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“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Isaiah 53:2-3

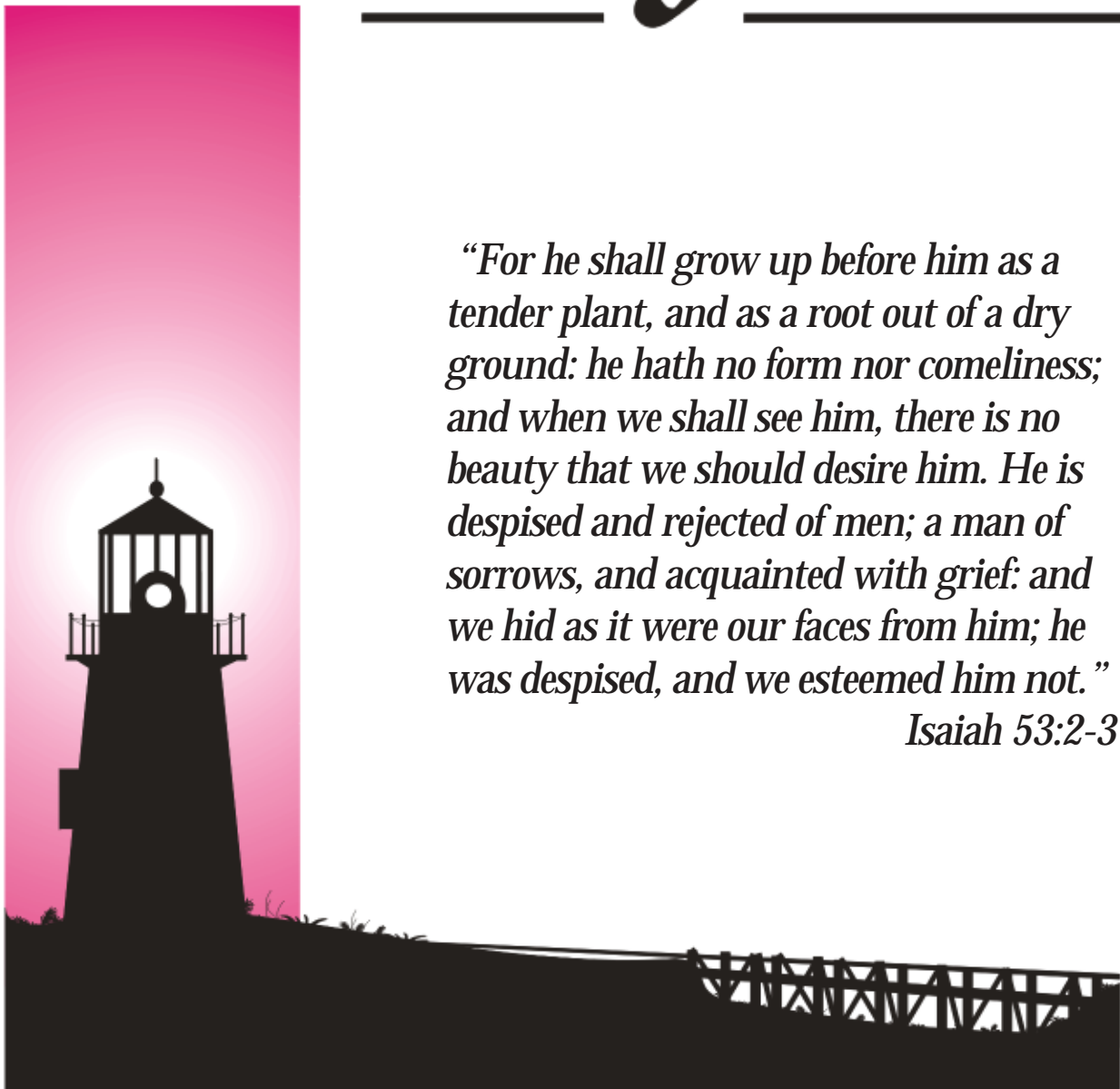


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	His Humble Birth
	STORY TIME
4	Sara's Prayer
	THE READER ASKS
7	Our Good Works and Degrees of Reward and Punishment (2)
8	Forgiveness and Repentance
	CONSIDER THE CREATION
9	Tree Harvest
	CHURCH FAMILY
10	Stewardship
	DEVOTIONAL
13	Watching Daily At My Gates
	FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY
21	Holding the Traditions (2)
	WHERE WE STAND
22	All Means All, and That Is All It Means!
	MEMOIR OF REV. C. HANKO
25	Chapter 7: Rev. Hoeksema Comes to Eastern Avenue CRC
	CHURCH HISTORY
27	George M. Ophoff (27): Rev. Ophoff's Last Years
	CHURCH NEWS
30	Church News
	LITTLE LIGHTS
31	Waiting

BEACON LIGHTS

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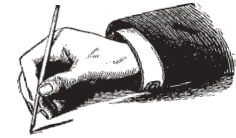
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His Humble Birth

by George Ten Elshof



Perhaps the first thing a child is taught concerning the birth of Jesus, is the place of that birth. And even before it has learned to speak correctly, it will answer when asked, “Where was Jesus born?” “In Bethlehem.” A little later, details are added which more definitely state the location and children are taught that it was “in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn.” And it would not be superfluous for us to pause for just a few moments and consider this humble birth of our King although, the facts, as such, are known to all of us.

What a far cry is such a birthplace from that of the children of today! Do we not associate the event of birth with spotless, sanitary hospitals and maternity wards? Basket after basket each with its precious little bundle safely sheltered behind glass walls; “No Admittance” signs on the door; a nurse with a gauze mask over mouth and nose carefully weighing out formulas and checking charts! And Jesus? In a manger! In the room where the cattle were kept! Possibly it was not a separate building since in that region it was customary to set apart a portion of the dwelling place for a stable for the cattle. But even at best it certainly, to all external appearances and even literally, was a very ignominious place in which to be born.

And as we pause to reflect, how true it becomes that Jesus was born, as it were, on the very edge of the world. For even the lowliest peasant mother must have had her bed-chamber, but Mary the mother of our Lord was forced to spend her hour of travail in a stable!

Oh yes, you may say that it was circumstance that determined this lowly birthplace. Tell Mary that she had no business at a time like this to be so far from home and the accommodations which it afforded. She didn’t *have* to go with Joseph did she? Could he as family head and representative not have transacted this tax business alone and left her in the care of friends? Surely they could have foreseen that housing facilities would be limited at a time such as this. Foolish parents? Newlyweds who couldn’t bear to be separated? Ignorant folk who did not appreciate or understand the mysteries and seriousness of childbirth?

These and many more questions and accusations could be hurled and yet, in that direction we shall never find the answer. For it is the Hand of God who is leading them. And He it was who required that his own Son should be born in a manger.

In the world, we find two classes of people. First of all there are those who have risen to heights of wealth and prominence and who, if they have been born “on the wrong side of the tracks,” will avoid discussing their birthplace or parentage for they are ashamed. Secondly, there are, in direct contrast to the former, those who will openly boast of their lowly birth and brag about how they “started on a shoestring.” It is done, of course, solely for the purpose of boasting. How often haven’t we been reminded of the fact that Lincoln was born in a log cabin and arose to become a president?

But Jesus? A child of royal lineage even according to the flesh, must He be born in a stable? Yes, He must! It is a fitting place for Him! I repeat, *He must and it is a fitting place for Him!* Why? Because He stood in our stead and even as some thirty years later, He is to be nailed to the accursed tree and drink to the last the dregs of the bitter cup; and even as during His sojourn among men He could testify that the foxes have holes and the birds have nests but the Son of Man hath not place where to lay His head; even so it is fitting that His birth be in conformity with His life and purpose.

And shall we strive to remove the shameful of that humble birth? Shall we embellish that lowly scene and remove its objection? Should we, perhaps, have little plays and pageants and highly imaginative artists' conceptions of that birthplace? Shall we place a shining halo above the head of that kingly Child? Shall we? Shall we forget that He was born in a stable and that stables smell? Shall we tell the world that, after all, our King wasn't born in such a bad place and besides, He couldn't help it and neither could Mary and Joseph. Remember, there were those "unavoidable circumstances." Shall we take the Christ Child out of a malodorous stable?

No! Leave Him there when meditating upon His birthplace. Leave Him there for He is come in our stead. Leave Him there for it is a silent yet dramatic testimony, both to us and to the world, that there is no room for Him. Leave Him there for it speaks louder than words can shout that He has come in our place of death and shame and the stench of our decomposition. Leave Him there and as you gaze on the Son of God lying in a mephitic stable, remember that that suffering and shame, which was climaxed in the cross, was already begun at His humble birth. And now, who among us dares lift his head? Who among us dares to boast in his own self-righteousness? Who dares boast of his wealth, position in society, talent, skill or ingenuity? Who dares then to hold high his head and begrudge a hearty Christian greeting to his fellow miscreant? If we do, we have not seen that manger nor the precious gift which it contained. We have not seen that He, our King and Redeemer, has come in our stead and has borne our shame and guilt also in His humble birth.

