don't like. He is innocent; but if we lie, he could get in trouble! And that wouldn't particularly bother us. So we lie.

Already we can think of all kinds of situations in which lies would be helpful. The policeman asks us, "Do you know how fast you were going?" And we lie: "No." The teacher asks: "Did I not tell you that, if I forget to give you an assignment, you are to go on to the next lesson?" Indeed she did. But if we acknowledge that, then it is our fault for not having done the next lesson. So we lie: "I don't remember."

Sometimes our lie is a matter of giving wrong testimony regarding what we saw or heard or did. Other times our lie is a matter of twisting God's word, or not accurately representing it. To teach that God loves all men; to teach that God will never punish anybody; or to teach as truth anything other than the true gospel is a lie which many ministers commit. But it is as much a lie for the young person to say these things as well!

Sometimes our lie is a matter of saying what is blatantly false; other times our lie is a matter of telling the truth, but not the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We do not actually deny the truth; but neither do we give a person the whole picture, and so we deceive them.

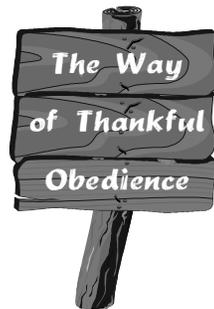


In order to avoid exiting The Way of Thankful Obedience for Liars Lane, we must know what the truth is, and who determines it.

Truth is what God says; He determines truth.

He determines the truth regarding Himself, man, Christ, salvation, the church, and the end of time. Such truth God makes known to us in Scripture, His Word. So Jesus acknowledged in prayer, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). At the heart of this revelation of truth is Jesus Christ Himself, who said of Himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). To enjoy salvation, one must know the Truth, Jesus Christ.

God also determines the truth regarding events that happen in time and history. He determined from all eternity everything that would happen; and in His providence, He governs all that happens. When we see an accident happen, or when we are witness to a crime, or when we



hear a person lie, and are called to testify regarding these things, we must speak truth—that is, we must speak exactly what we saw, as we saw it, without distorting it. To do so is to speak truth. To speak what we did not see, is to speak a lie.

Young people, it is very important to remember that we, humans, do not determine what is truth. In our society, many people think truth is what we *want* it to be. Truth is my *opinion*. Truth is whatever I believe. Truth is one thing for me, and another thing for you. But these ideas are false—they are the lie itself! For truth is determined by God, and does not change, just as God Himself does not change.

So our duty, in light of the ninth commandment, is always to speak the truth. Doing that, we will continue to travel on The Way of Thankful Obedience.



That we speak truth is not *all* that the ninth commandment requires of us. It is much broader.

The ninth commandment requires that we speak this truth *in love*. There are times when we need not speak truth. I don't mean that there are times when we may lie. But there are times when we need not speak at all, because to speak the truth in such instances does not show love. We need not speak the truth about the sins which this or that person committed privately; we need not speak about the weaknesses of other people. To do so is to gossip, slander, or backbite. To gossip is to speak about other people's private, personal lives—matters that are none of our business. Gossip often leads to rumors. To backbite is to attack the character or reputation of a person who is not present. It might be that what is said about the person is technically true; but to say it does not manifest love. And slander is an outright lie about a person, with the intent of making that other person look bad.

God requires us to speak the truth in love, and to speak that which is good to the use of edifying. In other words, we are to speak that which will build up our fellow saints and neighbors. We are to refrain from speaking what we might think is the truth about them, when to speak such would not build them up.

I had the privilege of knowing a certain godly man, from whose mouth I never heard an unkind word about anybody. I sometimes wondered, as he spoke highly of certain people, whether he knew their faults or weaknesses. I decided that he surely did. But he spoke only of their good points! What an example to follow! God created each of us with certain strengths and certain weaknesses. None of us is perfect. But each of us must speak

highly of the other. This is part of the command of God to us in the ninth commandment.

If we cannot speak good one of another, we ought not speak at all.

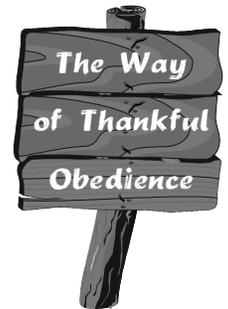
If we cannot speak good sincerely, we ought not speak. To speak flattery—that is, to speak one’s praises, but not sincerely—is not a keeping of this commandment.



