
Beacon

August/September
2004

Volume LXIII
Number 8

Lights

*“He delighteth not in the strength
of the horse: he taketh not pleasure
in the legs of a man.”*

Psalm 147:10

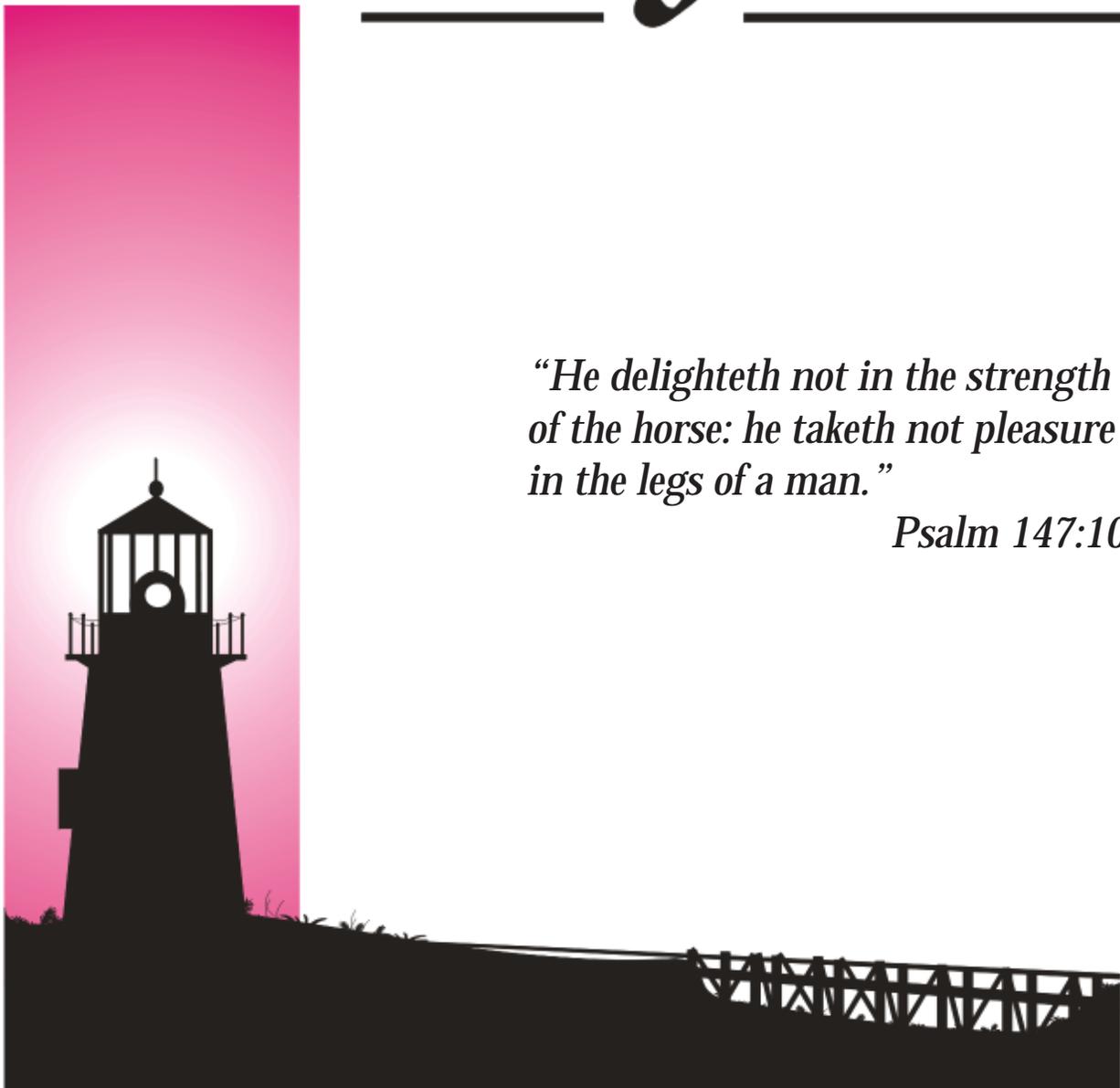


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	Off on the Right Foot
	FRUITFUL BRANCHES
4	The Minister's Reflection of Christ
	GEM OF THE MONTH
6	Liberty
	THE READER ASKS
7	Christian Fiction (2)
	PASTOR PROFILE
8	Rev. Nathan Brummel
	CONSIDER THE CREATION
11	The Battle Front: Plants
	DEVOTIONAL
13	Watching Daily At My Gates
	MUSIC
21	A Small Walk
	WHERE WE STAND
22	Common Grace: Reformed Doctrine or Fallacy (1)
	CHURCH HISTORY
25	George M. Ophoff (18): Rev. Ophoff's Relation To His Colleague
28	The State Reformed Church Of Serooskerke
	POEM
30	A Perfect Day
	LITTLE LIGHTS
31	In a Snowy Day
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

BEACON LIGHTS

EDITOR

John Huizenga

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Aaron Cleveland

SECRETARY

CONTENTS COMMITTEE

John Huizenga
Trevor Kalsbeek
Jason Kuiper
Kris Moelker
Randy Vaalburg

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD

Kevin Gritters (President)
Matt Overway (Vice-President)
Rachel Kuiper (Secretary)
Brad Vander Veen (Treasurer)
Sarah Koole (Librarian)
Sara Huizinga (Vice-Secretary)
Jeff Van Uffelen (Vice-Treasurer)
Jim Holstege (Youth Coordinator)
Prof. Barry Gritters (Spiritual Advisor)

PROMOTION COMMITTEE

Kim Doezeema
Rachel Joostens
Jeff Kalsbeek

PRODUCTION COMMITTEE

Aaron Cleveland
Dave Langerak

BUSINESS OFFICE

Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 144
Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920) 326-6186
Email: huizenga@powercom.net

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE

A free service to the legally blind. Contact Sam Copple
659 Lincoln Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Phone: (616) 774-4132
Email: SamCopples@email.msn.com

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melinda Bleyenbergh
Email: darylme@altelco.net

BOOK SALES

Becky Kalsbeek

TYPESETTER

Robert Vermeer

PRINTER

James Huizinga

MAILERS

Bill & Fran Leep

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

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

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

Off on the Right Foot

by John Huizenga



Excitement builds as the runners line up on the track. Each is focused; distracted by nothing around them. They carefully position their feet and hands for the best possible start. Muscles tense, a shot cracks, and the runners are off in the blur of arms and legs. Every ounce of energy is poured forth in an effort to reach the goal.

Do these runners describe you in your race? We are all at this very moment in the heat of a race, and for you students, a very important part of the race is just around the corner. God in Hebrews 12:1 and 2 describes our life as Christians in terms of a race: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Our instruction and life in school is a very important part of this race, and you are called by God to muster all the strength, courage, and dedication to do your best.

We are not called to be spectators at a race where we sit and watch the few elite “saints” of God run the race. Every man, woman, and child is sweating and straining in this race. Old grandmas and grandpas; babies and children; the maimed, crippled, and deformed; muscular men and beautiful models; from the homeless to the rocket scientist; everyone is running a race. The strange thing about all this running around in the world is that many are running wide eyed and with great determination in one direction toward a vision of glory and happiness in man himself. There are others who run in the exact opposite direction. Many of these have tear stained faces, but they are smiling. They are working together in groups helping one another. They stop to pick up those that fall. Those who wander off and begin to run with the world are diligently sought out. And in the center of those groups are the children where much energy and time is being spent showing them how to get off on the right foot, encouraging them, and pointing ahead to the goal: the glory of God in Christ. When the world slows down a bit on Sunday to indulge in their accomplishments, the church gathers for a time of great thanksgiving, instruction, and praise to God for his salvation in Christ.

In some ways the race we run is like a relay race or a triathlon. A heritage is passed on from one generation to the next and we all begin and end new phases in life. Each year of school is an important part of the race for everyone in the church, not just the children. On the first day of school, the students are all lined up at the starting line, . . . along with the parents, teacher, and everyone else in church. They all run the race together. And as with any race, it is important to get off on the right foot. To get off on the right foot means that we do everything possible to have a good start.

Are you ready to run the school race this coming year? Do you see clearly before you the goal? If your goal is to be the top student, to be the worst student, to do the best you can, or just have a good time, you’d better wait a minute before taking off because you are going in the wrong direction. Our chief goal must be the glory of God, and we accomplish that by seeing ourselves as servants of God. We must strive this year to be a good servant of God. When we run with the proper goal before us, then a student who gets a “D” average will win if he is prepared to do the best he can as the servant of God. A student who gets straight “A’s” will lose the race if he does it only for his own glory.

With God’s glory as our goal, we do not compete with one another in this race; we compete with the old man of sin within ourselves. As believers, we must all work together. We don’t fight, argue, cheat, or hurt one another; we encourage one another to do our best and help those who fall. In this race we don’t

run every which way trying to be the best student, have the most friends, be the naughtiest kid or whatever. We all run together for the glory of God. The parent does not say, "This school had better do a good job in math and science or I'm leaving, because I'm sending my son to college." Rather, the parent says, "I'm so thankful we have a school where students are prepared to be servants of God."

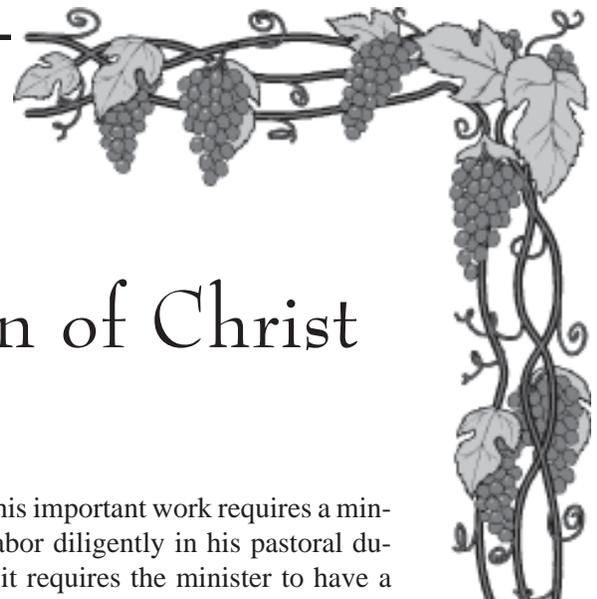
Are you ready now to run the school race this year? On your mark, get set, ... Wait a minute! Do you have all the right equipment? An Olympic runner has the best equipment she can get. She has expensive shoes, the right food in her stomach, and is not cluttered with anything that distracts from her goal. Though our race is essentially spiritual, we live now on this earth and we have been given earthly gifts to be used as we work and run as servants of God. Do you have all the supplies on your school supply list? Supporters of our schools, did you give willingly to make sure the school was supplied with an adequate building, books, etc.? Most importantly, do you meditate upon God's word each morning and pray for strength and wisdom to run today's race?

There is one more important part to running the race. An Olympic runner on the track is very serious, focused, eager, and excited. He doesn't care what others are thinking about him. His eyes are riveted on the finish line. He is not carelessly standing there with his arms crossed, muttering about the stupidity of races. He has an attitude about the race that will enable him to do his best in the race.

Students, what is your attitude toward the coming year of school? Parents, what is your attitude toward the school, the teachers God has placed there, the curriculum, and the instruction? Teachers, what is your attitude toward your calling as a teacher? What is your attitude toward the students, the parents and the board? Your attitude is like a window to your heart. Since a battle rages in our heart between the old and new man, we often stumble at the start of the race, run off the track, trip others, and do other foolish things that slow us way down. These bad attitudes come out in how we express our goals and how we prepare for the school year.

Our attitude is something we need to work at each moment of the day. A proper attitude will only come in the way of staying focused on the goal. The only way to stay focused on the goal is to meditate upon God's word and pray. And it is only by God's grace that we can do any of this. May God graciously bless this coming year so that we may say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). ❖

Fruitful Branches



The Minister's Reflection of Christ

by Nathan Dykstra

The minister of the gospel is called to labor in the church of Christ. This calling is an important work because the church is the spiritual body of Jesus

Christ. This important work requires a minister to labor diligently in his pastoral duties, and it requires the minister to have a

certain love for his congregation. The work of the minister is similar to that of a shepherd and a disciple. The work of the minister is a reflection of the work of the chief shepherd and disciple: Jesus Christ.

The duties of a minister toward his congregation are similar to the duties a shepherd has toward a flock of sheep. The shepherd protects his sheep from roving predators that seek to devour them. The shepherd may even risk his life in order to provide safety for the sheep. The parable of the lost sheep illustrates the extent of a shepherd's love for his sheep. The shepherd was concerned about the one sheep that had gone astray into the wilderness. He was not content to have ninety-nine sheep in his fold. No, the shepherd left the ninety-nine and searched until the lost sheep was restored. The love that the minister has for the saints should be similar to the love of the shepherd. He labors among the saints of God on account of the love that he holds for the church. The minister also seeks the spiritual welfare of the people of God. When a child of God wanders into the wilderness of sin, the minister labors unceasingly in order to restore the child of God into the church.

The shepherd is also responsible for providing pasture and water for his flock. In John 21:15-17, Jesus commanded Peter: "Feed my sheep." Here the Lord exhorts every under-shepherd to busy himself in the ministry of the Word (Calvin 291). The minister labors in the study of the Word so that each Sunday he may lead the people of God into the green pastures of His Word. When the believers come into the house of God on Sunday after a week of trekking through the wilderness of the world, they need to be fed and watered. It is the responsibility of the minister, the ambassador of Christ, to seek green pastures and living water for the people of God. The saints desire the living water that flows from the atonement of Christ on His cross. The desired pastures are rich with the doctrines of the Christian religion that provide true comfort to the saints. The saints enjoy this comfort after they hear about the Great Shepherd, who purchased His people not with gold or silver but with His own precious blood.

Preaching the Word is the primary duty of the minister of the gospel. The preaching of the gospel is considered one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The Heidelberg Catechism answer 84 states:

When it is declared to every believer, that, when they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, and on the contrary, when it is declared to all unbeliev-

ers, and such as do not repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath and judgement of God.

The emphasis the catechism places on the preaching of the Word motivates people to note the seriousness involved with preaching. The preaching serves the purpose of gathering all believers into the body of Christ, but it also serves as a warning to the unbeliever. In order to accomplish this purpose, the minister must preach exegetically and interpret Scripture on its own account. It is through these means that God is glorified in the preaching and the saints are nourished with the Word of God.