But if we have seen Him and known Him both in His birth and life and death and have been made partakers of the work which He has so perfectly accomplished, then must we indeed stand in awe and with humble gratitude rejoice in this great gift of God's love. ❖

**Reprinted from the Dec. 1945 issue of Beacon Lights, at which time Mr. Ten Elshof was the editor.*

Story Time

Sara's Prayer

by Tom Cammenga

What began as the solitary ballet of a single snowflake had slowly evolved into the dance of a host innumerable. The tiny ice crystals that had served as the introduction gave way to large flakes that fell slowly down, covering all in a brilliant blanket of white. The birds and squirrels that only a short time before had been scurrying around had now disappeared; no doubt seeking shelter from the cold and snow. The light gradually faded and afternoon became evening. Sitting there in the window seat of her bedroom she had watched it all unfold and yet had not really seen any of it. So lost in thought was she that the entrance of her 7-year old granddaughter Sara into the room went without her notice. Only after the little girl had stood next to her for a minute or so did she finally realize she was there.

"Oh dear!" she exclaimed both alarmed and relieved at the same time. "I didn't hear you come in honey." She looked briefly at her granddaughter then turned her eyes to the falling snow once again.

"What are you watching Grandma?" Sara asked after a bit, following her grandmother's gaze out the window.

"Just... watching it snow I suppose," she said, sighing softly.

The two of them were silent then, taking in the darkening wintry scene, the wind now swirling the snow into a tantalizing show of glitter. Finally the woman turned back to the child and grasped her hands.

"What is on your mind little one?" she asked in a soothing voice and with a slight smile on her face.

“I was just wondering,” replied the little girl, pausing momentarily in search of the right words, “if you could have anything for Christmas, Grandma, what would it be?”

Leaning back the woman looked out the window once again and didn’t reply for quite some time. So much time passed in fact that the little girl wondered if she had even been heard. At last the woman turned back to the little girl, the motion of her turning head causing the tears that had formed in her eyes to trickle down her cheeks.

“More than anything,” she asked in a barely audible voice? The little girl nodded her head slowly. “More than anything I wish I could see your Uncle Brandon just once more, to hold him and talk to him and tell him how much I love him.” As these last words escaped her quivering lips she fought with all of her might to maintain her composure for the little girl’s sake.

The Lord had taken Brandon home through an automobile accident at the age of sixteen only a month before. The pain was still so real it felt at times as though her heart would surely break. The little things it seemed most often brought it all back. Even now as she had watched the falling snow her mind had been flooded with memories both recent and of long ago. God’s grace was always there, His everlasting arms were ceaselessly underneath holding her but oh how it still hurt. Oh how she longed for the pain in her heart to fade. Oh how she missed him so.

Realizing that the child into whose face she now gazed did not, really could not understand this wish she wiped the tears from her eyes and cheeks with the back of her hand and stood up. Tenderly she wrapped her arms around the child’s shoulders and hugged her tightly.

“You really miss him don’t you Grandma?” Sara asked in a matter of fact tone as they broke their embrace and looked at each other.

“Yes dear, I really miss him,” she replied in a whisper.

* * * * *

Later that night after arriving home and being tucked in by her father and mother Sara quietly climbed out of bed and very purposefully knelt on her knees, folded her little hands, and prayed with an earnestness far beyond her years.

“Lord, please be with Grandma and Grandpa and help them to stop crying. Help them to not be sad and help them to smile. And please Lord; give Grandma her

wish for Christmas. Please let Uncle Brandon come home so that she can see him one more time. Amen.”

With a now quieted spirit and an assurance in her heart that her prayer had been heard she clambered back into bed once more, snuggled into her blankets, and slept the sleep of a child whose faith was simple and sure.

* * * * *

Christmas day came and went with the normal excitement, hustle and bustle, and family time. As had become the custom of the family all the married children came to the house for lunch after church in the morning and stayed throughout the day. After lunch everyone gathered in the family room and sat in rapt attention as Grandpa read the account of Christ’s birth found in Luke 2. This was another custom begun long ago in order to place the proper perspective on the day. There then shortly followed a chaos of flying paper, squeals of joy, and hugs of thanks. The enthusiasm of all the grandchildren as they ripped open the presents and then later as they raced around the house with their new toys brought much joy to their parents and especially their grandparents. So much so that they almost forgot that Brandon was not there. Almost.

Sara though seemed somewhat out of sorts and not her cheerful and energetic self. All day she constantly looked out the front window as if expecting someone to drive up and would even open the front door occasionally in order to see outside. Her grandmother noticed this and though she said nothing the oddity of it struck her.

Later that evening as everyone packed up children and presents, Sarah was no where to be seen. Her grandmother soon found her in the bedroom sitting on the window seat weeping quietly.

“Oh sweetie, don’t cry,” she said in a consoling voice as she took the child in her arms. “Whatever is the matter?”

“I am so sorry Grandma. I asked God to give you one more chance to see Uncle Brandon but he didn’t come home today.” Tears now flowed freely down Sara’s face as if for the first time the reality of Brandon’s death was clear to her. He was never coming home.

Wiping the tears from the child’s face her grandmother tried to comfort the little girl. “It’s alright honey. Even though that is what I wish for, I know that it isn’t possible.” Gently she took Sara’s face in her hands and looked in her eyes. “When we go to heaven we are made perfect. It isn’t possible to come back to this sinful earth

once we are perfect. We will see him again someday though when Jesus comes to take us to heaven too.”

They comforted one another for a time then and once Sara had calmed down she and her family left for their own home. As they watched the tail lights of the car disappear down the road Brandon’s parents shook their heads in amazement.

“What a precious little girl,” her grandmother said, still shaking her head back and forth.

“If only we could all have such a child like faith,” her husband said as he wrapped his arm around his wife.

After cleaning and straightening up the house and having a bit of quiet time they retired for the night exhausted and drained, hoping that sleep would come and yet both knowing that it probably wouldn’t as was the case with most every night. Lying quietly in the darkness only prompted the many memories and thoughts to arise in their minds of the events of the last month and though sleep beckoned, they were unable to follow.

They lay awake long after going to bed. Having tossed and turned for most of the night they finally got up and made their way to Brandon’s room for the first time since having to pick out clothes for him to wear in the casket. Hand in hand they steeled themselves against the flood of emotions that surely awaited them on the other side of the door. Having finally walked through the doorway they stopped and simply stood there for a long time taking in each detail. Everything was exactly as Brandon had left it the day of the accident. There were a few clothes scattered over the floor, the bed remained unmade, and the closet door stood ajar. It was hard to know where to begin. Walking over to his desk she ran her fingers over the school books that still lie stacked neatly off to the side, leaving behind faint lines in the dust that had accumulated on them. Sitting down in the chair she gently opened the largest drawer and there in the corner lay an envelope wrapped in Christmas paper. On the tag that was taped to the top of it were these words: “To Mom and Dad. DO NOT OPEN UNTIL CHRISTMAS!!!!!!” With trembling hands she picked it up and held it tightly to her chest, knowing it was from Brandon. His father looked at her in bewilderment at first and then suddenly understanding washed over him. Brandon had been scheduled to join his youth group from church on a mission trip to Ghana, Africa over the Christmas break and would not have been home for the holiday. He must have written the letter intending to give it to them before he left. His father gently took it from her and together they sat down on the bed to read Brandon’s final words to them.

Dear Dad and Mom,

If you are reading this letter it must be Christmas. MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!!!!! I know we decided to exchange our gifts when I get home but I had to leave something for you to open. I’m sorry I couldn’t be there to share the day with you and everyone else. God had other plans for me this year.

Thanks again for letting me go. I know you had a hard time with it and really didn’t want to let me go. Like I said before though, I really feel that this is God’s will for me. Mom, DON’T WORRY!!!! Everything will be fine and we’ll be back together again before you know it.

Even though I won’t be there for Christmas just think of all the memories from past years and it will seem like I am right there with you. I know I’ll be doing the same. I’ll think of Dad reading the story of Christ’s birth with all of us gathered around. I’ll remember how excited I was the year I got my first bike and then how I cried when I realized it had a flat tire and I couldn’t ride it. I’ll recall the Christmas that Dad got Mom a necklace with all our birthstones on it and how Mom cried when she opened it. Then there was the year it snowed so much that nobody was able to come over on Christmas day and we kept busy digging out and building the greatest snow fort ever. See, I feel better already!

Well, I guess I’ll let you get back to celebrating the day. Make sure you tell everyone I love them and miss them. Who knows, maybe I’ll even bring some gifts back from Ghana for everyone. Actually, I don’t think I’ll have a choice as I haven’t had time to do any shopping yet! If all is well I will see you soon. God Bless!