How difficult to stay traveling on The Way of Thankful Obedience! It requires of us that we tame our tongue—which James calls “an unruly evil, full of deadly

poison” (James 3:8). It requires of us that we love the truth of God.

To obey the ninth commandment is not at all easy. But God gives His grace, to those who seek it of Him. Young people, do you desire grace to love and speak the truth of God? ❖



Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Our Young People’s Federation

2003 Convention from a Chaperone’s Perspective

by Roger Brand

I arrived at the YMCA camp both enthused and apprehensive. Enthused about developing new friendships, renewing old ones, and enjoying the fellowship often found at conventions. Apprehensive about what the conventioners would act like. Would they be willing to attend meetings, willing to discuss the subjects presented, courteous and respectful, willing to follow the dress codes presented, or not?

Chaperone meetings were held each morning after our morning devotions. At the first meeting we were told the camp had very specific nighttime rules and whether we agreed or not we had to follow the rules set forth. I later found out we had several other families in our dorm that were not part of the convention or the PR churches. One had a baby and young daughter with them. It was imperative that we follow the camp rules and respect the others around us not only during the day but especially at night.

In our dorm, there were chaperones in the rooms at each end of the hallways on each floor. Rev. Eriks, Leon Griess, Shon Griess and I roomed together. Even though there seemed to be a snoring contest each evening, I hope they enjoyed the company and fellowship as much as I did.

Each chaperone was given a list of the people in the two or three rooms they were responsible for. We had devotions together at 6:45am and 10:30pm. The guys I had were on a different floor than I was, another unusual aspect that worked out well thanks to the responsible attitudes of the young people. Also the chaperones were not allowed to have master keys for the dorms due to the other guests in our building, but thankfully we didn’t need them. We really didn’t have to check rooms and search for kids skipping meetings. The conventioners were told they had to check in with their chaps at the auditorium before each of the speeches and discussion groups. Their names were checked off the chaps list, and only those too ill to attend were excused.

The cafeteria at the YMCA was outstanding. Prime rib, fried chicken, shrimp and ham were some of the dinner meals provided, along with salad bar, fruit bar, and desserts at each meal. Chaperones and pastors often dined together but it also wasn’t uncommon to see the young people sitting with the adults in the dining room. The other heart-warming experience was hearing others at the camp approach our table asking who we were and where we were from and then commenting on the dress and attitude of our young people. One older fellow com-

mented specifically on the fact that the girls didn't represent the "Britney Spears" look. The dress code was clearly noticed by others at the camp.

I was also very impressed with the behavior and attitudes of our young people. We had a number of special needs young people at the convention, and they were very well received and accepted. The fact that many of our special children are mainstreamed at our schools made a huge difference in how they were received and treated at the convention. During the games and mixers, there was much encouragement given to those who were not as physical and athletic as others. It was also very heart-warming to see these young people be a part of the discussion groups, Bible trivia, and speeches.

Some of the young people did struggle with altitude sickness and there seemed to be a flu bug at camp. There were a few of the chaps that were nurses and did double duty at camp. I think they suffered with sleep deprivation more than most of the kids; they were extremely busy all week with both sicknesses and a few injuries.

The Loveland steering committee had a 25-year age minimum for chaperones, a decision that seemed to help with discipline. I did hear of a couple of occasions where the conventioners didn't respect the younger women chaps and actually ignored them when they tried to talk

to the kids. We also had a few kids that chose to go home early. My impression was that most of the young people that did leave early were a bit older. Hopefully the older young people will prove to be better examples to the younger conventioners in the future.

My experience at the Loveland Convention was far more than I expected. I know that many of the young people build and renew friendships at our Conventions that last for years. I have found that the same holds true for the chaperones at conventions. This year was no different; I enjoyed the new friendships and also the fellowship with pastors and others who have chaperoned before. I often wonder if the chaperones get more out of the conventions than the young people.

I would encourage those who have never spent a week at a young people's convention to take the opportunity to spend a week working with the young people and experiencing the fellowship and spiritual growth. I remember a convention a few years back when one of the couples chaperoning was pushing 70 years old. They not only enjoyed the week, but commented later on what an uplifting and enjoyable week they had had.

Roger is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Church History

George M. Ophoff (14)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

Those of our readers who are acquainted with the history of our denomination will know that, although the Synod of 1924 adopted the three points of common grace, this Synod did not pass a motion which would require the discipline of those who opposed the doctrine. In fact, the Synod specifically rejected a motion to discipline. The result was that Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof continued to write and speak concerning their views on the whole matter of common grace. They did not do this because they wanted to agitate against Synodical decisions; the Synod itself, as a part of its decisions, had stated that the doctrine should continue to be

discussed in the churches. Such discussion seemed to imply the right to voice opposition to the doctrine.