The work of the minister is also reflected in the life of a disciple. The disciple is one who follows and takes upon himself the example set forth by his master. The minister must follow the example of the Master who denied Himself even unto death because of His love for His chosen people. The life that Christ portrayed is truly the best example of the life of a disciple. Christ was busy in His earthly ministry preaching and teaching among the people. He then humbly submitted Himself to the will of the Father by suffering and dying on the cross and descending into the torments of hell. He bore all this suffering so that the saints might receive life everlasting. What an inspiration this is for the men who labor in the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The zeal a minister has for his work stems from the work of Christ in his heart, and he is motivated to busy himself in the work of the church. The minister seeks to serve his Master by laboring in the church. The minister denies himself and his own interests and strives for the good of the church.

The work of the minister in the church is a labor of love and obedience to Christ. The minister must realize that Christ called him to labor in the church. This calling places a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the minister. Since the minister has been called by Christ to serve His church, the minister is held responsible for his labors in the church directly to Christ Himself (DeJong 29). Hebrews 13:17 states: "For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." This text motivates the minister to busy himself in the work of the church because he must watch over the very souls of God's children. What a calling it is then to be a laborer on the walls of Zion!

Should God be pleased to call me as an undershepherd to labor in His fold I must submit to His will. Submission to the will of the Father is what it means to be a

disciple of God. Remember the idea of a disciple, one who denies himself and his own interests in order to serve the Master. The idea of discipleship truly involves every child of God, but a minister has a spiritual calling to deny himself and live in servitude to the church. The disciple must also follow the spiritual teachings of the Master in heaven. I believe the Protestant Reformed Churches are blessed with one of the purest manifestations of the truth. The Protestant Reformed Churches preach and teach the whole counsel of God; therefore our churches follow the command of Christ to feed the sheep. The work of the minister reflects the service of Christ after he denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows in the teachings of Christ. Whether God calls me to labor as a minister in His kingdom or not, I pray that whatever I do may be done to the honor and glory of His name. To God alone be the glory and may His name be praised! ❖

Works Cited

- Calvin, John. (1949). *Commentary of the Gospel According to John*. (Vol. 2). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- DeJong, Rev. Peter. (1955). *Taking Heed to the Flock*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Nathan is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. He wrote this essay for the Protestant Reformed Scholarship.

Liberty

Liberty...
*The cry of millions over all the earth,
 The cry of people yearning to breathe free.
 What do they really want? Freedom from what?
 Oppression, they would tell you; just to be
 The masters of their lives and of their fate,
 No stringent rules; **that** is the enemy!*

Liberty...
*What do the Scriptures say true freedom is?
 To shed sin's yoke. The battle we shall win.
 The cross of Christ bestows this gift to us
 And gives the grace that we may walk within
 The freedom of the law of **righteousness**;
 No longer in the bondage of our **sin**.*

Liberty...
*The mad mob rushes on in pride,
 Thinking they're free, they wallow in their slime,
 Defiling good; obscenity they love;
 With bloody hands they glory in their crime,
 Not understanding they are Satan's slaves,
 They are convinced they're having a good time!*

Liberty...
*How must we seek true freedom then?
 By singing songs the world delights in singing?
 By following their lead in what to wear?
 By gestures rude, by "mild oaths" flinging?
 By watching entertainment spawned in hell?
 Aren't we aware from whence these things are
 springing?*

Liberty...
*Lord, give us grace to flee the wrong,
 To know the truth: the truth shall make us free.
 May we sing praises to **Thy holy name!**
 Rule in our hearts; give us new eyes to see
 The way of righteousness is joy sublime:
 Our hand in Thine, we'll know true liberty.*

Thelma Westra

Christian Fiction (2)

by Rev. James Laning

Dear Rev. Laning

Thank you for your careful consideration of my questions and the thorough response you made in your rubric in the *Beacon Lights*. I have some follow up questions that have come up in my mind. You may include them in your rubric or send me a personal reply, whichever you feel is appropriate.

I like to write. Perhaps you have seen some of my stories printed in the *Perspectives*. That is what happens when I share my stories with my father who is the editor. So the questions I have are of a personal nature. I struggle with the issue and I agree with your response, even though I have attempted “biblical narrative.” What about a story that bears a biblical setting and maybe has a biblical character in a secondary role? I am thinking of novels like *The Robe* by Lloyd C. Douglas, or *The Silver Chalice* by Thomas B. Costain, or *The Charioteer* (I’m not sure of the author). In each case there is a biblical setting and secondary characters that are found in the pages of scripture but the plot flows away from the biblical events. Again, with all reading there is the need to read with discretion but how do you view this type of “Christian literature?”

What about need? There is so much out there and your response touched on this. It is one thing to read a Charles Dickens tale and learn about 19th century England and quite another to read “Christian literature.” Should aspiring writers concentrate on reformed, biblical lessons, designed to teach certain morals, or can they fictionalize without getting preachy?

My feelings are that one can pen his tale but do so in such a manner as to be profitable to those who know little about the subject. The writer can then present his viewpoint and the action without using worldly language, worldly innuendoes or worldly implications. Since all stories present the certain ethics and worldview of the author to some degree or another, would “Christian literature” then depend on the writer? I am sure that my

own writing reflects my biases and beliefs without having them too obvious.

Thanks again for your previous responses. They have been helpful.

Respectfully,
Jay Kalsbeek

Dear Jay

Thanks for your letters, and for addressing an interesting topic.

Let me begin by saying this, whenever we write, the following are two questions that we should ask ourselves:

1. What message am I trying to get across?
2. Is this message clearly coming across in my writing?

The first question can be expanded a bit, so that we ask ourselves this question: Am I trying to teach and to expound on the truths taught in Scripture, or am I trying to teach my own ideas? Obviously, this is the crucial question, and it requires some serious self-examination on our part. Yet, this is precisely what we must do. I must always confess that my own ideas are evil and useless, and that the only thing worth writing is something that will set forth, in one form or another, the truth of the Word of God. So this question must be answered first.

Whether writing fiction or non-fiction, the writer should be able to summarize briefly what truths he is trying to get across. If he cannot do this, then he should not be writing. If he himself does not really know what he is saying, how can he expect anybody else to figure it out?

Now let us go on to consider that second question, which concerns the way in which we try to get across the message. As I said in my previous response, fiction can certainly be used profitably to get across various truths. But I do not think it is wise to bring into a fictional story a person spoken of in the Bible. In my judgment, this tends to promote vain speculation about the true stories recorded in Scripture, and inevitably leads

some readers to ask, “Did that really happen?” or, worse yet, to say, “I did not know that that happened.” This leads to confusion, and the writer becomes partly responsible for leading people away from contemplating the truth that God is making known in the historical narrative. God forbids us to add to or take away from His Word (Rev. 22:18, 19), and it seems to me that one who connects his story to the Scriptures in the way you suggest is really playing around a bit with that which God forbids. Therefore, I would warn against doing this.

With regard to your final comment, I think you are correct that one’s writing will and should manifest the writer’s worldview. What is important, however, is that the “ethics and worldview” that comes across in our writing is that of Scripture and our confessions. God used many different men with many different writing styles to write the Scriptures. Yet they all wrote the same truths, having the same “ethics and worldview.” Although we are not infallibly inspired when we write, we should all strive to show forth in our writing that we have these same views, this same worldview. Then, whether we write fiction or non-fiction, our writing will be profitable to those who read it. And that, after all, must be our goal. ❖

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

Pastor Profile

Rev. Nathan Brummel

edited by Kris Moelker

I first saw the light of day on March 16, 1970 in the Pipestone County Hospital in rural Minnesota. I was the second child born to Allen and Sharon Brummel. I joined an older brother, Allen, who was a year and a half old. Later my parents were blessed with three daughters: Jodi, Shari, and Tiffany.

I look back with gratitude to God for the gift of my parents. What a blessing it was to have faithful parents, who were committed to the body of Christ. From my earliest years my mother taught me the great Bible stories. She taught me to memorize Psalter numbers and Bible passages. My father sacrificed until it hurt for my education. He was willing to be used in the church and

the community on various boards and later as a volunteer for the Edgerton ambulance.

Some of my earliest memories involve visiting my Grandpa and Grandma Brummel’s farm, some seven miles away from my hometown of Edgerton. Later my Uncle Joe and Aunt Mary took over the farm and I have fond memories of visiting them. One time my brother and I stayed overnight at the farm. One of the cows had just had a calf. The old veterinarian from Edgerton, Dr. Kemp, came out to make sure all of the afterbirth was out of the cow. He soaped up his arm and it disappeared into the back of the cow. Since it was a hot day and flies were everywhere in the barn, and landing on his back,

the vet commanded us boys to keep the flies off. We kept the flies off. We dried his sweaty back off with an old towel. After he was finished he handed us an aluminum bucket with the afterbirth and said: "Give this to your Aunt Mary and have her make you some hamburger." To say the least, that didn't look too appetizing.

I grew up in the little Dutch town of Edgerton, Minnesota. We lived across from our church and a block away from the Free Christian School, our grade school. Our school was a two-room schoolhouse. I had three teachers through ten grades. Carol Brands, then Miss De Jong, was my kindergarten teacher. Then for a few grades I was taught by Miss Hoekstra. Most memorable of all was her teaching of the Bible stories! Then from fourth grade to ninth grade I was taught by my "uncle" Peter Brummel. I am thankful for the sacrifices of those teachers.

When I was in grade school my father quit his job as assistant editor of the *Edgerton Enterprise*, the local newspaper, and bought out two shoe businesses in town and opened Brummel's Sewing and Shoes. For a few years my parents had run a sewing machine business out of the house.

Growing up, our life centered around the church and school. When I was young the Slopsema family moved to Edgerton. Thereafter I had a very tall pastor and as the years passed my siblings and I spent many happy hours playing with the Slopsema girls.

Summers in Edgerton were carefree times, at least before I was 14 or 15 and started working for local farmers. Almost every day my friends, Steve and Tim, and I would ride our bikes to the public swimming pool. Afterwards we would stop by Brummel's Bakery, owned by my Uncle Andy, and eat donuts and rolls and cookies. Yet I was skinny. My uncle would probably be able to retire now if we hadn't eaten so many free donuts.

Some of the hobbies I enjoy now began when I was a boy. Since my father was the hunting and fishing editor for the newspaper, he had a good excuse for taking us fishing or hunting. He always outfished us boys. When I was 13 my parents finally gave me a dog after I had begged for one for years. Later he would hunt pheasants with me. I remember when a jackrabbit jumped up in front of me and I shot and missed. My dog, Duke, took off chasing the rabbit, and disappeared over a hill. When I came over the rise I found out that my dog had caught the jackrabbit. He must have figured that he had to take up the slack for me.

Once a year the Brummel relation would converge on a lake in Minnesota for camping. Today our family still likes to camp, although having a baby does pose special challenges for tenting.

Our home was a home of bookworms. If my dad wasn't working or at a meeting, the odds were that you would find him with his nose in a book. In fact his interest in books earned him the unique honor of being the first male selected to serve on the Edgerton Runals Library Board. As a result of our parents not allowing us to watch much television (in fact for years there was not a TV in the house) and their example in reading, I learned to love books.

It was when I was in high school that I began to think about entering the ministry. I was embarrassed about it and kept quiet. After all, when my brother was a senior in high school he and my cousin Doug Kuiper both let it be known that they planned to go to seminary. I probably didn't want others to think of me as a clone of my brother.

I began high school when I was in the 10th grade. I didn't enjoy high school. I was much too shy. I found it hard to break into friendships that many of my class-



mates already had formed. They had grown up together in Christian Reformed churches and had started high school in the 9th grade.

When my high school years came to an end, I made a decision to study at Calvin College. Since a friend of mine also planned on going there, the decision was easier. It is amazing to me how easily I made such an important decision. I am rather amazed at how my parents freely allowed me to choose to go to college more than 700 miles from home. They just wanted me to go to a Christian college—with the options pretty much assumed to be Dordt or Calvin.

But God wanted me at Calvin. He was going to test me that first year. I went to Calvin College a bit naïve. I thought that the main differences with which I would be confronted would be issues surrounding common grace. Instead I ran into higher criticism of the Bible. My first semester in Religion 103 shook my faith in the trustworthiness of Scripture. If my professor was correct, the Bible was filled with errors because it was only inspired and infallible with respect to some vague and nebulous “redemptive message”. I know of another student who after taking the class concluded that no ordinary person could ever get at the meaning of Scripture, and so what was the use of reading it?

I found relief that year when I was sitting in my dorm room reading Homer Hoeksema’s little book “In the beginning...”. His discussion of inerrancy and the Scriptural reasons for it opened my eyes to the fact that I could trust the Bible because Scripture itself claimed to be God-breathed and not the result of any private interpretation.

In response to this and other attacks on the Reformed faith, the Lord gave me the desire to defend the truths of Scripture. Feeling the Lord Jesus calling me to the ministry I signed up for Greek classes my sophomore year.

I had two excellent philosophy professors who helped me realize that I could be a thinking Christian. One was Bill Dennyson, now a professor at Covenant College, whom we called “The Inerrant One” simply because he believed in inerrancy, unlike most of the faculty. I took the most classes with Mark Talbot, now a professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College. We called him “The Philosopher” because we were impressed by his careful logic. Talbot steered me in the direction of Jonathan Edwards, teaching an interim class on *The Religious Affections*. I discovered that there was no conflict between being a Christian and studying philosophical issues. At Calvin College I discovered the insights of

Abraham Kuyper and what they meant for the Christian scholar.

After college, I did not feel ready for seminary. I wanted to have time to read more widely, so I enrolled in graduate school to study philosophy. I wrote a thesis defending an argument by Jonathan Edwards against Arminianism, i.e. the idea that God possessing infinite perfect foreknowledge of all future acts is inconsistent with libertarian free will.

After graduate school I moved from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Grandville, Michigan, where I lived in the apartments across from the seminary. One thing I learned in seminary is that for a young man to make it through seminary he must have a strong sense of his calling. In graduate school I grew in my prayer life and intimacy with God. In seminary I learned to rely upon God for the grace to study and practice preach. One nice thing about seminary was the opportunity to learn from the thinking and life of a variety of godly and gifted men. It was a bit stressful for me to be the only student in most of my classes in seminary.

I appreciated Dogmatics classes with Prof. Engelsma who in so many ways expanded my theological horizons. As I examine my theological world-view I see that I am in many ways a disciple of Engelsma. I enjoyed listening to Prof. Hanko’s engaging lectures on church history. I have fond memories of practical theology classes with Prof. Decker where I learned about missions and how to be a pastor.