Love Always,
Brandon

Sitting side by side on the bed they read and re-read the letter, hanging on each word as if Brandon were right there with them, their tears forever staining the paper. As the first light of a new day began to grace the creation they knelt there beside the bed and Brandon’s father led in prayer for a long while. At times full minutes would pass between words as he was overcome with emotion and would struggle to regain his composure. By the grace of God for the first time since Brandon had passed away their tears were those of joy. Joy that God was so good and faithful to His people. Joy because that same God was also their Father. Joy because the Lord answers prayers—even those of little girls. ❖

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

Our Good Works and Degrees of Reward and Punishment (2)

In the previous article, I began to respond to a letter from Laurel Lotterman in which she asked the following interesting questions:

- If our good works profit us nothing, then why do we believe that there will be different levels in heaven?
- What kind of levels are the levels of heaven? If heaven is perfect and we are perfectly happy, will the people in levels higher than us be *more* happy, or *more* perfect?
- If all sins are equal, why are there different levels of hell? (or aren't there?)

In my response I pointed out that even though we are not saved because of our good works, our good works do profit us. God rewards us *according to* our works, but not *on the basis of* our works. We are rewarded on the basis of what Christ has done, not on the basis of anything that we have done. The blessings God's people receive are blessings Christ purchased for them by His suffering and death. But God gives to us these blessings in a way that relates to the good works we perform. The more good works we do, the more blessings we receive. In this life, God is constantly rewarding us according to our works. And the reward we will receive at the final judgment will also be according to our works.

Last time I showed that our confessions clearly teach this (e.g. Belgic Confession, Article 24). I begin this time by showing that when our confessions speak on this matter they are accurately summarizing the teaching of Scripture.

God Rewarding Us According to Our Works

When speaking about His final coming, our Savior uttered the following words:

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works (Matt. 16:27).

He said the same thing in the vision that He gave to John:

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12).

Christ illustrated this truth in some of His parables. In one parable He spoke of a man who had ten servants and who gave each of them a pound (a pound is a unit of money). Later the man called his servants to him to see how much each one had been able to gain by trading. One of the servants that had started with one pound now had ten pounds. He was rewarded according to his works, and received a position in which he had authority over ten cities. Another servant, who also had started with one pound, now had five pounds. This servant also received a reward that was according to his works. Having gained five pounds, he received a position in which he had authority over five cities (Luke 19:11-27). This clearly teaches that the more faithfully one labors down here on earth, the greater will be his reward in heaven.

When we understand this, we will also be able to begin to grasp what Christ means when He exhorts us to lay up our treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20). The more we deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus, doing the good works that bring glory to the name of our heavenly Father, the greater will be our reward in heaven. The more we dig into the riches found in the Word of God and grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding, the more treasures we will have both now and in the life to come. For these are the treasures that endure, and that we can enjoy both now and forever.

Vessels Full of God's Glory, But with Different Capacities

This brings us now to what some people refer to as "levels in heaven." I would not use the phrase "levels in heaven," because it appears to speak of heaven as a building with many floors, with the lowest people being on the ground level, then another group living a little higher on the second floor, and another group living a little higher yet on the third floor, and so on. Rather, I prefer to use the biblical illustration of God's people as vessels (Rom.

9:23) that can be filled with the Spirit and glory of God. Then the idea would be that in heaven each of God's people will be a vessel filled with God's glory, so that each person will be perfectly happy and content. But some vessels will have more capacity than others, so that there will be different degrees of glory in heaven.

This idea of different degrees of glory is illustrated for us every night in the stars of heaven. The Scriptures take the truth that "one star differeth from another star in glory" (I Cor. 15:41), and apply it to the resurrection from the dead. Believers will shine as the stars. Some stars will be brighter than others, but each will perfectly radiate the light of God. Especially bright will be those

who grow in spiritual wisdom, and faithfully witness to bring others to the way of truth.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

By a verse such as this, we are encouraged to make good use of our time and effort, to seek after the only thing in life that is important.

I have not gotten to the third question yet, concerning degrees of punishment. Lord willing, I will start with this subject next time. ❖

Forgiveness and Repentance

Hi Rev. Laning,

The question that I have is in regard to forgiveness. It seems that there are different ideas with respect to the part of repentance and its place in forgiveness. We know that we are called to forgive the brother as much as seventy times seven, but when do we properly forgive? (Luke 17:3-4).

Craig Poortinga
Loveland PRC

Dear Craig,

I very much appreciate your question, and would like to begin by quoting the passage to which you refer:

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him (Luke 17:3, 4).

In this passage our Lord instructs us that we must forgive our brother in Christ repeatedly, even if he comes to us seven times in a day and tells us that he repents.

We also see here that we are to express this forgiveness to a person in the way of his or her repentance. We are not to tell the impenitent that they are forgiven. But in the way of his repenting and asking us to forgive him, we must truly forgive him from the heart, and must not bear any grudge against him. This is very important to remember in our marriages, in our relation between parents and children, and in our dealings with one another.

Now what if a person has sinned against us and has not yet shown any sign of repentance? In such a case we are called to strive to bring that person to repentance, so that we can express to him our forgiveness, and thus bring about reconciliation. It is true that the person who has sinned should be the one to come to the person whom he has sinned against. But if he does not do this, the brother who has been sinned against must go to the sinning brother and try to bring him to repentance, following the instruction of our Savior set forth in Matthew 18.

To do this we must keep in mind how God brought us to repentance, and then assured us that all our sins are forgiven. Although we are not forgiven *on the basis of* our repentance, it is *in the way of* our repentance and faith that God causes us consciously to experience the comfort of forgiveness. Thinking on how much God has forgiven us, and the way in which He has caused us to experience this forgiveness, we are to imitate Him in our forgiving of one another.

God's continued blessings upon you and the saints in Loveland. ❖

Do you have a question that has been on your mind? Something that came up at school or during a discussion with friends or co-workers? You can be sure that there are many more people reading these words who have had the same question and are looking for answers just like you. Rev. Laning of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

is waiting to answer them. Don't worry, if you would rather your name was not published with your question, we will honor your request. We do, however, ask that your name and either your home or email address be included so that Rev. Laning can respond privately if need be.

Please send your question to:

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Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

Tree Harvest

by Deane Wassink

What has eight wheel traction, sonar, intelligence and moves trees for a living? Would you believe it is my logging team made up of my Belgian mule, Pat, and my Belgian horse, Rosie. Their job in the wintertime is to help harvest the trees along the lakeshore that I cut for delivery to sawmills. Through working with them and marketing the trees they haul, I have gained a whole new appreciation for the creatures I work with and the forests we work in.

We cut many kinds of trees. Primarily I take care of woodlots by removing a percentage of the mature and diseased trees to allow for better growth and greater value in the future. Along the lakeshore the most common and valuable hardwood trees are cherry, oak and sugar maple. These hardwoods are used primarily for furniture, cabinets and veneers. Some of the less valuable species like beech, sassafras, silver maple and poplar are used for decking and pallets. We also harvest red, white, and scotch pine which is used for fence posts, fencing, and rustic furniture. Though we have done some sawing of the logs into boards, we now only harvest the logs and sell them to large sawmills. There they are turned into useful products more efficiently.

I use my horses and mules for more activities than just the "fun" of sleigh rides, wagon rides and pulling weights. They are an efficient and environmentally friendly way to harvest trees. Certainly, they are no match for the "monster" logging machines for production, however, they do much less residual damage to the ecosystem of the forest. The animals themselves are amazingly intelligent creatures that avoid dangerous situations, work with voice commands, and desire to work as a team with

a human. In fact there are few more awesome experiences than to control 4,000 pounds of horse scratching for traction in determination to pull a huge log no matter how difficult it is. Though man has bred these animals with the desire to work hard and please man, God has created them with that innate desire to subject themselves in the service of man. Certainly, their behavior is an example of the fact that God created the world with man as the head of creation. It is obvious to anyone who works them that they are happiest when they are being put to work and feel "useful". In fact, it is interesting that the same is true of us. We are happiest when we are productive in work and in the church.

The trees themselves are a wonderful example of a renewable resource. My whole perspective has changed regarding trees. I used to think of them as a kind of permanent part of the landscape. Now that I am harvesting them, I look at them more as a crop like corn or beans. The difference is that the trees are grown in 30 to 50 year cycles rather than the seasonal cycle of annual crops. We can "husband" them as a gift from our heavenly Father. By that means, He provides us with building materials and energy to take care of us in the world.

What a wise and wonderful creator we serve. He has not only given us the trees for our earthly wellbeing and care, but, He has also given us creatures like my logging team to work with us. How sad it is that many use the creation for sin and curse the God who made them and provides for their physical needs. May we be thankful every day for His provision endeavoring to serve Him through repentance and a godly life. May His name be praised.