There were many in the Christian Reformed Church who were not happy with this state of affairs; and the result was that the matter of the discipline of Rev. Hoeksema came to Classis Grand Rapids East in the latter part of the year. This Classis deposed Rev. Hoeksema and his consistory from office—an act which was the beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Classis Grand Rapids West met in January of 1925. This was the Classis which deposed Revs. Danhof and Ophoff along with their consistories.

A reading of the minutes of Classis Grand Rapids West cannot help but give certain definite impressions concerning these proceedings. For one thing, it is completely obvious that the delegates to Classis Grand Rapids West were following closely and consciously what Classis Grand Rapids East had already done. The latter had paved the way; the former was following a trail already blazed.

For another thing, there seems no doubt about it that there was collusion between the two Classes—or, at least, between various members of the two Classes. There was a determined effort on the part of the majority in both Classes to solve the common grace controversy once and for all and to get rid of all opposition to the doctrine.

One more impression is left. Classis Grand Rapids West was guilty of what can only be called “steamroller tactics.” The outcome of the classical meeting was never in doubt; it was a foregone conclusion before the first day of classical business was finished. The Classis would tolerate no delay, no argument, no opposition to its pre-determined plan. It had its goal clearly in mind, and it pushed towards this goal relentlessly.

Rev. Hoeksema was correct when he wrote in *The Protestant Reformed Churches In America*,

Classis Grand Rapids West was more clearly conscious of its hierarchical power and ecclesiastical authority over consistories and congregations with their pastors; and it expressed this sense of authority more boldly and proudly.

It attributes to itself the right at any time to pick up a quarrel with a local consistory or pastor or both, though there be no accusation against either of them; and in the course of that quarrel to depose the Officebearers, if they presume to disagree with its authority!

It brooks no opposition or contradiction! When its commanding voice is heard, the consistories and ministers had better hasten to obey!

And its vengeance is swift as lightning!

Even though Church Orders and Formulas of Subscription speak of suspension of ministers before they are deposed, Classis Grand Rapids West imposes the supreme penalty at once!

It is not our purpose to enter into all the proceedings of Classis Grand Rapids West, in which the congregation of Rev. Ophoff resided. Nor is there a need to evaluate from a church political aspect all that Classis did. A few remarks will have to be sufficient.

First of all, The Synod of 1924, for whatever reason, had at least left the impression that Rev. Hoeksema, and others who disagreed with the decisions, were free to discuss the decisions of common grace even though Synod had spoken on the matter. The Synod had rejected a decision to exercise or advise discipline of those who expressed open disagreement with the decision. The Synod had declared in an official statement that Rev. Hoeksema was fundamentally Reformed, even though he may have had a tendency to be one-sided. The Synod itself had officially spoken of the need to study the issue of common grace, write about it publicly and continue to make it a subject for discussion in the churches. Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that those who opposed common grace continued to speak against the doctrine publicly.

Ordinarily, such public opposition to synodical decisions would be wrong. The decisions of the assemblies in the church are settled and binding unless they are proved to be in conflict with the Word of God and the Reformed confessions. That surely means that these decisions are also binding *until* such proof as the Church Order requires is accepted by the assemblies. (One can consult Article 31 of our Church Order to read the entire article.)

Second, Classis West did Rev. Ophoff (and Danhof) grave injustice. The injustice was surely present in the refusal of the Classis to tolerate any discussion on the subject on the floor of the assembly. But the injustice was especially the activity of Classis in deposing these two ministers. Rev. Hoeksema points out in the quote above that the Church Order requires the suspension of a minister before he is actually deposed. Classis argued this requirement out of the way.

But, more importantly, the Classis has no right to depose ministers. If it finds a minister guilty of a sin worthy of suspension and deposition, all it can do is advise the consistory of the minister to suspend and depose its pastor. If the consistory refuses to obey Classis, the Classis can only declare such a congregation outside the denomination. But it may not engage in discipline itself. That is the work of the elders.

The decisions of Classis West of the Christian Reformed Church are interesting and give some idea of what went on there. We can only quote excerpts.