During seminary I fell in love with a young lady who had been an acquaintance for a few years. I was married to Paula Faber a few weeks before I began my internship in Redlands, California. We have many fond memories of Redlands with its beautiful orange groves, forest fires, and Joshua trees.

Two years ago the Lord blessed Paula and me with two adoptive children from Ukraine, Melitta and Augustine. In December the Lord blessed us with our first biological child, who we named Peter. It is a great blessing to see covenant children growing in their knowledge of Scripture and their love for God.

After seminary I was called to a new daughter church of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. At the first meeting of the daughter church it was named Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church and I was called to be her first pastor.

It was exciting to be part of a new congregation. For a few years we met at various locations, until our building project was completed in 2003. We have enjoyed

our new building for about a year. It is nice to have a more public and visible presence in the community.

One of the delights of being a pastor is being able to observe how the Lord uses the gifts of His people for the good of others. It is gratifying to see God at work in people's lives, giving them the willingness to deny themselves for others. I have enjoyed seeing the saints be witnesses about their Savior by their words and deeds. It is a great blessing to be able to spend much of the week studying and meditating on Scripture in preparation for preaching. I delight in preaching the great themes of Scripture: God's sovereignty, the mission of God, the covenant, and the call to discipleship.

I love teaching catechism to the children of different ages. It is fun to watch the littlest children listen to Bible stories with wide eyes. I remember telling the story about the two women who disputed before Solomon over whose baby the living baby was. As the story reached its climax I began to see tears forming in the eyes of the littlest children. It is so fun to teach little children because they don't always know which way the story will go. I also appreciate the spiritual and intellectual gifts that God gives to our young people so that they can interpret Scripture and think through theological issues.

Out of my own experience I would offer some advice to young people. Growing up, my own life was out of balance. I knew a lot of doctrine, but when it came to

living the Christian life in a mature way, I was out of balance. For example, during my college years I was not a good witness about my Savior. I understood the doctrines of Calvinism, but I did not act like I should have as a Calvinist. Our Christian life needs to balance the importance of knowing the teachings of Scripture and living out the Christian life. We need to be not only hearers, but doers of the word.

A second comment I have is about how young people should view their studies. Education is a big part of your life. Do not view your studies as unfortunate work that you need to do to try to get a good enough grade to satisfy your parents. Don't study to prove your intelligence or try to get accepted at a good college. Instead love God with your mind as you study. View your studies as service of God. Develop your gifts and mind for the glory of God. View your studies as preparation for service to God and other people.

Finally, don't get caught up with the latest coolest thing or fad—whether it is dress or music or whatever. Take a broader, more comprehensive view of life. Be faithful to the eternal Christ who is unchanging, the same yesterday, today, and forever. ❖

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

Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

The Battle Front: Plants

by Deane Wassink

The battle lines have been drawn. The invasion has begun. The survival of the lakeshore as a unique ecosystem is in question. There are three fronts to the invasion:

- I. Plants
- II. Water
- III. Man's Use

The plants of the lakeshore are under attack. The invaders are highly successful because they have unique characteristics that overwhelm the native plant populations. They attack with overwhelming force due primarily to their ability to multiply much more quickly than the native plants. They also literally attack the native

plants. The result is that the native plants are choked out and replaced by the invaders.

There are many invaders in the plant kingdom. Most are escaped from the gardens and flowerbeds of men. Among the trees, two especially come to mind, the Austrian pine and the Norway maple.

The Austrian pine is a tough and prolific variety of long needle pine that was planted many years ago to help control the drifting sand by providing a windbreak. Now, the Austrian pine is being cut down by the Department of Natural Resources in an attempt to stop its spread. It is changing the whole character of the dunes because it stops erosion and shades the ground, killing the natives that depend on a moving dune.

The Norway maple is a beautiful tree in the landscape. However, it is spreading into the forests on the shore at an alarming rate. You may think this is not a big deal. But, here is the problem: the Norway grows so large and has such a dense leaf canopy that nothing can grow under it. All the native trees, shrubs, and forbs are totally choked out. The beautiful diversity becomes a shade desert.

On the forest floor there are three invaders that are doing terrible damage.

Vinaca minor, also known as myrtle, is one of my favorite shade groundcovers. However, when it escapes from the cultivated landscape it blankets the wooded dune hills with a thick mat that kills all the trillium, dutchman's breeches and solomon's seal, as well as the other native wildflowers. Because of its destructive characteristics I will not willingly plant it in the wooded dunes where it can spread.

A second invader escaped from the culinary gardens of European immigrants, is called the mustard garlic. It produces thousands of seeds and is spreading all over the place. In the dunes, special teams of volunteers are trying to stop it from choking out the native plants.

A third invader, spotted knapweed, is also spreading rapidly by seed. It has just been proven that its roots produce a toxin that makes it impossible for other plants to live next to it. I recently was involved in a project to pull it out of a protected site for the Karner blue butterfly. It was killing the wild blue lupine that the butterflies need to survive. This plant is only beginning to make a negative impact, but, much more damage will be seen in the near future.

There are only a few safe havens for native plants in the beauty of the native ecosystems left along the lakeshore. I would guess that over ninety percent of the

shoreline has been irreversibly corrupted by the invaders. Correspondingly, many of the animal populations have been affected by this devastating change of habitat. I am thankful for the few refuges left where God's special shoreline handiwork can be viewed. I hope the invaders can be kept at bay.

In the spiritual realm the church is also being attacked by an invasion of false doctrine and ungodly living. It seems that the church world has been overrun by Sabbath desecration, divorce, worldly-mindedness, self-seeking. Along with it is a denial of God as the creator, and the sovereign author of all our salvation. The only hope for the church, as with natural plants, is that we guard against false doctrine by study of the Word of God and tear it out root and branch through faithful church discipline. May God give us the strength and fortitude to so fight.

Lifted Up

*When waves and waves wash o'er my soul,
Anxiety, guilt, despair.
'Tis then I know my Savior's love,
I trust His gentle care.*

*When death and sorrow compass me,
My eyes an empty stare.
'Tis then my Savior comfort sends,
His heart my sorrows share.*

*When all alone I suffering walk,
My soul with weariness weighed.
'Tis then my burden is lifted free,
On Him my hope is stayed.*

*He lifts me up and sets me high,
Upon a mountain tall.
'Tis tender mercy raises me,
When on my knees I fall. ❖*

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Richard G. Moore

August 1 Read Isaiah 25:6-12

Isaiah prophesied of the captivity of Israel by Babylon and the darkness that came over Israel because of their sin. Also that prophesy spoke of the many judgments that would come upon the wicked both within Israel and upon the nations around about. However it is evident that this prophecy of Isaiah also speaks of the coming of Christ, both in His incarnation and in His second coming upon the clouds of heaven to usher in the new heavens and the new earth. We will concentrate in the following meditations upon this prophecy and others as they speak to us about the second coming of Christ. Surely Christ comes quickly and we must be prepared for His coming as He Himself tells us in His Word. This means for the church that we look for the time when God will destroy the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over the nations. The darkness of God's judgment shall surely pass and the church shall be delivered. We are filled with gratitude for this testimony. Sing Psalter 104:1-3.

August 2 Read II Timothy 3:1-7

The time of darkness that shall be destroyed we presently live in. This is the time that we read about in II Timothy 3:1 where we read that in the last days perilous times shall come. The perilous times are perilous times for the church. We might first want to apply this to man in general, because we see wars, pestilence, economical troubles, etc. And man in general finds that this is a difficult time to live in. In fact there are many pressures upon us to concentrate only on all these hardships that man faces, and it is even said this must be our concern as Christians to work to alleviate these things. But this is not the idea found in our text, rather it is so that these are perilous times for the church because of all the wickedness in the earth, verses 2ff. Thus because of the many temptations that we face in these days it is a perilous time for us. We must be spiritually prepared for this time, and it is necessary that we see the temptations and the urgency of our spiritual strengthening in the days in which we live. May God grant the grace to us for these days and may He lead us in that also through these meditations. Psalter 104:4-6.

August 3 Read Isaiah 25:6-12; Isaiah 1

Now as we begin to expand on the prophesy of Isaiah with respect to those things that must come to pass, we will take time to take note of the promises immediately set forth in this section of the Scripture. In the days in which we live, indeed perilous times for the church and for us as individuals and this because of the many temptations and the extreme wickedness of the age which affects also the church, we are given a comforting word of promise by the prophet. Understand that the day of this prophecy was a very dark day in the history of the church. Judah had walked in terrible sin as the first chapter of Isaiah makes plain. Further the wicked nations seemed to have the upper hand and seemed certain of complete victory. Judah would soon be carried off into captivity and all would

appear lost. This is also true in our day, a fact that will even be clearer as we continue these meditations. But even now the question could be truly asked, are there any that have faith? And it shall become worse. Yet there is the promise of the apostle "The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces, he will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. Sing Psalter 104:7-10.

August 4 Read Isaiah 25: 6-12; Ephesians 2: 1-10

Let us take note specifically to the words of the prophet in the present text. Jehovah the Almighty God will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples. This seems just the opposite from what the people would have and the place in which they found themselves. Because of sin they entered into darkness and all that they had was taken away. In captivity they would be deprived of all but the very barest of necessity in order to live, and even that life would be miserable. But it is even more true of you, covenant young people and of me and of your parents. We have deprived ourselves of all blessing by our sin and have become dead. We have nothing to sustain ourselves. We are empty by our sin. Worthy are we only of eternal death and condemnation. This Paul makes clear in the first three verses of Ephesians 2. But Jehovah will prepare a feast! Blessed God of all grace. Sing Psalter 108.

August 5 Read Isaiah 25 6-8; Isaiah 61:1-3

Jehovah prepares us a feast and on this mountain (within his church) we shall have the oil of joy for mourning, beauty for ashes, life for death, as the prophecy also speaks in the 61st chapter, when speaking of the coming of Christ. The picture of our text in Isaiah 25 is that the Lord will prosper us richly. Even as this prophecy was given to the saints of the day of the prophet, the fulfillment looked beyond the return from the captivity to the coming of Christ. Typically it was in a shadowy way fulfilled at the end of the captivity as the remnant returned to Judah and Mount Zion. But as is obvious from the remaining verses of this 25th chapter of Isaiah, the fulfillment would come later when Christ was born, and suffered and died and was risen and ascended into heaven. And yet more even now covered by the precious blood of Christ and forgiven for His sake, having received His Spirit and now beginning to live in the newness of the life of Christ, we still have but the beginning of the great feast that we will have when Jesus comes upon the clouds of heaven. Think of that! What a precious promise. Then we shall have no more sorrow, no more sin, no more suffering, but only joy and gladness in the fellowship of our God. Sing Psalter 111.

August 6 Read Isaiah 25:6-8; Revelation 21:1-7

The prophet continues to explain why we shall enter into the joy we have spoken of. It is because He will destroy the face of the covering cast over the people and nations. By sending Jesus Christ as our redeemer, God justifies the elect sinner in all peoples, and nations. Clearly this text also speaks of the coming of Christ for the forgiveness of sin extends far beyond the nation of Israel to the nations and peoples. And God swallows up death (the death of our

own making by our sin and that of father Adam) and gives to us victory. And by the justifying work of Christ and through the operation of His Spirit, we are made free of sin and guilt and have nothing to fear. We must remember this as we look to the signs of Christ's coming presently. Cleansed by the blood of Christ we shall have no more tears and all of our reproach shall be removed, for our sin is taken away. This is the comfort of the promise of the certain coming of our Lord that gives us strength also for the trials we now face. Blessed God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 292.

August 7 Read Isaiah 25:9; Psalm 25:1-6

The prophet further states in this promise that the day comes when it shall be said "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us." For Israel this was true, for us it shall also certainly come to pass. We wait for our God to come again, do we not? Young people to you live waiting for our God, waiting for Jesus' return? As godly children we wait, we long for, we seek, we trust, we look for our Lord's return. Even when it seems there is so much to occupy our thoughts and drive our activities, the child of God does long for the return of the Lord and seeks the day of the Lord. This is your life is it not, by the grace of God it is. And we shall not be dismayed or ashamed. Remember this when by God's grace you serve Him and seek the coming of Christ you shall never be ashamed, but you shall be sustained in the battle of faith to obtain the day. This is the promise of our Lord in our text. We shall be glad and rejoice in His salvation. It is the promise of life eternal and everlasting fellowship with God. May we so hope for that day! Sing Psalter 298.

August 8 Read Isaiah 25:9-12; II Peter 3:1-15

The prophet points out to us that in this mountain, in the true church God dwells and brings salvation. But also this means the destruction of those that serve Him not, of His enemies. One cannot stand against Jehovah and His cause, one may not turn aside from His ways without tasting His vengeance and wrath. The prophet points out that the enemies of Israel shall be trodden down. Those that are proud and who oppose His word shall be destroyed and the things that they have made shall likewise be brought to naught. They may think that they have power and strength, and so also the world today acts as though there is no God. This is evident in the disdain that they hold for His word, so that the world overflows in wickedness, ungodliness and all manner of sin. But they and all that pertains to them shall be utterly destroyed. The Scripture emphatically teaches that it shall all be burned. We therefore must not trust in the ways of the wicked nor entertain them, but walk in godly fear before our Lord. Sing Psalter 354.

August 9 Read Isaiah 26:20-21

We will return to chapter 26 of Isaiah in these meditations at a later point, but for now I want to draw our attention to the last two verses of the chapter. God calls us as He did Judah through the prophet to enter into His presence. We are directed to find refuge in Him, but this means for a time that we are to enter our little place that he has given us and to close the doors behind us. We are to hide ourselves for a little moment. We cannot do this if we see how close to the world we can come. We cannot do this if we seek our entertainment at the hands of that world, or if we turn to the philosophy and wisdom of the world in our daily lives. We must not look to what this world offers, but are to flee to our chambers. Basically we must flee to our heritage, to our reformed faith, to our church and Bible studies, to our catechism and our parents for strength to stand in faith. But this means we must flee to God and His word and find

our refuge and hiding place in that word. This we shall do by His sovereign grace, and in the faith that He gives to us. Sing Psalter 401.

August 10 Read Isaiah 26:20-21; Galatians 6:1-6

The reason we are to hide ourselves, take our refuge apart from the world and within our God given place is to be safe until the indignation is past. You understand that God will not be mocked. He is the Holy One and He cannot allow His holiness to be tarnished by the sin of man. The wicked will also have their reward. God sends judgment to destroy Satan, his co-workers, and the world of sinful man. God's indignation shall bring the wicked to destruction. Until then the trials will be great, and the wicked as the servants of Satan shall seek to destroy all that trust in God. Motivation indeed to hide oneself from that wicked world in the Word of Christ! Jehovah comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. The beginning of which time of judgment is here now. Run to God and His word and close the doors by grace behind you against the world and its ways. Sing Psalter 396.