Daily Praise

*Daily praise the earth proclaims,
Different voices, the sound the same.
The heav'ns high above the earth,
Shout their Makers wondrous worth.*

*The earth's sea with life abounds,
Thund'ring waters His praise sounds.
The storms show His mighty hand,
Floods destroy at His command.*

*Mighty oaks their black arms raise,
In homage they bring Him praise.
The maple paints brilliant hues.
Their beauty shows us the news.*

*The great horse with strength doth toil,
Humbly helping work the soil.
Their patient strength a lesson,
In work, by faith, to press on.*

*The dog waits his lord to see,
A companion and friend to be.
O that we so gentle be,
To those in need that we see.*

*Come, ye saints, His praises sing,
To the hills let your songs ring.
Praise Him for His gift of love,
Bless Him in the heavens above. ❖*

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

Church Family

Stewardship (1)

by Darren Vink

STOP, DO NOT READ THIS ARTICLE UNTIL YOU HAVE BLANK PAPER AND SOMETHING TO WRITE WITH!! Take the paper and write down the five most valuable things that you have. Next, write down five things that are in your living room.

What is stewardship? Stewardship is a gift of God to us whereby we are to manage the possessions given to us in a responsible way. A steward works on behalf of another. A steward has been given the responsibility of managing some or all of the possessions of another. A steward does not own anything.

Let's look at the idea of ownership. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." There are two principles about ownership in this verse.

The first principle is that the LORD owns the world. He created it and can do with it what he pleases. When we are given possessions by God, we must realize that they are not our own but belong to him. Everything we

have belongs to God. Our house, cars, furniture, every appliance in the kitchen, every electronic gadget, our retirement accounts, every dollar, every dime, every last penny you have: it's all his. None of it is yours. Some examples of these things given to us are what you wrote down on your two lists.

The second principle is that the LORD owns all the people in the world. God owns you and me. God owns every part of you and every part of me. He owns our heart, our mind, our soul, and our strength. Since he created us and owns us, he has the authority to tell us what to do.

We can see an example of a steward in Joseph (Gen. 39:1-6). Joseph had a rough start by being sold into slavery, but "the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." Joseph was made "overseer" of his master's house. The story continues with the LORD blessing "all that he had in the house, and in the field."

Joseph was treated unjustly but rose again to be a steward in the house of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:40-45). He was set over all the people of Egypt. He was given rule over every person and every thing except Pharaoh himself.

What did he do that was different than everyone else in the land of Egypt? There were multitudes of people in Egypt, but there was something different about Joseph that set him apart.

A second example of a steward is Daniel. Like Joseph, he started out as a slave. Through his ability he rose to be the second in command in Babylon (Dan. 2:48). After Babylon was conquered by Darius, king of the Medes and Persians, Daniel proved to be an excellent steward. He was to be set over all the land.

What did Daniel do to set himself apart from the millions of people in Babylon? Even after Babylon fell, King Darius recognized Daniel as the most capable man in the whole land. What did he do differently than everyone else? How did he conduct himself? What kind of character did he have?

The first thing any steward does is to put God first. Stewards put God first by placing their faith in him. As Christians and stewards, we have the example and testimony of our forefathers. God gave us these examples so that we could look at and study them. As we look and study, we can follow the examples of faith.

We see a great example of the faith Joseph had in Genesis 41:16. Before he even heard Pharaoh's dream, he said that God would give an answer. He was so confident that he told Pharaoh he knew that God would provide an answer. He didn't even know what the question was!

We take this lesson of faith for our lives too. To place faith in God is to trust him. Can we follow Joseph's example? Can we, before we hear any of the particulars of what it means to be a steward, trust God in this? God has given us many commands in the Bible, but each one of his commands is designed for our spiritual wellbeing. Certainly, God as our loving Father in heaven would never command us to do anything that would be to our hurt (see Matt. 7:9-11). God is a trustworthy God. With this kind of God, we can be confident, just as Joseph was confident.

Confidence, which is part of faith, shows itself through prayer. Prayer is communication with God. Prayer is where we make our requests known to God. Prayer is where we ask for God's help in our lives. Prayer is where

we thank God for everything he has given us. It is where we thank God for everything he has done for us.

Daniel showed this confidence when he desired God's mercy. Because Nebuchadnezzar had decided to kill all the wise men in the land, Daniel needed to know both a dream and its interpretation. He prayed. He made his request known to God. He was told the dream and its interpretation. When given the answer he praised God and gave thanks (Dan. 2:16-23).

We should follow Daniel's example of faith and pray. We need to give thanks for the abundance of possessions God gave us to manage. We need to ask what God will have us to do with all our possessions. We should look for an answer. When we pray, when we ask in faith, God will answer.

Following prayer, faith in stewardship will also show itself by listening to God. To listen is to hear. But how do we hear? We look to see what God says. And what does God say? He says many things. He has written them down in the Bible. In order to listen to God, we must read and study the Bible. Reading and studying should be done as an individual, as a family, and with fellow saints at church. When this is done, faith, part of which is knowledge, increases.

We look again to the example of Daniel. Daniel had faith. Daniel listened. "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm" (Dan 1:20). The only way that Daniel could have been found better is because he was granted true wisdom. This type of wisdom comes from God through prayer (James 1:5). Daniel knew the Word of God. He had education, and he had the majority of what we know as the Old Testament. He prayed over the Word every day. He studied the Word every day. Through daily study he listened to God and became wiser than all those around him.

We too can understand our role as steward better by following the example of Daniel. When we study, we are listening to what God has to say. When we have personal devotions, we meditate on what God says. When we sit with the family or in a Bible study, we have the opportunity to ask questions, the opportunity to listen to others, and the opportunity to grow in our understanding.

What is one of the things we hear? WORK! A good manager doesn't do just enough to get by but will exert himself. This requires a lot of effort. This effort will keep us very busy. The details of our work will keep us busy from when we wake up to when we go to bed. We have

many possessions that we have to manage for God. Our houses need repair, our cars need oil changes, and our family needs to be fed. There is no end to the details of the work to do.

Joseph “went throughout all the land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:46). He was busy on Pharaoh’s behalf in Genesis 47:13-26. He was in charge of the storehouses of corn. He traded the surpluses of corn for money. When the money ran out, he traded for cattle. When Pharaoh owned all the cattle, Joseph traded for labor. Day after day, year after year, he had to attend to all the details.

To see some of the results of the work of a steward, we turn yet again to the life of Daniel. We see that his work has three results. First, we see him praising God (Dan. 2:19-23). After he received an answer to prayer he praised God.

Second, we see his actions leading others to praise God. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 2:47 says, “Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings.”

A little later in Daniel’s life, we see a third result. The kingdom of God was advanced after Daniel was pulled out of the den of lions. In Daniel 6:25-27, king Darius wrote a decree to “all the earth.” This decree set God apart from all other gods. This decree showed to everyone in the known world who God was and what he was capable of.

These three results of work in the life of Daniel also serve as examples for us to follow. First, as managers we must praise God. We have been given so much. Where do we start? Since you probably skipped right over it, reread and follow the instructions in the first paragraph of this article. Now, start your praise with the list of the five most valuable things that you wrote down. Next, look around you. Look in your living room (did you write these five things down yet?), your bedroom, your car, your savings account, your—these are some of the things you can put a price tag on. Praise God for these things! Some things without a price tag are your ability to read, to think, to work, and to love others. Praise God for these too!

The second result of our managing is praise to God on the part of other people. Others look at us. They see us. They see our walk. They see our lifestyle. They hear our conversation. What do they say? Do they praise God for having you in their lives? Do they give thanks to God for the many various ways that you have helped out? We cannot control how others react to what we say and do, but it must be clear to all around us that we are different, set apart; in a word: Christian.

The third result of our work is that the kingdom of God should be advanced. What we say and do will either help or hinder the kingdom of God. Everything we do sets an example. We are stewards of our time; how are we using it? We can teach others. We can lead others. We can give in so many ways: of our time, our talents, and our money. All these things can be put to good use in the kingdom.

What a great responsibility we have with those possessions we have been given to manage on behalf of God. What are we going to do with our possessions to advance the kingdom? Specifically, what are we going to do with our money to advance the kingdom?

Stewardship applies to our money. Each of us has been given money to manage. There are countless uses of our money. Each use, though, must have one common result: it must advance the kingdom of God.

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There are countless uses of our money, but those uses can be broken down into three categories. We can spend it, we can save it, or we can give it. We will take a specific look at these three aspects of stewardship in upcoming articles. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Richard Moore

December 1 Read Psalm 119:113-120

As we are quickened by the Spirit and called by the Word we are made principally new creatures. As new creatures in Christ we can say with the psalmist that we hate vain thoughts and love the law of God. We find our delight in His Word, and we would be freed from all evildoers. However, we have this new life only in Christ and only in principal. Therefore, we need to be kept by God and we confess that He is our hiding place and our shield. He alone can deliver us from our three-fold enemy, and He gives us by His word the instruments of war to fight the battle of faith.