We must remember that this same Classis also dealt with the deposition of Rev. H. Danhof, minister of Kalamazoo I Christian Reformed Church and an opponent of common grace. Further, the Classis dealt with

the candidacy of Mr. B. Danhof, called to be a minister of Coopersville Christian Reformed Church. He was a nephew of Rev. H. Danhof, and had also expressed opposition to common grace. His candidacy was refused by Classis.

But we are concerned here with what transpired on Classis in the Ophoff case. ❖

Prof. Hanko is a professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary. This article is reprinted from the March, 1977 issue of Beacon Lights.

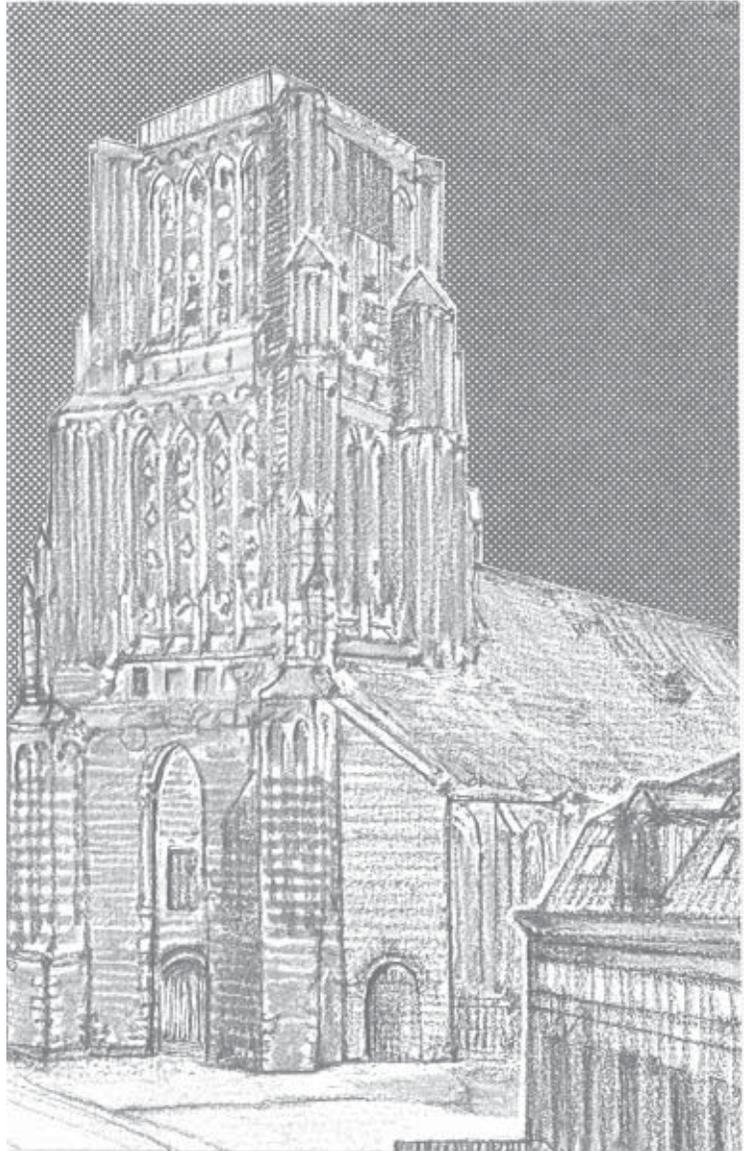
The Sint-Gertrudiskerk of Workum

By J. P. de Klerk

Workum is a small town in the western part of the Dutch province of Friesland, and the Sint-Gertrudis Church is famous because of the tower of this State Reformed building. It was built in 1340 without the church, which was built in the years 1555-1613 by Protestants, because in the meantime the Reformation had come to Friesland.

The name comes from Sint Gertrudis de grote van Hefta, a noble who had become a nun. She was born January 6, 1256 in Thuringen, Germany, and was admired by the Roman Catholics because she said she had all kinds of visions, which she wrote down in two books (in Latin). This drawing was made in 1921 in crayon by the Dutch Architect Dr. H. P. Berlage, who always liked to study historic church buildings and made sketches of them in his spare time. From the 14th until the 17th century, Workum was an important commercial center, together with Stavoren and Hindelopen. Many old buildings in Workum are well preserved or restored. There is also a well-known pottery and a dairy factory that exports its products. ❖