August 11 Read Matthew 24:1-3

When shall the end of His indignation be? Or when shall God so come in judgment against the wicked so as to destroy them? When must we hide ourselves? The answer to the last question of course is now, and every day of our lives. But when is the final judgment? This is basically the same question that the apostles put to Christ in our text, verse 3, "tell us, when shall these things be?" Jesus taught the disciples that this world must come to an end, verse 2. This is obviously the meaning that the apostles got from the words of the Lord, that spoke of the stones of the temple being cast down. They desired to know when would the final judgment of the wicked come to pass and thus when would Jesus come again in judgment, and when would this present world come to an end. It is important for the church of Jesus Christ to know this. We must also hear the answer of Christ, that we may by grace be properly prepared for that day. Sing Psalter 308.

August 12 Read Matthew 24:4-5; II Peter 3:1-11

Jesus next gives us the signs of His coming and the passing of the day of indignation. He begins by telling us that we must "Take heed that no man deceive you." Of course the church and you must understand that we live in the day of deceivers. This is a part of the perilous time in which we live, as we learned in our former reading in II Timothy 3:1-7. Part of this deceit is by the world at large when they say as Peter teaches that they would say that there is no God, and there is no day of judgment, and as those before the flood said the same thing and perished so will they and those that listen to them, see II Peter 3. There are many today that will scoff at the idea that this world is becoming ripe for final judgment. And they will attempt to make you think the same way! Be not deceived. Sing Psalter 267.

August 13 Read Matthew 24:5

Jesus goes on to point out however that the way of deceit shall in particular be that many shall say that they are Christ and shall deceive many. In the first place Jesus says that such come in His name. That is He teaches us that the main deceit arises within that which calls itself the church of Christ. O! We know that there are many false religions that have arisen, the Jewish religion after the death of Christ, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists, Satanists, etc. All of these try to get you to believe that they have the way of truth that leads to peace for the soul. They are liars and deceivers. However, Jesus warns us that within that which calls herself church arise

deceivers, that say they are the Christ. They represent their teachings as that which Christ would bring, but are deceivers. This is what we now face, with the doctrines of true reformed faith under attack on every side. And in the name of Christ everything under the sun is approved and deceptively taught to be the teaching of Christ. Take heed to be not deceived. Sing Psalter 253:1-5.

August 14 Read Revelation 2:18-29

What Jesus has warned us of in Matthew 24:5 we see came to manifest in some of the churches of Asia Minor and to which Jesus refers so as to point out to us as a church what is right and what is not before Him Who is the King of the Church. In Thyatira for instance there were those that in the name of Christ teaching and seducing Christ's people to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. The point is that in allowing this evil woman to teach these things in the church many were in danger of being deceived. But today in the church from congregation to congregation things are taught to be right which are contrary to the Word of God, whether we refer to women in church office, or to divorce and remarriage, or to homosexual marriages and way of life. It ought not so to be. Be not deceived. Jesus will not tolerate such sin for long. He comes quickly. Sing Psalter 253: 6-10.

August 15 Read Matthew 24:6-8

Jesus continues to give us further signs of His coming and next speaks of wars and rumors of wars. Now we understand that since the fall there always has been strife among men and wars consequently. But as a sign of Christ's coming and the coming of the final judgment the world is characterized by the fact that there are many wars and rumors of war. We live in a day in which this is true to the near full. Not because the wars take many lives, for the large part the ones presently fought do not. But there are wars that are found throughout the world and that affect the whole world of man. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan really are not huge, nor have they taken many lives. But they result from the fact that there is a fear of terrorism which has caused the whole world to tremble. And because of this fear there are wars in Africa (Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Congo, etc.) Wars between Israel and the Arabs, between Arabs and Arabs, and a fear of attack in Europe and the Americas. We live in an age of ongoing wars or rumors thereof. A sign that Christ comes! Praise the Lord. Sing Psalter 280.

August 16 Read Matthew 24:7-8; Revelation 6

In verse seven of Matthew 24, Jesus mentions other signs. Signs that are included also in the running of the horsemen of Revelation 6. We will only briefly take note of these signs now. In the first place there is mention made of famines and pestilences. There have always been these things, but it is striking that they persist and even increase in this day in which we have all the modern inventions and technology of man. Further many that think they are serving Christ strive with money and with much time to alleviate these things, but to no avail. We here in North America do not see much famine, but it exists with great effect in Africa, India, some Middle East countries and in other parts of Asia. Man strives to overcome the judgments of God, but cannot prevail. The same is true of pestilences. In the past we might say it was the plague, or polio, or small pox, etc. Man has striven to overcome these pestilences only to find more and more deadly take their place. TB still runs rampant in various nations. Types of flu, insect borne diseases and especially a pestilence like AIDS take an increasing toll. But remember these are signs. Jesus directs the horsemen and sounds forth the trumpets.

Jesus directs these judgments against a wicked world, and He alone can lead us through the times of their revelation. Sing Psalter 311.

August 17 Read Matthew 24: 7-8

When we see the famine, the sickness, the earthquakes in many and different places what is our reaction? Do we see these as so many signs of the coming of our Lord and the fulfillment of the promises of our God? While these days are difficult for the flesh, do we find also a time to rejoice and say, the Lord comes quickly? Jesus teaches us that these days are the beginning of sorrows. The idea may be related to a woman with child. As the time draws closer to her delivery there is a growing burden in carrying the child, and then an increasing cramping, and other related aches and pains. The beginning of sorrows, the nearer to delivery the more intense this beginning, especially at the outset of her contractions. As we see the signs revealed that Christ speaks of we are also aware that they affect us. We too, may contract the diseases sent. We may find the famines of this world affect us, at least economically. We too can have the earthquake or tornado, etc. take away our homes and destroy our property. This is the beginning of sorrows, but the beginning of sorrow that trumpets the coming of deliverance. God be thanked for the grace to see. Sing Psalter 291.

August 18 Read Matthew 24:8-9; Luke 12:51-59

Lest we think that the beginning of sorrows of which the Lord speaks is a small thing, Jesus goes on to point out what these days shall mean for the church. Indeed we live in perilous times when our faith shall be severely tried. First we note that Jesus teaches us that they shall deliver up the true believers to be afflicted, and shall even kill us, and we shall be hated of all nations for Christ's name sake. The wicked cannot stand the righteous testimony and walk of God's people. That world of man shall turn against the elect children of God as the day of deliverance draws near. This will take place by all nations, for all of man shall be set against God's true church. This includes our own nation, and even that which shall take the name Christian falsely. As we read Luke 12: 51-53 as those confessing Christ before the return of our Lord shall find that even our children or our parents shall turn against us as we stand by grace in faith. So be prepared. Sing Psalter 103.

August 19 Read Matthew 25:1-13; I Thess. 5:1-6

Indeed we must be prepared for the days in which we live, which precede the coming of our Lord. Of this preparation Jesus speaks in the next chapter when He gives us the parable of the virgins. He points out that those unprepared have no place in the great wedding feast at His coming when we shall be forever united with our Bridegroom. At the conclusion of this parable, He calls us to watch for we know not the hour wherein He cometh. The principle idea is that we are to know the signs of His coming and that we must know His Word. This means that we ought to be students of the Scripture, that not only we will know the signs of His coming, but that our lives may be guarded by His strengthening Word. We must be founded in the truth for that truth is under attack and we must know wherein is life. Sing Psalter 341.

August 20 Read Revelation 3:1-6

By taking note of what God reveals to us in the letter to the church of Sardis we are given further understanding of our calling to watchfulness and its urgency. Briefly we note that while there was much apostasy in Sardis, there had been a falling away from the truth and this made her ready to die, nevertheless the Lord admonishes the remnant to be watchful. Here He emphasizes the idea that this is necessary to strengthen the things that remain. We need constantly

to strengthen our understanding and holding to the precious reformed doctrines of the Scripture. This shall also be our source of nourishment in the battle of faith that is upon us. Thus here also we are called to repent of all contrary to this way of life and to hold fast the truth. Sing Psalter 365.

August 21 Read I Thessalonians 5:1-6

Finally in this connection we look at the passage from Thessalonians. We note that we are called by the Spirit the children of light. This is true whether we are the covenant youth within the congregations, or whether we are the elder saints. We are children for we are the sons and daughters of the living God, this according to His good pleasure as He has chosen us in Christ. We are children and thus dependent upon our heavenly Father for all things. We are children of light because God has delivered us from darkness through the precious blood of our Saviour. We are children of light because by His Spirit God dwells in us. Now as children of light we must not sleep but be watchful. Sing Psalter 183.

August 22 Read I Thessalonians 5:1-6

Watchfulness according to the apostle means that we also are to be sober. Sober is the opposite of being drunk. Children of the night or of darkness and sin are drunken. When one is drunk even by alcohol he is no longer prepared. His reflexes are slowed or even non-functional. So it is to be spiritually drunk. We cannot defend ourselves if we are filled with the wine of this world of darkness and sin. We will not be prepared for the day of our Lord, if we fill our lives with the intoxicating ways of the world. Young people must remember this wherever they are. Whether in church, at home or on spring break. The dance halls of this world deaden our spiritual lives. The dens of iniquity must be fled. The philosophy of this world's colleges can only lead us into darkness. Over against these we must be sober. Sober with the Word of God directing all of our lives. Let us be prepared for the day of the Lord. Sing Psalter 363.

August 23 Read Matthew 24:10-14

Returning to the words of our Lord concerning the time of His coming we take note that in the days when the world threatens our very lives and when we shall be hated of all nations then many shall be offended. Jesus says that many within the church shall be offended. He is not speaking of the world at large, but now says that many who say they believe in Christ shall be offended. They will betray one another as we mentioned before even within families. In those days there will be no place left for hypocrites, because if they remain a hypocrite they also shall die, and be hated. Many who have not true faith shall flee the true church. So far our congregations for the large part are still growing by small steps, but already now we see signs of many leaving the true church. They do so because they will not be hated. They want to be like the rest of the world. They will not serve God, and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many wax cold. May God keep us from such apostasy. Sing Psalter 210.

August 24 Read Matthew 24:13; Psalm 89:29-37

Jesus teaches His people that those that endure shall be saved. The Psalmist speaks of God's sending forth His firstborn, and while there is a reference to David in this passage it also refers to Christ. We read that the seed of Christ principally shall be made to endure forever. When Jesus teaches us that in the last days those that shall endure shall be saved, He speaks of we who are of His true people or church. And the Scripture makes it clear that we endure, because God makes us to endure. We ourselves would never endure to the end, but would follow the way of those who wax cold. But God is

faithful also as the Psalmist teaches in this 89th Psalm verses 33 to 36. The seed of David is the seed of Christ, and God will not suffer His faithfulness to fail, nor His covenant will He break, therefore the true seed shall endure forever. What a precious promise in these days in which we live. Sing Psalter 155.

August 25 Read Matthew 24:14; Revelation 6:1-8

The perilous times for the church take place especially as the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world for a witness to the nations. This has been done, principally. There are no nations in which the gospel of Christ has not been proclaimed. Oh, it is still being proclaimed in the nations, and even reintroduced to some nations, but the gospel has in fact gone out to all the world as a witness. In the book of Revelation we also are reminded of the running of the white horse where he goes forth conquering and to conquer. There remains of course the final ingathering of the people of God. This is a calling of the remnant but as to the scope the white horse has finished his course. Jesus says to us when we see these things then the end shall come. Jesus comes! Quickly! Repent and believe, be sober and watchful! Sing Psalter 313.

August 26 Read Matthew 24:15-21

Now in the end of time, during the time leading up to the final fulfillment of these signs, indeed we shall face perilous times. It is evident from the verses we have just read that those days shall be days of extreme difficulty for our flesh and spirit. Days in which our Lord points out to us that we must take no time for our normal daily activities and it is not a day to hold precious those things that we so often think are important to us now. We are not even to turn back to take our clothes, for there shall come great tribulation for the true children of God. The suffering at the hands of those who hate God shall be brought upon us with seemingly no measure. But of course we know and must know that our Lord Himself governs even these things. He it is that is able to open the book of Revelation 5. And He shall bring to pass all things to prepare for His coming in judgment and with life for His own. Remember these things and be thankful. Sing Psalter 241.

August 27 Read Matthew 24:22

Yes the days shall be a true trial for us, and difficult indeed, a perilous time, and Jesus teaches us that in fact except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. In other words so difficult will be those days that one naturally could not endure. The fact is we already are in the midst of these days and we see one church after another following the way to apostasy and we see many individuals fleeing the true church to follow the way of the apostate. And there shall be no salvation in these paths. However, Jesus says those days shall be shortened. He brings the wicked to their just end, and comes on the clouds of heaven before we are consumed. Sing Psalter 78.

August 28 Read Matthew 24:22; Isaiah 53:6

We may wonder why any shall be saved. Surely we must understand that we have all gone astray, we have turned every one to our own way. Yes we have sinned, Oh how we have walked in the ways of darkness. Why should we expect to stand in the days of great tribulation? But we shall! We shall not stand because of our ability or spirituality, but because of the faithfulness of our God, the God of our salvation. Jesus teaches us that for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened and we shall endure and be saved. God knows His elect from eternity. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Our God will not allow any to go lost. Jesus says in John 6, that of all that Father has given Him, He should lose

nothing. We shall endure until He comes again. Praise God. Sing Psalter 166.

August 29 Read Isaiah 26:1

We said that we would return to Isaiah 26 and now we do that in the next several meditations. We will take only one verse a day and perhaps even use two days to consider each verse that we look at from this chapter. We do so because Isaiah in this prophecy has much to say to us that will soon face the end of our days upon this earth. As we face those days that we cannot endure except they be shortened, it is good to hear what the Spirit saith unto the church through the prophet in these verses. Isaiah speaks in this chapter in the day of judgment of the enemies of God and His people there shall be a song sung in the true church, typically in the old dispensation, the land of Judah. Sing Psalter 338.

August 30 Read Isaiah 26:1

In the day of deliverance we shall indeed sing, we even do so now for this prophecy is in principle fulfilled in Christ's first coming, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. It is fulfilled with the outpouring of His Spirit in our hearts whereby the bondage to sin and death has been broken. So that we sing with the saints of the ages that we have a strong city, that is a city of refuge, one kept by God for us. It is a city in which we may dwell with our savior God. And we shall sing of salvation that God appoints to keep us safe in His care to taste of His love and salvation forever. In Christ we find our refuge and our strength for the battle of these days. Sing Psalter 78.