Again we must say how precious His Word is. As God upholds us according to His Word we shall stand, and only then. In this way we shall live, apart from His work we shall die. Our prayer is with the psalmist that we not be ashamed of our hope. We trust in the faithful covenant God.

Sing Psalter 335.

December 2 Read Psalm 119:113-120

Our instructor teaches us that God trods down the wicked that err from the statutes of God, further He puts away all the wicked of the earth like dross. The wicked have a place in the midst of the earth and it is implied in this text when the term dross is used. The wicked serve the trying of the elect, but when the trying is done as is the case in a furnace where the molten gold is made pure the dross is cast off as waste. The wicked indeed serve the trying of our faith that it may be purified. But all the wicked who think themselves important shall perish. There is no grace for them.

But then the psalmist must confess that he trembles for fear of God, and he is afraid of God's judgments. This is true for the psalmist knows his own frailties and weaknesses. We are sinners and cannot stand for a moment in our own strength. Only as God gives us to love His testimonies shall we be kept from the same destruction of the wicked. Thus in godly fear we must walk before Lord in His Word.

Sing Psalter 260:4-6.

December 3 Read Psalm 119:121-128

We must repeatedly petition God for His care and blessing, as the writer also does. It is because we live in such a consciousness of our own weakness and sin. It is only possible to be delivered from those that would oppress us if God blesses

and if He has mercy upon us. Further as the psalmist we too must pray that God may be surety for our good (salvation). That God is our surety means that He provides the ransom, He provides our justification. God is this in His promise of salvation in Christ which He provides in sending His Son to die on the cross to pay the price of our redemption. Thus is a pledge of our salvation.

Now when confronted with the enemies of God who make void the law of God and deny it, it is time for Jehovah to work. Only He can make judgment and bring it to pass. Especially for those that make light of the law and who depart from its ways, the prayer is for God to judge and bring their ways to naught.

We find by the grace of God the law to be more precious than any gold of this life. That is so, is it not my readers, in principle in our lives. We then esteem the law of God and hate and flee every false way. As Christ lives in our hearts it shall be so.

Sing Psalter 336.

December 4 Read Psalm 119:129-136

This section of the Psalm is written once more from the deep consciousness of the psalmist' weakness and sinful inclinations and thus is uttered in light of his own need. We find so often in our lives that we too should bring this prayer forth from our own soul. He is able to seek God's care exactly because the Word is a light unto his soul. As God gives to us His Word through the preaching and other means He gives light upon our life. It leads us in the midst of darkness. This we must remember in all the trials of this life, one thing is constant and that is God's word gives to us understanding and thus peace. When we pant as did the psalmist we also long for God's commandments.

Let us remember this when we have trouble; we do have a place to turn. The Scripture abounds with comfort and wisdom. God gives us His Word to be a guide unto us, and to strengthen us and to lead us. When we lose a father or mother in death it is the Word that strengthens and leads us on. When we have fallen in sin it is the Word that will comfort us and be our strength in turning from that path. God is gracious through His Word unto His children.

Sing Psalter 192:1-3.

December 5 Read Psalm 119:133-136; I John 2:1-18

It is especially necessary in the consciousness of our sin and iniquity that we pray as the psalmist does, "order my steps in thy word." The Scripture gives direction to all of our life, and it warns us of the consequence of our sin, it calls us to repentance and it strengthens us to turn from darkness and to walk in the light. How very necessary in your and my life. Without God ordering our steps by His Word we would only follow the path to destruction. But by His grace led by His Spirit to hear the Word of Christ we indeed know that sin and iniquity cannot have dominion over us. The word applied to our hearts will cause us to repent every time anew and to follow the way of righteousness wherein is blessing.

Not only do we battle against our own sin, but we are oppressed by man. The devil and his co-workers try to destroy us. They do this by temptation, by mockery, by persecution and any means available to them. This enemy also is very strong especially as you young people know. But we may pray to God with the knowledge that as he delivers us we will keep his precepts. In I John 2:12-14 this is given as our assurance. As our God in His Son makes His face to shine upon us we know we have forgiveness of sin, and we seek more and more to be taught by His Word. On the other hand we have sorrow when those about us keep not the law, especially is this so when our brother or sister departs from the word.

Sing Psalter 337.

December 6 Read Psalm 119:137-144; II Tim. 3:1-9

At the time of great apostasy we find dark and perilous times for the church. It has been so in the history of the church and also in the days of the psalmist. In these days it is also the last times and many cease to follow the ways of God and make life difficult and at times it almost seems unbearable for God's child. We have witnessed this in the various times of apostasy within our own denomination, and it is always a difficulty and a cause of trouble throughout our days on this earth. It is at this time that it is good to reflect upon God's ways for He governs and upholds all things and all history as the sovereign God. Today in Christ He leads and guides all things unto the perfecting of His kingdom.

When we so reflect upon God and His ways through the means of His word, we too must exclaim, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." This is true when even those judgments reach into our own family or congregation. His truth and Word is always righteous and His way is always faithful to His perfect purpose of gathering His church in Christ Jesus. We may be consumed at times because our enemies have departed from God's Word. But His word is pure, His judgment just, and our love for His testimonies remains strong by His grace.

Sing Psalter 338:1, 2.

December 7 Read Psalm 119:137-144

It is often during these days and at times of such oppression and trouble when reflecting upon ourselves in gracious wisdom we see ourselves as very small. It may even seem as

though we are absolutely insignificant. We compare ourselves even to the things of this life, the universe, the power of creation with its earthquakes, tornados, and hurricanes and we seem so small. But especially when we are compared to the living God we are nothing. Why would God even be mindful of such as we are? Yet as we remember His Word we are struck by God's righteousness as revealed in Christ, and are given to confess it is an everlasting righteousness. He has chosen us before the foundation of the world in Christ that we might be holy and without blame, and His word is truth.

In faithfulness to His own righteousness and truth, God will deliver us from our enemies, and uphold us in the truth. He will save us, His only begotten Son is testimony of this as He died on the cross and arose from the grave. Our righteousness is sealed by His death and resurrection. We shall live!

Sing Psalter 338:3, 4.

December 8 Read Psalm 119:145-152; Psalm 1

When is the last time that you cried over your sin and or the sin of your neighbor? Do we do this or are we too straight-laced to sob over sin. The saints of the past were never ashamed to sob over sin. They were free to express what is in their heart whether it be with joy declaring, "Praise the LORD," or whether it be sobbing in repentance over their sin or that of the neighbor. May we have grace not to cover up our spiritual needs, but rather to freely and deeply express our needs unto God.

The psalmist cries out to God to hear him, that he may indeed keep God's statutes. It is impossible to keep them except God gives His grace to us in Christ and by His Spirit. Only then shall we keep His way. So we cry also save us that we may keep Thy testimonies.

It is good for us even to pass through the night with prayer and meditation that our thoughts may be cleansed and our ways directed by God. Is God's word so important to you and the keeping of His statutes that you spend a whole night in its meditation. In the meditation of that word is our delight, cf. Psalm 1.

Sing Psalter 1.

December 9 Read Psalm 119:149-152

In this section the psalmist as he nears the end of this psalm reflects on the goodness of his God unto him in the time of his great need. We ought also to be filled with reflection upon the things of God and upon His faithfulness to us. It is necessary that we often and repeatedly call upon our God in Christ in the way of our prayer. Prayer is a great means of blessing, and it is the chief part of thankfulness. We need to be busy with prayer unto the God of our salvation.

This is emphasized by the writer as he again turns to God and rests in God's faithfulness. We and the psalmist rest upon Jehovah's lovingkindness, who looks favorably upon us because that lovingkindness is unailing for His chosen people. Again the greatest measure of His love and His compassionate mercy for us is revealed as He sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross to cover our sin and iniquity. Indeed on the basis of

His work we can cry out, “Quicken me according to Thy judgment.” We know that for Jesus’ sake we are covered in His blood and righteous before God according to His own judgment.

Sing Psalter 339:1, 2.

December 10 Read Psalm 119:149-152

Those that oppose the godly life of the people of God follow after mischief. This term says that those opposing God and His people do so having an evil plan, they are filled with malice for God’s people and purpose. So is the world of darkness whether that world be far off or as near as our own family.

But no matter how great the enemy or how difficult the trial we say with the writer, “Thou art near, O Jehovah.” He is sovereign over all and He is the faithful covenant God and His promises are sure. We know by the searching of the Scripture and by the testimony of Christ through the true preaching, that of old God has founded the testimonies for ever. The promises of God never end. He is faithful to save.

Sing Psalter 339:3, 4.