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



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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:
- Kayla Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Velthouse—Byron Center, MI
 - Andrew Justice, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Chesebro—Byron Center, MI
 - Parker Jeffrey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff VanBaren—Faith, MI
 - Dewey Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dewey Engelsma—Grandville, MI
 - Connor John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Courtney—Holland, MI
 - Karlene Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Herman Boonstra—Hull, IA
 - Ava Morgan, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Brummel—Hull, IA
 - Reuben James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Tolsma—Lacombe, Canada

- Kaitlin Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rob McClaury—Redlands, CA
- Brooke Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Cammenga—Southwest, MI
- Adult Baptism was administered to Mr. William Graham in Ballymena, NI

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:
- William Graham—Ballymena, NI
 - Dan Kuiper—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

- United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
- Mr. Chad Rus and Miss Jill Griffioen—Faith, MI
 - Mr. Herman Hanko and Miss Lindy Lotterman—Grandville, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

One Man Against the World (4)

The year was 325. The city was Nicea. The issue was—is Jesus God or not?

The Arians were winning. There were more of them. They spoke the loudest. They would surely be able to sway the many church leaders who were undecided. "Jesus was created," they said. "He is not of the same substance of God. Besides, why be so concerned about details? We still confess that He is the Son of God."

Athanasius was very young, but he was just as educated as the rest. He knew Scripture even more. He loved it and revered it. He knew Who Jesus was. And he could prove it. He could see through the Arian heresies and lies. He would stand alone if he had to. The truth that the Son is co-eternal and co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit had to be unswervingly maintained!

One letter in one Latin word, that's all the council was trying to decide. With an *i* they would write a creed that said Jesus was only "of like substance" with God. Without the *i* the creed would say that Jesus was "of the same substance" of God. Just one letter, but a world—an eternity—of difference.

"Athanasius," called one of the council members, "you will never win. Don't you know that right now the whole world is against you?"

The young deacon was undaunted. He answered with boldness and courage. He answered with words that

would follow him into the record of history for all time. "Is the world against Athanasius? So be it. Then Athanasius is against the world!"*

And so it was.
(to be continued) ❖

**Against the World: The Odyssey of Athanasius by Henry W. Coray, Inheritance Publications, 1999, p. 39.*

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

Unscramble the letters to complete the following verses:

"I ilwl ysa fo het Lord, Eh si
I _ _ _ _ _ Lord, _ _ _ _

ym feureg nad ym restrofs: ym
_ _ _ _ _:

God; ni mih lliw I uttsr."
God; _ _ _ _ _ I _ _ _ _ .

"A dashtuno slahl llaf ta yth
A _ _ _ _ _

dies, dan net nusthoad ta hyt
_ _ _ _ , _ _ _ _ _

hirtg dnah; tub ti halls ton
_ _ _ _ _ ; _ _ _ _ _

moec ginh hete."
_ _ _ _ _ .

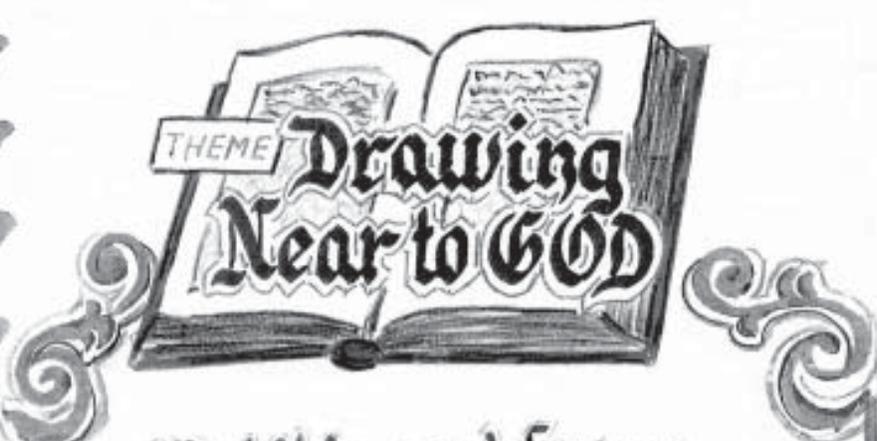
Psalm 91:2, 7



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THEME **Drawing
Near to GOD**

But it is good for me
to draw near to GOD:
I have put my trust in
the Lord God, that I
may declare all thy works.

PSALM 73:28

Covenant Hills Otisville MI.
JULY 12-16

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Rev. R. Cammenga, Rev. A. Kleyn,
Rev. W. Langerak.

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