August 31 Read Isaiah 26:2; Romans 5:10-11

The song that is sung speaks the prayer of our Lord for us, that the living God opens unto us the gates, the gates of the city of refuge, the gates within which there is salvation. Within the gates no enemy can have victory over us. When I speak of "us" I speak of you who are God's elect children that hear this word of God. You and I are sinners, but sinners that are called here in our text, the righteous nation. We may be considered a righteous nation because our King is righteous and He makes us partakers of His righteousness. While we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and being reconciled by Him, we are saved by His life. It is so that Jesus has passed through death by perfect obedience. Now we have received the atonement. Blessed Lord! Sing Psalter 303.



September 1 Read Isaiah 26:2

The prophet speaks of the song which we may sing referring to the people of God as the righteous nation, which keepeth the truth and thus may enter into the city of refuge and salvation. The people that are called the righteous nation is composed of those that keep the truth. You see covenant youth how precious it is to know the Scripture and the doctrine of the Word. We are to keep the truth. To keep the truth means that we guard it like one would guard a treasure that none can take away. So we must be jealous for the truth of God's Word. So precious then is the instruction that we receive in our catechism classes, and under the preaching of the Word. We must by God's grace love the truth of the Word of God and hold it fast. And now at this point the prophet teaches us that we may sing

as those that keep the truth. Understand that Jesus Who has made atonement of our sins does not forsake us, but He works in our hearts by His Spirit that we now already begin to live and to serve Him in steadfastness of faith. Sing Psalter 237.

September 2 Read Isaiah 26:3

We join with the saints in the knowledge that our God will keep us in perfect peace. He will not so keep all men, but will so keep those in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on God. Our minds must be stayed on God. That our minds are stayed on God means that we lean on Him for all of our thoughts. We stand fast in His Word so that we are united to God in all we think. It affects all of our activities, for if any activity is not resting upon God and His Word we cannot have any of it. That is true of our dating, of our school work, of our marriages and of our lives. Is your mind stayed upon God, or upon self? We must stand in the truth of His Word always. By His grace we shall. Sing Psalter 13.

September 3 Read Isaiah 26:3; Romans 8:28

To have our minds stayed on God means according to this text that we trust in God. It is so easy to think that we could pass through this life and especially through the days in which we live trusting in our own ways and knowledge. But how vain this is and would be. We cannot stand a moment in our own ability and strength as the children of God. But by faith we do trust in God, we see that He is the only object of our hope in Whom we may trust without fear of the trust being misplaced. God will give to us peace. He shall keep us in perfect peace. This is a peace that is complete. Even if the enemy takes all things away from us in this life he cannot remove our peace. We trust in God Who is sovereign and Who loves us with a perfect love in Christ. Surely all things shall work together for our good, for our salvation. Sing Psalter 154.

September 4 Read Isaiah 26:4

The prophet in the name of God commands you and me to trust in the Lord forever. Our trust may not be only for a moment, or only for a day, or only during a worship service, etc. Our trust is to be forever in Jehovah. Forever has no limits and our trust is to have no limits. We also may so trust in God because He has no limits. Jehovah is His name, He is the I Am. He changes not for He is the living God. Further as Jehovah He is our faithful covenant God therefore He is our strength. He is our rock in Whom we may trust no matter how great the trial. For in His power and according to His sovereign authority He directs the whole world and even time itself. We need never to fear. Sing Psalter 153.

September 5 Read Isaiah 26:5

The prophecy goes on to warn us, and this too is the love of God for His people. Those who heed not His word shall experience a great judgment. It is a judgment that comes also now upon a wicked world that is given to sin. Those that trust in self, who are filled with pride, that dwell on high, God shall lay low. Those that think that they do not need to follow all the Word of God, who would lean upon their own strength God shall bring down to the ground. They shall have nothing at all left, no hope, no joy but shall be brought to the dust. We must understand this as well. We cannot walk in disobedience and think that there shall be no God to pay. Man will be judged. Sing Psalter 373.

September 6 Read Isaiah 26:6; I Corinthians 6:1-3

The prophet emphasizes this truth by pointing out that the foot shall tread it down. It is like a bug that we might step on and then turn our foot to make sure it will not survive to pester us again. The wicked shall be so tread down. But further we are told that the church

takes part in the judgment of the wicked. Not because we are better of ourselves than they, but because we are the body of Christ. Now in this life we may be the poor, the downtrodden, the weak and lowly, but we shall be more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. And we shall with Christ judge the world and even the angels according to Paul in I Corinthians 6. Now we may be oppressed but God is not mocked and He shall bring a right vengeance upon His and our enemies. Not our personal enemies as such, but those that hate us as they hate our God, and because they hate our God. Sing Psalter 124.

September 7 Read Isaiah 26:7; I Thessalonians 5

Now the prophet exclaims that the way of the just is uprightness and God does weigh or measure the path of the just. There are a couple of things to remember from this text as we live in the latter days. Understand that the temptations grow to lead us to leave the ways of God, to live in ways that are not so strictly in obedience to God's Word. Then the temptation is even to go further and follow the fashions, the way of life of the children of darkness. Yet we must remember and ever be reminded that it is God that weighs the path of the just. The church world may declare that it is just for women to serve in the offices of the church, or that it is just that members of the church divorce and remarry, or that it is just to practice homosexual activity. But neither the church nor man may determine that which is just. Only Jehovah our God in Christ weighs our path. Let us remember this always. Sing Psalter 208.

September 8 Read Isaiah 26:7

But if it is God Who judges our path as to its uprightness, then how is it possible for us to pass through the days in which we live and actually enter into the glory that God promises to the church? How shall we stand in the perilous days? The prophet declares that the way of the just is uprightness. This is true of us only because we are in Christ Jesus cleansed and led by His Spirit by the grace of God to faithfully serve Him according to His Word. Do you fear the days of the fulfilling of the signs that Christ has given us? Jesus our Lord will grant us the grace to stand also in the days of the great tribulation. This is the truth also that stands behind the words of Isaiah. God be thanked! Sing Psalter 403.

September 9 Read Isaiah 26:8; Psalm 4

We find now in the present verse the personal and deeply spiritual expression of the child of God as He passes through the judgments of God as they come upon us and the world in this life. It is not easy to be a child of God, and to live as God's child. However, the true children of God have a deep desire to be kept by God and to be cared for by our Savior. We wait for Jehovah Who is the ever faithful covenant God. Our God does not forsake His people, nor does he turn from His covenant promises. In the way of the judgments of God, whether in Babylon or at the end of time, God's people by grace and in faith wait upon Jehovah. To wait means that we rest in the will of the Lord. It is expressed in Psalm 4 as a being still. We from our soul, from our deepest spiritual being, do desire the name of God and the remembrance of Him, resting in His faithfulness. Sing Psalter 296.

September 10 Read Isaiah 26:9

That deep desire is with the children of God day and night. And especially is this true at the time of our greatest trials. It is in fact a way in which our God draws us nearer to Him. When God's judgments are in the earth this certainly shall be true in our lives. We have even as young people experienced this have we not? When we pass through deepest trial we know that we can depend on none

other than God alone As the prophet says, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Nothing else stands before God, only righteousness before God shall prevail. It is evident that when Isaiah speaks of the inhabitants of the world, he speaks of God's elect over the length and breadth of the earth. In the latter days it is necessary that we seek God early. May God grant us that grace. Sing Psalter 383.

September 11 Read Isaiah 26:10

The opposite of seeking God early in the time of judgment is the reaction of the wicked even when they are favored. When things seem to go the way that man thinks it should, when the path is smooth, even then the wicked will not learn righteousness. This is because the wicked have eyes only for themselves. This is the terribleness of the sin of pride. In pride man can only seek after himself. How dangerous is the pride that is natural to our lives. The wicked who only love themselves even in the land where uprightness is found will cause that they will only deal unjustly with all about them. Basically it is to walk contrary to the will of God; the wicked even in the face of a so-called peace will not behold the majesty of Jehovah. God forbid that we follow this life. Sing Psalter 351.

September 12 Read Isaiah 26:11; II Peter 3

However in the Day of Judgment, in the time of our Lord's return the wicked will not see, but will see. What does this mean? In the first place even when facing the righteous judgments of God the wicked will still mock at the coming judgment. It is as we read in II Peter 3, the wicked will not see. They refuse to see or to remember the ways of the Lord. But they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people. Peter states it in the following manner, II Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." They shall see and be ashamed; that is brought down, yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them, even as in the day of the battle of Armageddon. Sing Psalter 92.

September 13 Read Isaiah 26:12; Ephesians 2:8-10

The prophet now leads us to confess the same truth found on almost all the pages of the Scripture, and a truth that has been at the heart of the instruction in our Protestant Reformed Churches in America. The prophet expresses confidence of the fulfillment of God's promises to us and especially of the peace we shall know, when he states that God has wrought all our works in us. The apostle expresses this truth also in Ephesians 2:10. There we are called God's workmanship in Christ and are told we are so created in Christ unto good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. We take note that we are created in Christ Jesus expressly for the purpose of serving God in the good works which He works in us. This is amazing and we must consider this truth a little more in the next meditation as well. Sing Psalter 80.

September 14 Read Isaiah 26:12; Ephesians 1:4-6

Isaiah emphasizes the reason that Judah may be assured of coming peace and the same is true of us. Right now and in the years ahead much of our life will be spent in turmoil and in trial, but we know we shall have peace when Jesus comes again. Also we already now know that we may have peace in the midst of this life of trouble and turmoil. The reason for this is God's sovereign grace which we experience in this life. God has made us who we are. He has ordained from eternity our salvation as He has chosen us in

Christ before the foundation of the world. Further He ordains all of our life and way, so that God works in us all of our works. The works that please Him are all the product of His grace. And we are saved and have peace. Sing Psalter 328.

September 15 Read Isaiah 26:13-14

The prophet once again points out that with the promises made to the elect in whom God works by the Spirit of Christ there is also a prophecy of destruction to the enemies of God and His people. Any hearing this word and continuing to walk in their sin shall not have comfort or peace, but face the eternal wrath of God. Isaiah points out that we may indeed have many other lords in this life, whether the boss at work or a president, king, or despot. But while they may bring us even into captivity or prison we do not find in them our strength nor an overwhelming enemy, for we make mention alone of God's name. A name, Jehovah that reminds us that God is sovereign in all things, and we trust in His name. He alone can save us, and He always protects us according to His purpose to save us by His grace. May we mention alone the name of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 194.

September 16 Read II Peter 3:1-8

How do we face these days that we have been speaking about? We have spoken of this somewhat in the previous meditations, but let us now consider some other Scripture that addresses these matters more specifically. First we look at the ninth verse, understanding that the wicked claim that Christ is not coming and that judgment is only a figment of the imagination of a few zealots in this world. That this is the thinking of the wicked is clear from these verses, and in particular they scoff, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Foolishly say that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. This is the attitude of many in our day. But God forbid that we ever think such a thing! Sing Psalter 201.

September 17 Read II Peter 3:9; Ephesians 1:1-4

Christ by His Spirit through the apostle answers the child of God concerning the promises of God in verse nine. It is pointed out that God is not slack concerning His promise. The promise is that God will save us in Christ and bring us to salvation. That promise concerns every one that God has chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. This is evident as the apostle calls those He is addressing "beloved." He does so in verse eight as well as earlier, and again later in verse 14. The beloved are those loved of God from before the foundation of the world, and which led God in His love for us to choose us in Christ before the world began. So at the outset we are given to see that what is spoken of in verse nine is addressed to God's elect, beloved people. Wonder of grace, that we are counted as elect in Christ. Sing Psalter 278.

September 18 Read II Peter 3:9; Revelation 5:1-9

The wicked said God is slack, and the world of unbelief tries to convince us that this is true. They say, you do not have to worry about what you do, God will not bring judgment now or even at all. But the apostle points out that God is not slack concerning His promise. The idea here is that God does not tarry, He is not slow to bring to pass what He has promised and what He has determined to do. Especially in the days in which we live, perilous times, we have the assurance that God is perfectly bringing to pass the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of His church. However we also live in the last dispensation and know that Christ is now opening the BOOK, and is bringing to pass perfectly all things unto this end. What assurance! Sing Psalter 86.

September 19 Read II Peter 3:9

God is longsuffering. But He is longsuffering to us-ward, not to all who have lived, but specifically to us-ward. He is longsuffering to His beloved as we said before. Thus God according to His eternal counsel works all things. Christ providentially opens the book to bring unto salvation all whom God loves from eternity. He is not willing that any of His beloved should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God knows our needs, and He knows exactly what is required for each of His beloved to be brought to repentance and salvation. So it was in the time of the Babylonian captivity, and so it is as the signs of Christ's coming are unfolded in our days. God will bring each of us to repentance and life, and then Christ shall come upon the clouds of heaven. Wonder of wonders! Sing Psalter 394.

September 20 Read II Peter 3:10; Matthew 25: 1-13

While God is not slow or slack concerning His promises, the time continues to pass in this end of the age. In fact the signs of Christ's coming are very rapidly being revealed. But even you as young people know that the church has been looking for many years to the coming of Christ. It is possible that we might be tempted to become lax in our watchfulness. But we are warned again not to be lax or weary of well doing. We are to know that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. A thief comes when one does not expect, and especially for those who are not watchful. The coming of Christ will be unexpected as He comes with judgment. We must beware lest we be as those at the marriage feast unprepared (cf. Matthew 25). May God grant us this grace. Sing Psalter 361.

September 21 Read II Peter 3:10

For those who are not prepared, a sorry group it shall be. If we are not ready, what a terrible end we would have. For we read that in that day when Christ comes, the very heavens shall pass away and all of the elements of the heavens shall melt with fervent heat. Even the earth also shall be burned up. God's judgment will come upon this universe and the heat of His wrath against sinful man will cause that all shall be destroyed by fire. Further all the works done in this world, that is the works connected to this world shall also be burned up. There are many that think that their works shall merit something for them. How disappointed they shall be. In fact, they will find that all of their works which they look to for comfort shall be counted for nothing. And they that trust in those works and the things of this life shall likewise be consumed. Pray for grace to seek not this world but that which is to come. Sing Psalter 265.