December 11 Read Psalm 119:153-160

One may wonder at the times the psalmist calls upon God to consider his afflictions and his enemies, and yet it is not difficult at all to understand this if you have seen your own sin and weakness, as well as the strength of your threefold enemy. Our sins that we have walked in only show how very prone to evil we are, and how depraved our own nature. They show how very dependent we are if we are to enjoy the blessings of salvation. Indeed we must often and repeatedly cry out for mercy, for the reality is that in this life we are not delivered from the old man and we must confess we have sinned each day.

Thus we seek our Lord to plead our cause for we cannot. God heard the psalmist and hears us. He sent our Lord to die for us and to be raised in victory over our sin that He might be our advocate to plead our cause before Jehovah. We need daily quickening, a being made alive to live out of Christ. Daily we need the fullness of the Spirit to stand in the battle of faith.

Sing Psalter 340:1, 2.

December 12 Read Psalm 119:153-160

One more comment on this passage and that has to do with David’s persecutors. I am sure in one way or another you have faced persecution as a godly child. One might ask how we can call ourselves godly when there is so much sin in our lives. Some refuse to take the words of the psalmist upon their lips, but they should if they are God’s children. To refuse to do so is the greater sin for then we deny the work of Jehovah in Christ Jesus our Savior. David had sinned greatly in his life. One might consider his the greatest sin of any recorded in the Scripture, with the exception of Peter’s sin, and yet he says to God, “Consider how I love thy precepts O Jehovah.” He is able to say this because of the new life he has in the blood of Christ. He trusted in the promise of God to come through

sacrificial offerings having the testimony of God’s word that His sin would be covered. We may say the same thing through the promises realized in the blood of Christ spilled on Calvary. He trusts in the promises of God and so must we.

But further He is grieved with the transgressors because they kept not God’s word. They would not glorify God, would not humble themselves before the Holy One. Their sin grieves him for it detracts from God’s glory. Do we so grieve over the impenitent sin of the wicked? We must also. May God grant us the grace.

Sing Psalter 340:3, 4.

December 13 Read Psalm 119:159-162; Prov. 3:1-4

As we near the end of this Psalm we find the holy writer both summarizing what has been set forth in the Psalm and also drawing his final conclusions. When he does this we find that he reflects again upon the Word of God. In this Word he finds life, peace and consolation, even as we surely also do confess. The Scripture is most precious to every child of God for it reveals the God of our salvation and our Savior unto us. In this word we find strength and peace. The psalmist confesses by God’s grace that he loves the precepts of God’s law and would have God consider that love that arises in his heart for the law. But even as we must, so must the psalmist go on to pray that the God of his salvation quickens him. For he understands as we must that apart from the work of the Spirit of Christ we would never love His law nor walk according to its precepts. So relying upon God’s lovingkindness he prays for God’s quickening work in him. It is not that we are worthy of this quickening work, but it is in the knowledge of God’s eternal mercy and love revealed in Christ that we are able to seek this quickening work of the Spirit of God.

Now the writer sees the word so precious because he knows by God’s grace that it is true from the beginning and endures forever the same. What confidence we have when turning to the word for our strength and comfort. For it is God’s Word, the word of Him that changes not, and who is ever faithful to His own. Thus whether princes or any powers that be come against us we may stand in the sure confidence of God’s word. No wonder that we hold so precious the Lord’s Day when we come together to hear that word expounded unto us. This is true of you, by the grace of God, is it not?

Sing Psalter 341:1, 2.

December 14 Read Psalm 119:163-168

When we truly rejoice in the word and find that word a great treasure, then we shall with the psalmist hate and abhor lying. Sometimes this is not so clearly manifest in our lives when we take delight in the latest gossip that our fellow classmates have to entice us. Often we take a certain delight in the lies of this world as it would lead us down the paths that appeal to our flesh or pride. But as the grace of God by the power of the Spirit leads us in the true path of penitence, then indeed we find our delight in God’s law and detest the lies of those about us and of Satan the father of the lie.

Hence we and the psalmist find the need to fall down constantly before God seeking grace to praise God in the keeping of His law and for a love of His commandments. The writer expresses that he does this seven times a day, not just in the morning and evening prayers, nor is he guided by some other standard, but often and now he mentions the covenant number seven. Seven times a day, in the consciousness of God's covenant with him he finds the need to fill his life with prayer that he may praise His God Who gives him such a precious word.

In the law, precepts and testimonies of God's word we find our hoped for salvation and the strength in our lives not to offend our God, we find there our peace. How very important that we keep that word faithfully as churches and as individual believers. May God so grant it.

Sing Psalter 341:3, 4.

December 15 Read Psalm 119:169-172

The psalmist now comes to the final conclusion of the whole matter of this prolonged prayer and testimony. He knows himself as we must know ourselves, that we are not able to stand a moment in our own strength. We fail to seek God as we ought whenever we rely on our natural strength or abilities. As a covenant young person we have not the strength nor ability to fight the battle of faith, but this is no less true of the older and more experienced saint.

So we with the psalmist must cry out unto God. The idea here is that we have a shrill and audible cry unto God in the knowledge of our absolute need of His care. And we pray for our God to hear us and to give us understanding according to the word. It is needful that God gives us the ears to hear and the hearts to understand His Word. When He hears our supplication for Christ's sake and delivers us by the power of His word from our sins and weaknesses, our praise shall be given to Him and Him alone. We then shall speak of God's righteousness and of His goodness in all His ways with us. It does not matter how strong the enemy, nor how great our affliction. We pray that His hand shall help us and uphold us, then all shall be well.

Sing Psalter 342:1, 2.

December 16 Read Psalm 119:173-176; Isaiah 53:1-7

Praying that God will uphold us by His hand, teaches us that we can only be delivered if our God delivers us. Salvation is not of man. It is not a cooperative work of God and man, but salvation is God upholding us in His hand to save us. This He does by sending His only begotten Son to stand in our stead and to bear our guilt to deliver us from the depths of darkness to bring us into the light of His fellowship. So the psalmist prays, "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee." We will praise God only when He delivers us from the condemnation of our own sin. Only as we are lifted up by God out of the morass of our sin that we shall ever praise Him.

And above all, this has become the goal of the writer's and our lives. On our part we have gone astray. God's word by grace makes this clear to us. We have sinned, we cannot praise

God as we are in sin. But as a shepherd brings back the lost sheep so we acknowledge that our God in Christ has redeemed us and called us by His word, so that we may with newness of life and in repentance seek Him alone. May He grant that we forget not His commandments. Amen.

Sing Psalter 342:3, 4.

December 17 Read Genesis 3:8-20

In the fourteen remaining meditations for this month we will turn our attention to some of the prophecies of the Old Testament that are fulfilled with the coming of Christ. This is appropriate I believe for us to consider in this month. The first prophecy of the coming of Christ is that found in Genesis 3:15. It is often referred to as the mother promise, because all others flow from it.

Let us briefly consider this promise and its wonder. In the first place we might be surprised that at such an early stage God reveals His eternal decree of election and reprobation. He does because this was His purpose from eternity, that He would send His elect Seed to deliver His elect people from destruction, and to do so also through the trials that would come upon them through the reprobate seed. It would become evident that the only deliverance from sin and destruction would be by the grace of God in His sending of the Seed of the woman to bruise or trample the head of the seed of the serpent.

This text speaks then to us of a twofold seed within the sphere of the church and in the midst of this world that would oppose one another. And while God gives Satan and his seed the power to bruise the heel of the children of God and their Head, they shall surely have the victory through their Head as God sends the Seed of the woman to save His people. This promise is made ever clearer throughout the old dispensation and we are given to understand it more perfectly by the power of the Spirit of Christ poured out upon us and revealing to us the wonder of the incarnation, Jesus' sacrifice, death, resurrection and ascension to glory as our Head.

Sing Psalter 15.

December 18 Read Genesis 17:1-16

As we take time to read this passage of Scripture we find that there is already some increasing clarity of the promise as given to the church of God already in the days of Abraham. God came to Abraham and basically repeated the promise made to Adam and Eve. A seed would be given to the church to deliver her and to provide for her blessing. This, most certainly, covenant young people is what this season is all about. God's people have need of God's blessings. Really we need nothing more and nothing less. When we have the blessing of God all is well and our salvation is sure.

The covenant God establishes with Abraham is one-sided and this is a good thing. For if the covenant blessing of God was dependent upon us in any way it would fail. You know this don't you? You know this because you know your own sin and failure. We have an eternal covenant God that loves us in Christ. The blessings were assured Abraham and his

seed for He promises to establish His covenant with His church in their generations. What a rich blessing this is for it teaches us that God will not forsake His covenant nor the people of His covenant love. We are the children of the promise as we are gathered by the Spirit of Christ. This is the testimony of this promise repeated in Acts 2:39.

Sing Psalter 30.

December 19 Read Galatians 3:16-29

The promise made unto Abraham was the promise of Christ's coming. How precious is this truth for except Christ comes and represents us we could not have any blessing and the covenant of God would fail. Of course this is impossible, because God is God and thus His promise, His will cannot fail. He would bless Abraham and his Seed and through the Seed-Elect God will bless all chosen in Him.

This is also the point that the Scripture makes in Galatians 3:17 and the following argument against work's righteousness, which concludes in verse 29. The apostle points out that the passage in Genesis spoke of the Seed. The apostle correctly points out that the promise to bless the seed of Abraham is spoken in the singular case and that the Seed spoken of is Christ. God fulfills His promise to the church (through Abraham) in the sending of His only begotten Son to fulfill all righteousness on behalf of those given to Him. We by the grace of God believing that we are Christ's, that we belong to Him from eternity, know ourselves to be heirs according to that promise.

This is the blessed wonder of grace revealed to us in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Sing Psalter 48:1-3.

December 20 Read Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:13-26

We continue with further prophecy of Christ's blessed coming by turning our attention to Deuteronomy 18. In the fifteenth verse we are told that "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee." He spoke this word to Israel as His promise of blessing through this Prophet he shall raise up. However, those that will not hear what His Prophet speaks shall be cursed. God's children must hear Him. We must by His grace receive the words He sends us by the mouth of His Prophet. In doing this there is blessing without measure.

As the Scripture presents this Prophet it is striking that already at this time God reveals that the Prophet shall be very God and very man. The Prophet is raised from the midst of the people, yet is like unto God. Acts makes it very clear that the Scripture in Deuteronomy has its fulfillment in the coming of Christ. Peter says this in verse 20 of our reading from Acts. Jesus Christ which is preached before us is the Prophet spoken of by Moses. Peter rightly interprets that we must hear him in all things whatsoever he shall say unto us. For the voice of this Prophet is the voice of God in our midst. May we have ears to hear and hearts of understanding.

To fail to hear the Prophet is to disobey God, and as many as shall not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among

the people. This is the sad state of so much of the world today and even of the church world that will not hear the Word of Christ, but do their own good pleasure. Such shall surely perish. May God deliver us from such disobedience as individual children of God and as churches.

Sing Psalter 51.

December 21 Read Psalm 2; Psalm 110; Heb. 5:1-10

Beloved readers there are many, many Psalms that prophesy of Christ and His coming, but for now we will treat only the selections for our reading today and perhaps another one or two. The psalmist gives us the Word of God Who said, "Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee." God glorified Christ to be our high priest said the author of the Hebrews under the inspiration of the Spirit. Already in the days of David it was pointed out that Christ would come, as our high priest that He might be a sacrifice for our sin.

And the psalmist in Psalm 110 points out that He shall be an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. It was thus prophesied that He would in a sense be without beginning or ending of days, and yet be a priest raised up from the midst of God's people. He is eternally our high priest, the only begotten God, yet could suffer the infirmities of His people for our sake, being made the perfect author of eternal salvation unto us, unto all them that obey him. He is our high priest still today, for on the basis of His one sacrifice He still utters prayers which we cannot raise unto God for our salvation. How precious the word of God, the word of salvation.

Sing Psalter 303.

December 22 Read Psalm 132:13-18; Luke 1:69-75

We will look at another Psalm and the New Testament reference to it for today's meditation. In this Psalm God has prophesied that He would "make the horn of David to bud," and Zacharias as filled with the Holy Ghost teaches us that this is a reference to Christ. The prophecy of this Spirit-filled man teaches us that God in Christ has raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of David. This promise the Psalmist gave to God's people in the day of David. When Christ came in our flesh He came as the horn of salvation. We had no strength to save ourselves but Christ came in our flesh in the line and lineage of David to save us from our sins.

He would perform the mercy already promised to our fathers. God through His Son would cover our sin with His obedient death on the cross and save us. By this God remembered His holy covenant, and the oath which he swore to our father Abraham. By His coming would believers and their seed be delivered from the torments of their own iniquity and nature.

The fruit of this precious gift of God is that we are delivered out of the hand of our enemies, and we go on by His grace and in the power of His Spirit to serve God without fear during the days of our lives. This is our portion through the Christ child come in our flesh. For He is our God come to save us.

Sing Psalter 368.

December 23 Read Isaiah 7:12-15; Matthew 1:20-25

As we come closer in the history of the old dispensation to the coming of Christ, the prophecies become more complete or more detailed concerning the coming of our Lord in the flesh to save His people. We see this in the well known prophecy in Isaiah seven. In the midst of pronouncing the coming of judgment upon Judah to Ahaz the king, Isaiah prophesies of the wonder of wonders that shall provide for deliverance. He gives Ahaz a sign, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." The Seed in which the nations should be blessed comes forth of the woman by the birth of a son to a virgin in the line of David. Impossible as this would be, God would provide for the salvation of His people by His hand alone. The fact that Christ would come forth of a virgin in the line of David shows us with God's people of the ages that what is impossible for man is the very place where the grace of God is revealed in all of its majesty and wonder.

Our sins and our natural depravity keep us from any hope of salvation, it binds us on the path of destruction, but God provides what we cannot. God brings to pass that we cannot hope for, He and He alone saves. Joseph is also told this that Mary is with child according to promise, the fulfillment of the Word of the Lord spoken to the prophet Isaiah many years before. A virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son.

But further the prophecy given to Isaiah and brought before Ahaz and the word to Joseph quoting that Scripture declares that "they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Born of the woman without the will of man, yet flesh of our flesh, but also the only begotten God, God with us. The wonder the Incarnation. God saving His people.

Sing Psalter 61.

December 24 Read Daniel 7:13-28; Luke 1:26-37

We turn to the prophecy of Daniel as he prophesies of the Christ as the little horn who would crush the kingdoms of darkness in the midst of this earth. He would be given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all nations and languages should serve Him. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey Him, Luke 1:27. Now this prophecy that speaks of the coming of one like unto the Son of Man, to Whom such dominion would be given is quoted by the angel Gabriel as he declares to Mary that she would be favored among women and would bear the Christ Child. It is striking in this announcement of the angel that the Savior would be born of the virgin made in the likeness of man, who shall rule over all nations and dominions. He is the King of the kingdom of God for He is God come in our flesh to save His people chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world.

This Child's name shall be JESUS, we read. What a precious announcement. He is Jehovah saving us, saving God's chosen. There is such a wonder here, for we for whom He came are not worthy of the least of God's blessing, yet God Himself comes in our flesh to suffer in our stead, to die on the cross, to satisfy judgment for our sin, that we might inherit His king-

dom. That little child born of a lowly virgin shall be given everlasting dominion over all things to the saving of the church. Glorious Grace.

Sing Psalter 183.

December 25 Read Ezek. 16:1, 2, 48, 59-63; Luke 1:64-80

This is the day we remember with great thanksgiving the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. But what is the reason for this great joy that we have at this time of the year? Why are you filled with joy today, or are you not so filled with joy? If you are not, if you say my portion is too hard, my way too difficult, I cannot find joy, not on this Christmas day then beware of God's judgment. Consider your sin and repent.

God's children by His grace do rejoice today no matter the circumstance in which they are found. Indeed we are filled with rejoicing because our sins have been covered; God has remembered His covenant with us and our fathers. This is the ground for our joy.

Understand we have been worse than Sodom; as the prophet speaks of Jerusalem and Judah we have sinned in ways that are worse than any sins of the nations about us. We have on our part forsaken God's covenant, we have trampled it underfoot and the Holy God as well. We have transgressed all the law of Jehovah. That is the prophet's testimony over God's chosen people in Judah, and it applies to us as well. Our nature is totally depraved and in our lives we have transgressed God's way. We are not worthy of salvation. But then the prophet proclaims over Jerusalem the words of verses 60 and 62 of Ezekiel 16. This prophecy is said to be fulfilled with the coming of Jesus in our flesh according to the Spirit inspired words of Zacharias upon the birth of John and his naming. The wonder of salvation is God remembering His covenant with His people. Praise the Lord.

Sing Psalter 255:1-3.

December 26 Read Isaiah 40:1-5; Luke 3:1-6

It is striking that not only did the prophets of old speak clearly in their prophecies of the birth of Christ, but also were led by the Spirit to declare in prophesy details of His work when He came in our flesh to dwell in our midst. The prophet of Isaiah in the fortieth chapter speaks of the fact that when God fulfills His promise, he pardons the iniquity of His people. For Jehovah comes in our flesh to save us. This is so necessary for the elect seed in the days of Isaiah to hear but also it is so important that we see that this is the real meaning of Christ's birth and His walk in our flesh for us.

All the troubles that we have, all the mountains and hills that stand in our path shall be made low, they shall be made passable by the coming of the Lord. The crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. There is nothing that shall be in our path whether sickness, poverty, persecution, or even Satan and the wicked in this world shall prevent our entering into the everlasting life with our God.