September 22 Read II Peter 3:11

The apostle now reminds us of our calling in the light of that which shall soon be. He calls us both young and old to understand what manner of persons we ought to be. This is really a command of Christ to God's children. It is a command that only God's people will be able to hear, for they alone are given the ears to hear by the Spirit of our Lord. We ought to be those who walk in all holy conversation and godliness. This is possible of course only by grace, yet it is in the way of that grace that we must so order our lives that our life stands in harmony with the Scripture, and thus in obedience to God. This is absolutely necessary if we are to be comforted by God's promise. Sing Psalter 152.

September 23 Read II Peter 3:12

The apostle instructs us that our holy life and a walk of godliness leads us to look not for the awards, honors, the ends of this life, but consists in looking for and hastening unto the coming day of God. He points out that this even means that we look for the day of the Lord

in which day this earth and all in it shall be dissolved and the elements will melt. Perhaps as young people who are making plans for college and a career, or to dating and marriage, or any other of our goals. It may seem odd to look to the day when all we know here in this world shall be destroyed. But we should look for and hasten unto its coming, because it is the day when we shall be delivered of all sin and shall enter the loving fellowship of our Father in Christ forever. So strive to that end in all of your striving. This means in all activity we must have a very strong basis for our lives that is rooted in God's Word. How precious then the preaching of the gospel we receive from week to week. Sing Psalter 42.

September 24 Read II Peter 3:13

We live according to His promise. We do not live by what we see necessarily. Especially is this true in the natural sense. For all we can often see is suffering, trial, and trouble. Also often we see the wicked and immoral seemingly having the upper hand. It appears as though man is in control of so much, but we know better, we live according to His promise. We know His promise is as certain as God is God. Therefore, we look beyond this life and to that which all the signs of Christ's coming point us to, the new heavens and the new earth. We look for the beginning of a new and eternal life. Then instead of sin and darkness, instead of the struggle with all of our own weaknesses and sense of guilt, we shall have a life in glory where only righteousness shall abound. For we shall inherit the fullness of life as we are covered by the righteousness of Christ and enjoy the life of righteousness where there is no more sin. Sing Psalter 149.

September 25 Read II Peter 3:14

The apostle again calls us to faithfulness in our life now in the midst of the world as we walk as children of God looking for the fulfillment of the promises of God. The Spirit-led reasoning is that since we look for the fulfillment of the promise of God then we are diligent. It is absolutely necessary for the child of God as a fruit of faith worked in his heart, that he is diligent in seeking the kingdom of God. It would be a shame for us to say that we look for the things of the Spirit, but are lazy or lackadaisical in our spiritual life. This means that we must always be in attendance under the preaching of the word. We may not take vacation from serving God in any aspect of our lives. It means that our trust is alone in His work of salvation in Christ, then indeed we shall be found of God in peace, without spot and blameless. For it is only possible as we live out of Christ Who has given His life for us. Sing Psalter 134.

September 26 Read II Peter 3:15

Finally from this passage we take note of verse 15 and its reminder to us not to be discouraged as we pass down the pathway of life as strangers and pilgrims in the midst of the world. This could easily happen to us as we live during the days when the signs are being fulfilled and we undergo ever increasing apostasy and tribulation. We see that apostasy or at least the inroads of this apostasy entering even our own denomination and congregations. At the very least we see the influence of it in our midst. This is true whether we consider the move to leave the King James Version of the Scripture for another version, or whether we look at the modern day influence of the world's fashions ruling our lives. It is seen in the growing love of our youth and families for the world's entertainment. But remember God's longsuffering over His own also means that His love and grace shall sustain His elect children, His beloved, until the day of Christ. God be praised! Sing Psalter 271.

September 27 Read Isaiah 61:1-3

The true reason that we may see the longsuffering of God as good and as a blessing for us is expressed in many of the verses of Isaiah 61. First our attention is drawn for this short meditation to the third verse. It is evident that as we read the first three verses of this chapter that Isaiah prophesies principally of the Christ. For only Christ accomplishes all that is written in these verses in their full sense. He is the Anointed One. By His death in obedience to God suffering for us and bearing away our guilt we find beauty for the ashes of our own sin. He clothes us with the blood cleansed garments of righteousness. Thus we are become the planting of the Lord bringing forth the fruits of that salvation, and God is glorified. Because we are made new creatures we also serve the glory of God. Knowing His work for us and in us we continue in faith down this life's pathway. Sing Psalter 261.

September 28 Read Isaiah 61:7-8

In these verses the prophet points out the wonder work of God that shall be our portion, for our shame we shall have double. Think upon this a moment. It is not because we are worthy of a double portion, but when we are suffering at the hands of the wicked we are to know that God shall give us the riches of salvation. When we are troubled by our sin and the guilt we have because of that sin, God shall cover it in the blood of His Son and we shall have double in the land to which he leads us. The prophet surely speaks of more than the land of Canaan as is evident when we are told that everlasting joy shall be our portion. The reason once again is that Jehovah loves judgment, and hates apostasy in worship. How shall we stand? God directs our work in truth and makes an everlasting covenant with us. Praise the Lord. Sing Psalter 253.

September 29 Read Isaiah 61:9

Not only is that the hope of God's people, but we have the assurance that our seed shall be known among the nations, our offspring among the people. This is also a part of the promise that God will faithfully not only sustain us as covenant youth and as elder members of the church in the hope of the promise and in life, but our God shall be with our children and if the Lord tarries with our children's children until the Lord comes upon the heavenly clouds. Because of His covenant that He keeps our seed shall be acknowledged as the seed which the LORD has blessed. They too shall be gathered with the saints of all ages, nations and tongues. Sing Psalter 245.

September 30 Read Isaiah 61:10-11

We conclude this series of meditations by rejoicing in the LORD. Our souls shall be joyful in our God for He has given us so much and shall give us even everlasting joy. He does so as He has clothed us for the great wedding feast that shall be our portion. Then we as the bride of Christ shall be forever united in our Bridegroom's fellowship forever. His righteousness shall be ours as we are clothed with white robes. We shall spring forth even as the earth bringeth forth her bud. So shall the righteousness of Christ spring forth in our lives already now in principle, but soon in perfection. All of His elect before all nations shall praise our God forever. Sing Psalter 277.

A Small Walk

by Missy Van Baren

Come with me, if you will, for a small tour. Yes, just a small walk. We are going to take a glimpse into something very wonderful. This will just be a small glimpse into something that is so grand that we see different wonderful things every time we look into it. It is wonderful to think that no matter how many times we take a stroll through it we see something grand. Something always pops out at us and touches our hearts. Yet, the most wonderful thing is that everyone sees something different every time they look at it! It's just shocking to think that this could happen. It's like a beautiful garden or a lovely painting. No matter how long you stroll through it or look at it you always see something glorious and new about it. If you've been reading my previous articles, you know very well what I'm talking about. It is the Psalms that we sing in worship to God! It is a glorious gift that God has given to us. People of God, treasure it. We may not always have it. Bind the words to your heart!

In each of my next few articles, we are going to glance into the Psalms and watch as the different things jump out at us. We will look and see all the many things that are contained in the Psalter. It will, of course, be just the tip of the iceberg compared to what it fully contains, but we shall just glance and see some of the glorious wonders of God. It will be wonderful to be able to point out the attributes of God contained in the Psalms. We will also examine and see together what types of things God has commanded us to do. There will also be the different fruits of the Spirit contained in the Psalms. Yes, it will be just small glimpses each and every time, yet so glorious! So walk with me now, as we see the different attributes of God mentioned and sung about in the Psalms!

Let us consider and stroll through the Psalms to see the glory of God. We will see the glory of God in heaven, in His ruling throne, in creation, and in His providential rule and direction in our lives. If we look at Psalm 24:7-10, we see first of all who the King of glory is! Verse 10 states: "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." This shows us that God is in His

throne in heaven ruling and that *He* is King of glory, meaning that all glory flows from Him. He is who we need to look to for glory. It is the *only* place that we can look to see glory. Not one other being is found with glory, other than God. This passage from the Bible goes with Psalter numbers 58 and 59.

The Psalter and Psalms show us how we are to look to His glorious righteousness and quite often God's glory is also used to describe another attribute of God. We also see this in looking to God; He is our satisfaction when we look to Him in His glory. We see this in Psalter numbers 163 and 164. "O Lord, my God, most earnestly my heart would seek Thy face, within Thy holy house once more, to see Thy glorious grace (vs. 1)... The loving-kindness of my God is more than life to me" (vs. 2). We also sing about the glory of God in Psalter number 255: "For, how great a God and glorious, is Jehovah whom we sing; over idol gods victorious, great is He our God and King." (vs. 2) We see more and more of God's glory when we dig into the Psalms and Psalter. Oh how we fall short of seeing this when we sing God's praises and sing to His glory. Yet, it is wonderful to think that we can approach God in all His glory. We are His children and through Christ have this right to be able to do this. What a wonderful thing!

There are *many* Psalter numbers that speak of our praise and adoration to God in and for His glory. "All glory, might, and honor ascribe to God on high, His arm protects His people who on His power rely. Forth from Thy holy dwelling Thy awful Glories shine; Thou strengthenest Thy people, unending praise be thine" (Psalter 183, vs. 4). Also, there is Psalter number 233 verse 5: "There is no God but Thee alone, nor works like Thine, O Lord Most High: All nations shall surround Thy throne and their Creator glorify."

We could walk longer and longer through these passages and Psalter numbers but we just need a small glimpse at the moment. I pray that we may see God's glory more and more in the whole of the Psalms and Psalter. May we sing them more and more from the heart and each time with a deeper understanding! May He be

with you as you glimpse more and more into the Psalms and Psalter to see His glory. Sing from the hearts, my dear friends, to glorify our God. Thank you, friends, for walking just a short way with me. May we consider different attributes of God next time and walk even deeper into the “garden.” ❖

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

Where We Stand

Common Grace: Reformed Doctrine or Fallacy (1)

by Jonathan Mahtani

Is God good to those who reject Him? Is His mercy extended to all? Does God work in the unbeliever so that he does that which is right? These are only a few questions that may seem to apply to topics of discussion between Arminian and Reformed scholars. However, such questions have arisen *within* the circles of Reformed Christians. They rise over the doctrine of a common grace. This theory of common grace is used, without much thought, as an answer to such questions as those listed above. Should such a view of God’s grace be accepted in the so-called Reformed church? The intention of this paper is to expose common grace, with its three points and other ideas already accepted in many churches today, as a theory that confuses the terms of grace and providence and that also contradicts the Reformed faith, which is grounded in Scripture.

The first point of common grace to consider is if the natural gifts of rain, sunshine, and other gifts and talents of man are a grace of God in His *favor to all* humans (Gritters 28). This point appears to directly contradict biblical passages when it emphasizes favor to all humans. Numerous passages, like Proverbs 3:33 explain, “The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.” Scripture explains that God hates the wicked and does not show any favor to them. He, in fact, curses those who are not His elect. Such is the Reformed doctrine of predestination and reprobation revealed in Scripture. The first point of common grace in its claim of God’s favor to the wicked appears to deny this.

How does one who denies common grace deal with passages in Scripture that seem to say that God shows favor toward them? These passages must be read in the right context and studied carefully. Whenever the Bible speaks of God’s favor or grace, it speaks only of a grace to His elect. Take, for example, Luke 6:35, which may seem to be one of the strongest advocates of common grace. After Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, He gives us the reason why we are to love them: “for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” A careful study of this passage shows that the word “kindness” used here is the same word as “graciousness” (the Greek word *chreestos*) used in other passages. However, this graciousness in the Bible is always used to speak of a *saving* grace. Take, for example, Romans 2:4, where Paul says, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the *goodness (chreestos)* of God leadeth thee to repentance?” The goodness that leads to repentance is seen here as a saving grace and God’s saving grace is always particular. Again, Ephesians 4:32 shows Paul telling the church to be “*kind (chreestos)* one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” This kindness is that kindness in which God forgives, and God only forgives those whom He has saved. Jesus, in the Luke passage, is definitely not speaking of saving the reprobate but to those whom He has elected and forgives even though they are “unthankful and evil” (Engelsma 20-22). What Christ is teaching in Luke 6:35 is that we are to love our enemies, not know-

ing if they are His elect or not, for He loves His elect to whom He shows grace to even when they are “unthankful and evil.” This is the Reformed teaching of a particular grace that such a passage reveals, not a grace to the reprobate.

The second point of common grace that needs to be compared with Scripture is the point that God, with His Holy Spirit, works *in* the hearts of the unbeliever and restrains such a one from committing as much sin as he can (Gritters 28). The Reformed faith, with its basis on Scripture, does not deny that God restrains sin. It surely does teach, however, that the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of believers only. Nowhere in the Bible does God reveal the working of the Holy Spirit in one not elected. On the contrary, it is shown that God slowly gives the unbeliever up to his own lusts and wickedness in Romans 1:24-28. What is revealed to us in His Word is not a working of grace *in* the hearts of unbelievers but only a working in those whom He has chosen (Gritters 7).

The third point of common grace, which is probably referred to more than the others by the Reformed Christian, is that God shows grace to all humanity so that they can do civil good and produce good things (Gritters 8). Scripture seems to say the contrary. Romans 3:9-18 teaches that none can do good. Matthew 7:17 and 18 tells us: “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit”. Unless God is gracious to a person in choosing him and giving him faith, he cannot do good. It will be a contradiction of Scripture to say that a reprobate can do good.

An unbeliever does nothing good in God’s eyes because his work is not done for the glory of God.

Other passages may seem to say that an unbeliever is able to do good. However, going through these passages are unnecessary because the “good” that any unbeliever may seem to do is not truly good. How can such a statement that unbelievers can do no good be made? In Romans 14:23, Paul tells us that “whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.” An unbeliever does nothing good in God’s eyes because his work is not done for the glory of God. Even the works of the righteous are as “filthy rags”!

(Isaiah 64:6). Only through faith, by the true grace of God, and by the cleansing of Christ’s blood can a work be truly good in God’s sight. The Westminster Confession of Faith says that because the work of the wicked is not done for the right purpose, the glory of God, it is sinful (Mouw 39). Saying that God shows such a grace to an unbeliever so that he does good is a rejection of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity which says that no man can do good unless by faith, through His particular grace (Houck 27).

With the three points of common grace seeming to deny Scripture, we can now look to the common mistake into which the defenders of this theory almost always fall. This mistake is the confusion of the terms providence and grace. Providence is “divine power that keeps all things in existence and governs them (Englesma 58).” Grace is favor and mercy used in Scripture with a saving purpose. When the defenders of common grace argue in their first point that God shows *favor* to unbelievers with gifts of creation like the sun and rain, they are making a grave mistake. Things of this earth provided by His providence are not graces to them shown in favor to them. They are works of His providence and His will that can be blessings only to the elect, who use it for His glory and even a curse to the unregenerate.

One may think that such a statement of it being a curse is too harsh to our neighbors in this world. However, living in comfort without God can make an unbeliever oblivious to what he truly needs, and such comfort is truly a curse. Psalm 73:18 and 19 tell us that prosperity of the wicked are slippery places and that such places are their downfall. It is God’s good providence, and not his favor of grace, that gives an unbeliever certain gifts that are not blessings to them.

If trials are seen as the providence of God, however, such problems may then be seen as not His curse but His will for the good of His people.

When the theory of common grace says that there is a common grace to all, they confuse providence and grace in another way. They become baffled when they see believers facing trials and problems that do not seem to be blessings. How does a defender of common grace ex-

plain the trials faced by a person like Job? Is there a “common curse” to all as well? “His supposed common grace proves to be as particular as His (real) saving grace” (Engelsma 24). If trials are seen as the providence of God, however, such problems may then be seen as not His curse but His will for the good of His people. Not all have fruitful seasons of sunshine and rain that help them. Only when what seems to be gifts to the unbeliever and what seems to be curses to the believer are seen as providence of God working for the favor only of His people and the damnation of the wicked, can we understand God’s only grace, which is particular to His people.

Explaining the difference between grace and providence in the context of the second point is also necessary. The restraint of sin by God, is not a grace to them. As mentioned above, the Holy Spirit does not work *in* an unbeliever but only in the believer. However, there are outward restraints of sin which God uses to stop an unbeliever from doing every evil he is capable of. This is not grace to the unbeliever. It is God’s providence in setting the government and law in this world to prevent chaos (Gritters 6). It is God’s providence and His will that does not allow for some sins to take place. In addition to law, government, a person’s motives, feelings of shame, and just a person’s character are used by God in His providence, not grace, so that sin is not at its worse (Hoeksema 126). Only when God allows sin and evil to take place over these and other factors, can a person commit that sin and evil. Even though it is a sinner’s responsibility, only God’s providence allows for them to do anything. When Richard J. Mouw says that grace is everywhere to restrain sin, he should instead say that God’s *providence* is seen everywhere because He is sovereign over all things even over the heart of the king (Mouw 47; Proverbs 8:15).

Another way to look at the providence of God instead of His grace in light of the second point is by understanding how man was created and how he fell. He was simply made a man, and when he fell, he still remained a man. Hoeksema urges his readers that “man remained man” and “devils remained devils” (466). Man, in God’s providence remains a man, and even though God slowly gives them over to their sin (Romans 1:26), they do not commit every possible sin and cannot sin unless it is the will of God according to His providence. The fundamental reformed truth of the sovereignty of God should not be confused with grace.

The third point of common grace which tells us that civil righteousness, talents, and products are good bless-

ing from God to unbelievers, can also be denied when providence and grace are compared. Mouw says that since God is delighted with what He has created, He must also be delighted in man’s abilities and “morals” since they are good (35-37). The denial is not that He has created good things in a sense that He is pleased with His work. However, it is denied here that the talents and good gifts used by unbelievers please God. In His providence, He has created man with gifts in craftsmanship, in athletics, in academics, and many other areas of life, but “he takes no pleasure in the legs of man” (Psalm 147:10). He does not enjoy the way that unbelievers use those gifts. His providence in giving such good gifts are not to show grace to them, but can even be seen as a curse to them since they don’t use them for His glory.

The third point, and also the first and second points, can be seen from the view that such gifts of God in His providence, if not used for the glory of God, is evil in His sight. If one realizes this very important issue, then he will be able to see that an unbeliever who does not know God will always be doing wrong. If his purpose in using a gift is not for the glory of his Creator, it is wrong. “For God to appraise a work as good that is not directed to God and His glory would be for God to deny Himself” (Engelsma 37). Can it be right to assume that God is pleased with an earthly work of an unbeliever, but not pleased with the unbeliever who actually hates Him? C. S. Lewis realizes this concept in his book, *Mere Christianity*. Just because he seems good when he follows that law, a man is still not truly doing good if his intention is wrong (73). Christians must strive to do what God wants us to do, and anything not done for the only good purpose, which is to glorify Him, is sin. It is essential to recognize that common grace is not in accordance with Scripture when it makes the providence of God seem to be a grace that helps an unbeliever do good.

In the next article, the Lord willing, we will consider two additional ideas related to the issue of common grace: the idea that God has empathy for unbelievers and has more than one plan for the world. We will then point out the dangers of common grace to the Reformed faith. ❖

Works Cited

Engelsma, David J. *Common Grace Revisited*. Grandville: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2003.

Gritters, Barry. *Grace Uncommon*. Byron Center, Michigan: Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, 1994.

Hoeksema, H. C. “‘Common Grace’ Sickness.” *The Standard Bearer* 41 (1964): 28-31.

_____. “Editor’s Notes: The EPC and Common Grace.” *The Standard Bearer* 51 (1974): 125-127.

_____. “Question Box: About Common Grace and the Restraint of Sin.” *The Standard Bearer* 51 (1975): 464-466.

Houck, Steven. *Reformed Doctrine: Man*. Lansing, IL: Peace Protestant Reformed Church, 1998.

Mouw, Richard J. *He Shines in All That’s Fair*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Jonathan attends the Pittsburgh Protestant Reformed Mission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Church History

George M. Ophoff (18)

Rev. Ophoff’s Relation To His Colleague

by Prof. Herman Hanko

We were talking in our last article about the work required of Rev. Ophoff during his years in the pastoral ministry in Hope and Byron Center. During the time of his pastoral ministry, he was also professor in the Seminary.

This is probably as good a point as any to bring up another feature of Rev. Ophoff’s labor: the unique relationship which existed between Revs. Ophoff and Hoeksema.

I say this relationship was unique. This was true for various reasons. Most importantly, these two men were so diverse in character that there was little possibility of a deep and personal friendship between them. Although it is impossible to judge with accuracy, it often seemed to me that the two would never have been able to get along together in any sense, if they were not united in the cause of the truth.

Rev. Hoeksema, to cite but one example, was very systematic in all his work. He was orderly in the work he did in his study. He was systematic in his preaching and writing. He was organized in his teaching.

Rev. Ophoff was exactly the opposite. There was almost no order and system to anything which he did. His study looked as though a tornado had recently sped through it, and only he knew (most of the time) where anything was. A man took his life in his hands if he dared



The Byron Center parsonage

to move anything about in his study. He had little order and system in his writing, teaching or preaching—as his students and those who heard him preach will readily admit. I, when working for the Doorn Printing Company, often set his *Standard Bearer* articles on the linotype machine, and was hard pressed to make head or tail out of them when they came in on different sized sheets cut up and scotch-taped, with voluminous notes, marginal jottings, arrows, and references to different places in the manuscript. This was indicative of vast differences of character between these two men.

Nevertheless, they labored together in harmony for almost forty years. Rev. Ophoff, when asked why he labored with Rev. Hoeksema, said: "I saw in him a champion of the truth with bulldog tenacity. There is principally no other choice than to support him." At the same time, Rev. Ophoff was his own man and did his own thinking. He was not what the Dutch would call a "ja-broeder" (yes-brother). There were many times when they disagreed on questions of exegesis, points of the truth, ways of doing things, and courses of action to follow.

...there existed a mutual respect between these two men which was of the highest sort.

Rev. Hoeksema though sometimes perhaps secretly exasperated with Rev. Ophoff, never showed anything but respect for his colleague. I and those who knew these men could not help but be impressed with the fact that there existed a mutual respect between these two men which was of the highest sort. They never called each other by anything but their last names. They never debated in a heated and angry fashion. They never forced their own positions on the other, but allowed the greatest latitude for disagreement. They could discuss the most abstruse theological points, disagree while discussing them, and enjoy every minute of it. But they were not "friends" in the sense of socializing together or spending time in each other's company for purely social reasons—although this latter was also due to the fact that both were too busy for socializing.

In a certain sense of the word, Rev. Ophoff stood in the shade of Rev. Hoeksema. For various reasons, in the public mind Rev. Hoeksema's work overshadowed that of Rev. Ophoff. It seems to me that this was due in large measure to the fact that Rev. Hoeksema had the greater gifts of organization and of making popular the truth which both believed. But whatever may have been the reason, this fact never seemed to bother Rev. Ophoff in the least. He was never jealous, never dissatisfied with his lot, never concerned about the fact that his considerable achievements were often unrecognized and unnoticed.

Rev. Ophoff was basically a meek man. There would be some who would quarrel with this. His writings were

not always characterized by what one would call meekness. He possessed a fiery temper which sometimes broke out against his children in his home, sometimes against his parishioners in his congregation, and sometimes against his students in school. In fact, he fought all his life to control his temper, for he knew his weakness better than most. Yet I do not hesitate to say that he was meek in the good sense of the word. In my own acquaintance with Rev. Ophoff I was sometimes reminded of Scripture's description of Moses: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3).

When Ophoff became angry publicly, it was often because he was driven to the very point of distraction by those who attacked him without mercy. When he wrote or spoke vehemently, it was never out of personal hatred or dislike, but always as a passionate defender of what he believed to be the truth. And if he was shown to be wrong, he never hesitated to apologize openly and publicly for his wrongdoing and for his inability to hold his temper. But his meekness came out especially in that he could stand comfortably in the shade of his colleague Rev. Hoeksema all his life and never once murmur or complain even though his own achievements were sometimes overlooked.

I said that Rev. Ophoff most frequently lost his temper in public when he was driven to it by those who attacked him. This point needs some emphasis.

Both Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff did not do their work for personal gain. They were absorbed by the truth, deeply committed to it, and dedicated to its propagation and development. They did not stop to think about personal popularity or approval of men. They were not inclined to be "diplomatic" when questions of the truth were at stake. They did what had to be done without regard for personal popularity or human approval. They knew what Paul meant when he said (Galatians 1:10) that if he pleased men, he would not be a slave of Jesus Christ.

I suppose it can be argued that both sometimes carried this determination to an extreme. Insensitivity to others, bluntness to the point of hurting people's feelings, lack of diplomacy in delicate and fragile human relationships (to use some of the jargon of today's wishy-washy theological climate) were unknown to them. Or, if these things were known, the truth and glory of God were infinitely greater.

The result was that they took an almost unbelievable amount of bitter and fierce opposition. This came

mostly from those outside our churches, but sometimes from those within the church. They were persecuted for the cause of the gospel. They suffered the reproach of men. They were unjustly attacked. They were publicly slandered. They were condemned for their stand. And, finally, they were stripped of their offices and set outside the church.

My father tells of one instance of this, which will illustrate the point. It was soon after the split in 1953 and several men from our churches, including my father and Rev. Hoeksema, were on a committee to meet with a committee from the Christian Reformed Church to make final settlement of the archives, which rightly belonged to our churches, but were in the possession of the CRC. The meeting was in Calvin Seminary. When all the arrangements had been completed, the men from our churches were invited to the coffee shop for a cup of coffee. Rev. Hoeksema declined the invitation, but my father prevailed upon him to come, after all, in the interests of “decency”. The moment the men from both churches were seated at the table, the CRC men began to berate Rev. Hoeksema bitterly and fiercely for his “stubborn” nature, his refusal to cooperate, his past writings, his defense of the faith, etc. Through it all Rev. Hoeksema said nothing. But within a few minutes, my father, sorry that he had ever agreed to coffee, said to Rev. Hoeksema: “We’re going home.”

Both Rev. Hoeksema and Ophoff never were required to endure physical pain for the cause of the gospel. But the persecution they were called to endure was just as bad, frequently more painful, and yet, for the most part, borne with patience. That once in a while they would find it difficult to restrain themselves is not surprising.

They could provide for each
other the gifts which the
other lacked.

Though Rev. Ophoff stood in the shadow of Rev. Hoeksema in the public eye, God measures in different ways than man. Rev. Ophoff has his own, God-ordained place in the church. If the two fathers of our denomination did not find compatibility of character, they did complement each other. They could provide for each other the gifts which the other lacked. Prof. Hoeksema could provide organization and system. This was cru-

cially important in the early days of the history of our churches.

But, without Rev. Ophoff, the Protestant Reformed Churches would not be what they are today. When more times than we will ever know men who seemed to support the cause of the truth proved to be untrustworthy and treacherous, Rev. Ophoff was one man who stood unswervingly at Rev. Hoeksema’s side and could be counted on to stand with him when the truth was at stake.

...when it came to a love for
the Old Testament..., when
the Christian virtues of
meekness, willingness to
suffer for the cause of the
truth, total commitment to
sound doctrine,... Rev.
Ophoff left marks on us
impossible to erase.

In the Seminary Rev. Hoeksema was needed. But if someone would ask me: Who made the deepest impression on you and influenced you the most while you studied in the Seminary?” I would be hard-pressed to answer. The influence was different. Theologically, yes, Rev. Hoeksema’s influence was enormous. But when it came to a love for the Old Testament..., when the Christian virtues of meekness, willingness to suffer for the cause of the truth, total commitment to sound doctrine were being (in a totally unconscious way) conveyed to us—in learning these important characteristics of the Christian soldier, Rev. Ophoff left marks on us impossible to erase.

If one listened to the two preach, their way of preaching and the content of their sermons were as different as it is possible to be within the boundaries of Biblical and confessional faithfulness; but if many, many sermons of Rev. Hoeksema still linger in my mind, the same is true of those sermons which, less frequently, I heard from Rev. Ophoff. I vividly remember (during a sermon on Colossians 3:1-3) his earnest admonition to the young girls of the congregation not to purchase their beauty at the corner drug store. I cannot imagine anyone forgetting his sermon on the Levite who went to fetch his con-

cubine from her father. His description of the persuasive techniques of the father are almost verbatim in my memory. And his description of Noah's drunkenness left a horror of this sin in the minds of those who heard it.

In the controversy in 1953 it was Rev. Ophoff, long before anyone else, who saw the dangers in a conditional covenant and who was opposed to Dr. Schilder's visit to our churches when our pulpits were opened to him. And it was Rev. Ophoff who first saw the dreadful wrong and fatal consequences of such a doctrine.

This was the man who labored after 1924 for some twenty years in the pastoral ministry and in the Seminary.

His labors in Byron Center were not for the most part happy labors. Rev. Ophoff moved to Byron Center in 1930 and worked there as pastor for fifteen years. The fact that Rev. Ophoff's stay in Byron Center was such a lengthy one certainly testifies to the faithfulness of his ministry in that place.

Nevertheless, there were troubles in that congregation, and these troubles eventually led to the dissolution of the church. We do not intend to go into these troubles in any kind of detail in these articles. This is because of the fact that they were not doctrinal issues which divided the congregation, but personal issues which more or less revolved around the personality of their pastor. I have read all the material of this history as it came to Classis and finally to Synod.

The point that strikes me more than any other is the fact that it is difficult if not impossible for a man to do justice to teaching in the Seminary and caring for the needs of a congregation. This seems to be at the heart of the problem. Rev. Ophoff was far too busy. He simply

could not do all the work that needed doing, and the result was that the congregation in Byron Center suffered. There were people who were unhappy with the situation and who complained about it. It did not help any that Rev. Ophoff's rather naturally short temper was made shorter by all the pressures of work, by the lack of sleep, by his own awareness that he was not doing justice to his work in the congregation, and by the fact that there were those who severely tried his soul. The trouble that came to the congregation was not surprising. It dragged on for many years, and was finally resolved when Rev. Ophoff assumed full time labors in the Seminary in 1945. It came to an end when the faithful in Byron Center joined our other Churches and the congregation there dissolved. It is reason for gratitude, and a sort of vindication of Rev. Ophoff's work, that a flourishing and faithful congregation has been re-established in that area.

It is worth our notice that Rev. Ophoff's strengths never really lay in the pastoral ministry. We have said before that this must not be construed as meaning that he could not preach. In his own inimitable way, he was a preacher of unusual ability. It must also be remembered that he never really had an opportunity to prove himself in the pastoral ministry, for almost from the beginning of it he was thrust into the double role of pastor and professor. Nevertheless, God did not give Rev. Ophoff the gifts to be a pastor in the strictest sense of the word. He was a teacher and a preacher—above all the former. There was the place where his gifts could be put to best use. And there he took up full time labor after 1945. ❖

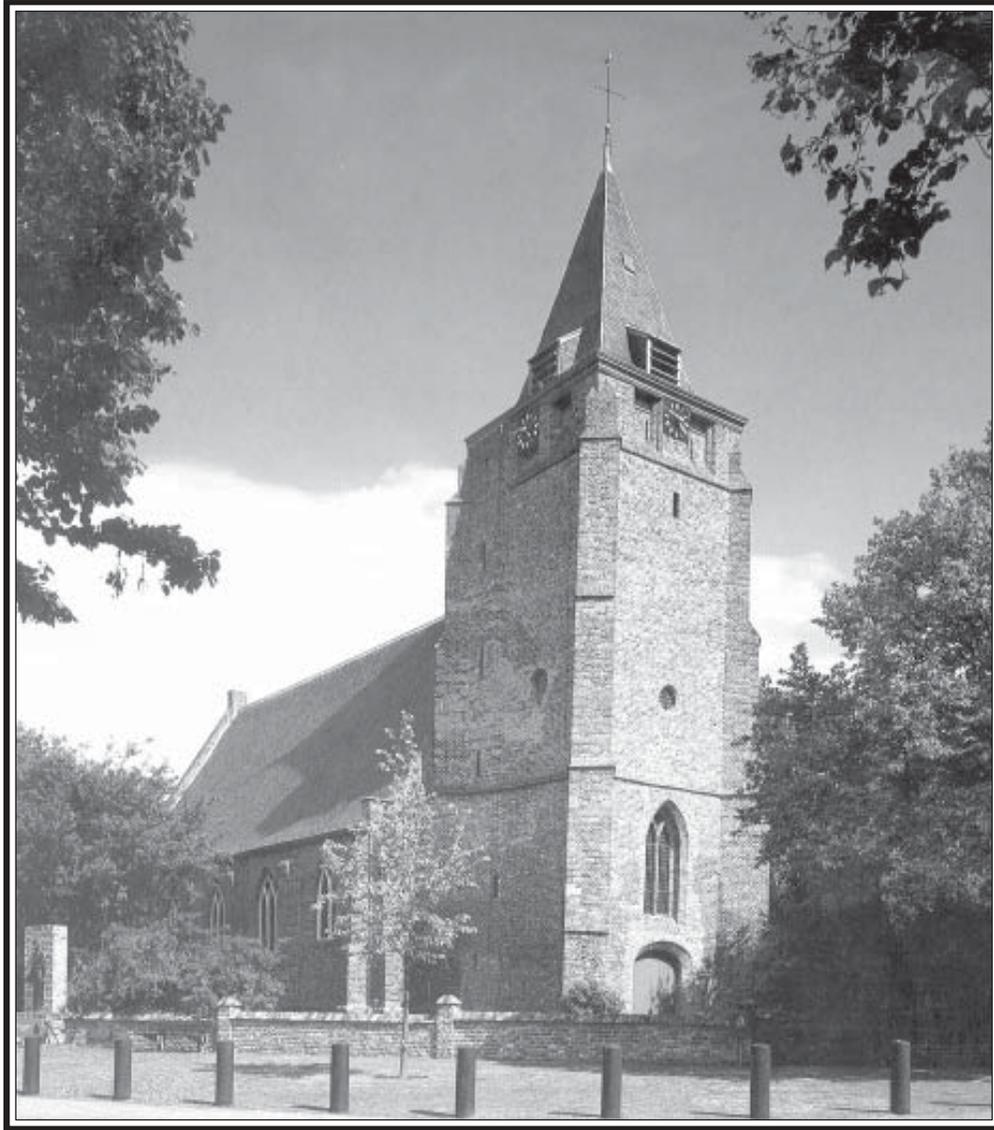
Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

The State Reformed Church Of Serooskerke

by J.P. de Klerk

Serooskerke is a town on the Dutch island of Walcheren (province of Zeeland). Today the inhabitants are all farmers and more than eighty per cent are known as Reformed Christians.

Noormannen (Norsemen) occupied this island from 826 to the 1100s. The State Reformed church was probably built after their departure, approximately 1190 AD. The original church building was probably small and



primitive. Over the years, there were additions and updates.

In 1577, the building being partly destroyed by war, was carefully restored. The floor in the church was then used as a cemetery. Each grave was covered with a large stone with engravings. By 1907 the floor of the church was filled.

Although the church was not damaged during World War II, it was poorly maintained. So it was decided that the whole building needed to be restored. The congregation along with the Council and the central government contributed the funds necessary for restoration. On June 011, 1958, the church was officially reopened. At the left side of the church, a monument was built in commemoration of the members who died during the Nazi occupation.

The best known minister in the history of this church was Rev. Johannes Plevier (born in Zierikzee on October 26, 1685), who had received his theological training in the universities of Utrecht and Leiden. He lived to be 76 years old and retired in the city of Middelburg. Rev. Plevier was a follower of Professor Johannes Coccejus, who did not want the Reformed Churches to unite with the Lutheran Churches and did not always adhere to Reformed theology.

Rev. Plevier wrote an exposition of the book of Acts in four volumes with 3,000 pages, which was reprinted three times. He also wrote an interpretation of Psalms 1-49. ❖

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

A Perfect Day

*B*egin the day with God;
 Kneel down to Him in prayer;
 Lift up thy heart to His abode,
 And seek His love to share.

*O*pen the book of God,
 And read a portion there
 That it may hallow all thy thoughts
 And sweeten all thy care.

*G*o through the day with God,
 Whate'er thy work may be;
 Where'er thou art—at home, abroad—
 He still is near to thee.

*C*onverse in mind with God;
 Thy spirit heavenward raise;
 Acknowledge every good bestowed,
 And offer grateful praise.

*C*onclude the day with God;
 Thy sins to Him confess;
 Trust in the Lord's atoning love,
 And plead His righteousness.

*L*ie down at night with God,
 Who gives His servants sleep;
 And when thou tread'st the vale of death
 He will thee guard and keep.

*S*o, led by Thee, my Lord,
 My grateful heart will say,
 "Praise God! whose grace has guided me,
 Unto a perfect day."

— Dann.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

In a Snowy Day

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

It was snowing. Wet, cold, frosty white snow lay on the ground. But nothing unusual in that. There was a pit, too. Snow lined the walls and floor of the hole in the earth. But nothing unusual in that either. Just a snowy day.

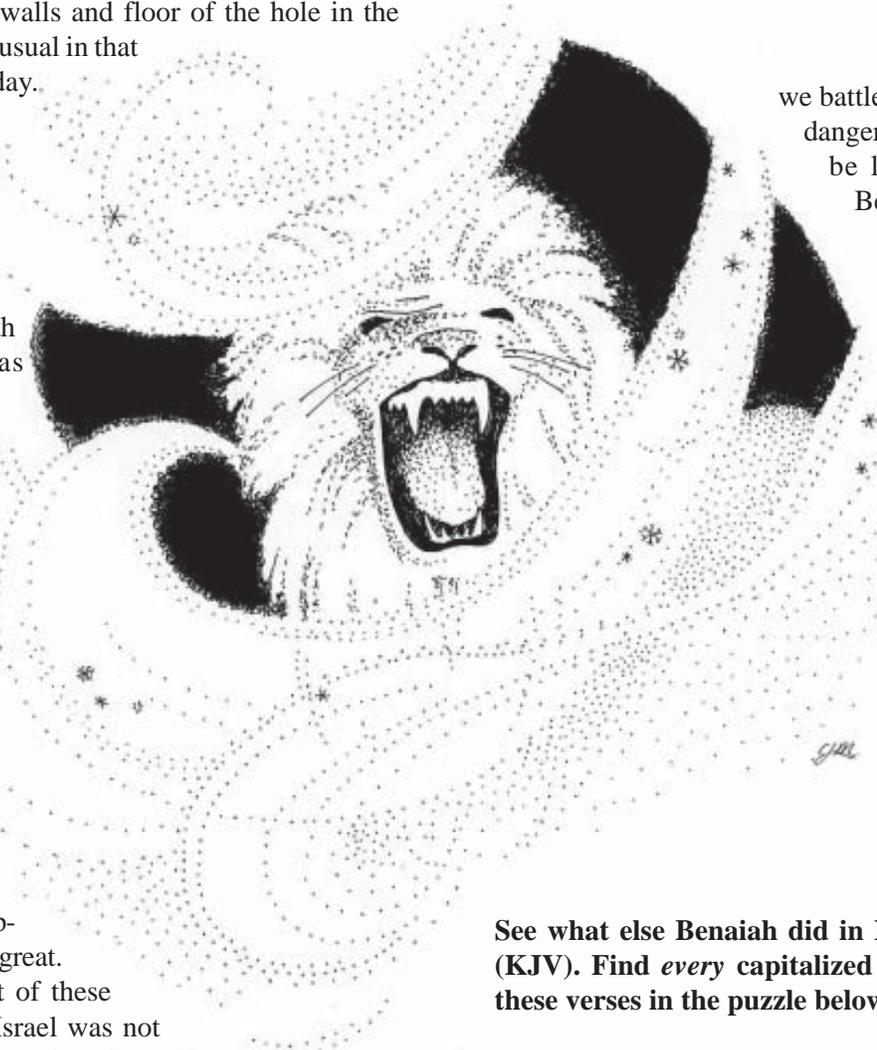
Until a growl was heard. It came from the gloom below. A snarl...a roar...a lion was in the pit! Paws as big as saucers and teeth and claws as big as knives, the beast was bent on destruction.

Benaiah was nearby. He heard the lion. He saw the animal inside the hole. It paced the floor of the pit—back and forth, back and forth—defying its captivity in frantic, piercing howls. And it kept snowing.

The lion was angry. The snow was slippery. The danger was great. But Benaiah thought of these things. The land of Israel was not safe with such lions roaming about. He entered the pit. He fought the lion. He killed it.

Exactly how Benaiah slew the lion we do not know. But we do know Benaiah was a mighty man of valor, numbered among the bravest and strongest of Israel. David set him over his guard. Benaiah loved his godly king. Benaiah loved his God.

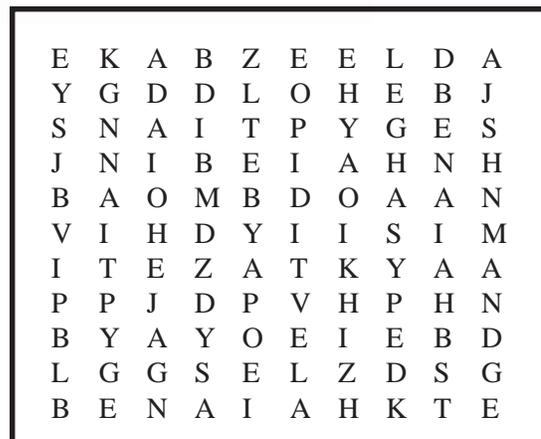
When we see our enemies—wickedness, lies, and sin, and especially our own—are we fearless and brave like Benaiah? Do we use all our might to kill those evil thoughts and desires that lurk in the pit of our souls? Do



we battle them, no matter what dangers confront us? May we be like valiant Benaiah, Benaiah who slew a lion in a pit—in a snowy day. ❖

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

See what else Benaiah did in I Chronicles 11:22-25 (KJV). Find every capitalized word or name from these verses in the puzzle below:



BEACONLIGHTS

P.O. BOX 144
Randolph, WI 53956

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

Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Micah James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Koole—Faith, MI
Carter James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Kuiper—Faith, MI
Leah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Decker—Faith, MI
Lydia Eileen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott VanUffelen—Faith, MI
Kylee Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wes Fisher—Georgetown, MI
Brendan Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Langerak—Hope, MI
Gideon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Bosman—Holland, MI
Sally Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Doezema—Holland, MI
Eli Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Lindsey—South Holland, IL
Devin William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Knecht—South Holland, IL
Jonah Louis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Regnerus—South Holland, IL
Ava Ruthanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Jabaay—Southeast, MI
Seth Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Don Kuiper—Southeast, MI
Colton James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Kamps—Southeast, MI
Genevieve Irene, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Kunst—Southeast, MI
Jamie Ellen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Kamps—Southwest, MI

Everett Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Bleyenbergh—Trinity, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Shealagh Wierenga—Edmonton, Alberta

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:
Abby VanDenTop—Doon, IA
Bethany VanEgdom—Doon, IA
Shari Klein—Doon, IA
Rebecca Klaasens—Edmonton, Alberta
Jason Tolsma—Edmonton, Alberta
Rachel Tolsma—Edmonton, Alberta
Heather Geertsma—Wingham, Ontario
Erik Guichelaar—Wingham, Ontario
Henk VanGent—Wingham, Ontario

MARRIAGES

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

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Rick Mingerink and Miss Carmen Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Aaron Lehrman and Miss Christine Young—First, MI
Mr. Nathan Lanning and Miss Dawn Fisher—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Jamie Aalsma and Miss Erika Braaksma—Randolph, WI