This it is prophesied shall be the message of the one preparing the way of the LORD who cries in the wilderness. Luke makes it plain in the third chapter that when John the Baptist

came into the wilderness as a prophet declaring the arrival of the Christ he was the fulfillment of this promise. His message was exactly that salvation was come. With the coming of Christ, all flesh would see the salvation of God in the person of God's Son come in our flesh. And through His work all is made straight. Salvation for us is assured.

Sing Psalter 276.

December 27 Read Isaiah 9:1-5; Matthew 4:14-17

As Jesus would begin His ministry and reveal through His Word that indeed He was the salvation of God Whom we could see, He began His labor in the borders of Zabulon and the land of Nephtholim. And we read in Matthew He did so that the prophesy of Isaiah might be fulfilled. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah nine had prophesied that the One who would bring light into darkness would do so in these places. The Spirit teaches us that all of the Old Testament prophesies indeed spoke of Christ and His work of saving His people.

When Jesus began His ministry already in these countries was the revelation of the light of God which came to dispel darkness. Now how precious is this testimony to the elect seed in the old dispensation which found themselves in darkness because of their sin, carried into captivity, cut off from the temple of God and the mercy seat. But also how precious is this word for the church of all ages, for we are taught that the labor of Christ in our flesh was light come into our darkness. How important this is! For we are in darkness, this is our nature as we are dead in sin and trespass, and we have walked in darkness in the way of sin. And all is darkness about us, none can have fellowship with God in the present darkness. Further nothing in this life of darkness can deliver us from the darkness, not our works, nor any man, or church. Only, if the Light sent of God comes, can the darkness of our sin be dispelled. But this indeed is the wonder of Christ's preaching in the midst of this world of sin. God's children are delivered and led into the light of God's fellowship.

Sing Psalter 113:1, 8, 9, 10.

December 28 Read Isaiah 53; I Peter 2:21-25

Much of the prophecy of Isaiah 53 is quoted in the New Testament in various passages in connection with the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed as Peter also points out that we like sheep have gone astray and everyone has turned to his own way. This is our natural walk. We make our own gods and think that we can control our own destiny. We seek our own pleasures and fail to take heed to the Word of Jehovah our God. We are filled with iniquity and worthy of damnation. This is the confession of God's child and therefore we have great need of deliverance. Even more we cannot accomplish that deliverance but can only increase our guilt, and even when Christ came, sent of the Father we despised Him and rejected Him.

But Jesus Who did no sin, neither was there any guile in His mouth, suffered for us. When He was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He was wounded for

our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. He bore our sins, the prophet said in the days of old, that Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. By His stripes we are healed. Blessed truth of the Scripture. Salvation is by grace alone, as Jesus in our stead bears the judgment of God against us, and we live. Now by the grace of God filled with this testimony of the Word we have returned to the Bishop of our souls and have peace.

Sing Psalter 318:1-5.

December 29 Read Isaiah 59:16-21; Rom. 11:13-36

Christ Who becomes the fulfillment of the prophecy of God through the prophets comes as the Deliverer out of Zion. The prophet Isaiah set this hope before the people so that when they were in captivity and all seemed hopeless to receive any good or salvation. There are so many times in our lives when it seems as though it is impossible for us to obtain the hope of the Scripture. This is true either because of our own hopelessly lost condition, or because of the many forces of evil that oppress us. Yet in the depths of our misery God sounds for the gospel of salvation.

Paul applies this prophecy of Isaiah to all Israel. Not only to Israel according to the flesh, but to spiritual Israel including the nations of the Gentiles. This is the blessed message of the gospel that Paul set before those unto whom he preached. This is the message of comfort for us which we receive every Lord's Day as we worship under the Word of Christ.

God has sent out of Zion the Deliverer. He has done this not because of the worthiness of those carried into captivity by their sin, for there is no worthiness among men. But God has set His covenant upon His people from before the foundation of the world. His covenant is unto us, and thus in Christ the covenant Seed, God works salvation. He takes away our sins and saves His elect, of Israel according to the flesh and of the Gentiles. Neither may boast but God fulfills His covenant with us. Blessed God of grace.

Sing Psalter 121.

December 30 Read Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8; 10:14-22

In Jeremiah 31, the prophet speaks of a new covenant that shall be realized when Christ comes. The old covenant Israel brake, although God was a husband unto them, and we might add was a faithful husband unto them, but the new covenant will be made with the house of Israel after those days. This statement refers to the time of Christ. Now this new covenant is not a different covenant from the point of view that it is a change of God's covenant love for His people. But it is a new covenant in that it is a more complete manifestation of this eternal covenant of love for His people that never fails. It is the covenant that is fulfilled with the coming of Christ, His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

In Hebrews 8 it is pointed out that the people led out of Egypt continued not in God's covenant, and God brought them as a people into many troubles, He "regarded them not." But with the coming of Christ, there is a Mediator of a better covenant (vs. 6). The author of the book of Hebrews then

quotes the passage from Jeremiah pointing out that God makes a covenant with the house of Israel whereby He puts His laws into their mind, and writes them in their hearts, whereby He will be to them a God and they shall be to Him a people. This speaks of the fact that on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection and His ascension into heaven the Spirit of Christ is poured out upon elect Israel, that is upon the church elect in Christ. That Spirit shall not be removed, and we shall experience forever God's mercy to our unrighteousness, and our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Wondrous Grace! This is the fruit of the one sacrifice of Christ, which is complete and never has to be repeated. Our salvation is made complete.

Sing Psalter 125:1-4.

December 31 Read Hos. 2; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Pet. 2:4-10

There are many prophecies that speak of the coming of Christ and told before those things that would come to pass. This also is the preciousness of the Scripture. It is the Word of God and it comes to pass according to His will. We could have considered many more such passages, however we are limited to the ones that we have used.

In this last meditation for the year 2005 we look to Hosea and the places where it is quoted in the New Testament. At

this time of the year we reflect on many things that have come to pass in the last year, and many of these have to do with the fruits of sin in the world about us and in our own lives. Natural man will not serve God, and natural man can have no hope as this year comes to an end. The world even the church world in the days of Hosea had walked in terrible sin and ungodliness, and so it is also today. On top of this God's people in Israel in the days of Hosea and also we have transgressed God's law and we must confess the utter unworthiness of hope in our future.

But God in faithfulness, betroths His people unto Himself. Jehovah through Hosea announces that He will keep His people in covenant faithfulness, and would have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and that He will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God. According to Paul in Romans 9 and in 1 Peter 2 in the coming of Christ and His satisfaction for sin, we shall be remembered according to His decree of election. He calls us out of darkness into the marvelous light of His fellowship. So that now we can walk in hope of the future year and years, knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose.

Sing Psalter 125:5-9.

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Holding the Traditions (2)

by Rev. Angus Stewart



Having explained the idea and the content of the “traditions” (II Thess. 2:15) last time, we must now ask: Where does this leave the church of Rome and her tradition? Rome has rejected apostolic traditions. Justification by faith alone is jettisoned for justification by faith *and works*. Christ’s all sufficient atonement and mediation is rejected for the mass and the intercession of Mary and the saints. Sovereign election and reprobation (11-14) is forsaken for the “gospel” of free will. (How few professed Protestants today “stand fast, and hold” this apostolic tradition!) Rome also rejects the faithful tradition of the best teachers of the church (e.g., Augustine, Luther and Calvin).

However, II Thessalonians 2 does apply to Rome and her tradition. It is not verse 15, though. Rome is embraced in the “falling away” (3), idolatry (4), false miracles (9), ingenious deceits (10) and “strong delusion” (11) which softens the world up to receive the “man of sin” (3), who brings the apostasy of the centuries to its culmination. At “his coming” (8) on the clouds, Christ will destroy “the son of perdition” (3).

While many are “falling away” (3), our calling is to “stand fast” (15) by “hold[ing] the traditions” as we “have been taught” (15). Obviously, this includes the truth of this chapter (II Thess. 2). Hold fast to the truth of Christ’s bodily return in great glory to destroy the man of sin who is the culmination of the working of the mystery of iniquity. Hold fast to the truth that God sovereignly orders all of this for the salvation of His elect and the destruction of the wicked (11-14). Indeed, hold fast to all of God-breathed Scripture: OT and NT; every book, chapter and verse.

Every professedly Christian group has its tradition (a received body of doctrine), whether its tradition is large or small, or whether or not it even realizes that it has its tradition. But how are we to judge between the various traditions of Rome or the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Reformed churches, etc.? Scripture, of course, is the in-

fallible rule which judges all tradition (Acts 17:11; I John 4:1).

We in the CPRF believe that the *Three Forms of Unity* (the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Belgic Confession* and the *Canons of Dordt*) faithfully set forth and summarise what the Scripture teaches about the Trinity, Creation, the Person and natures of Christ, the doctrines of grace, etc. Thus we stand fast to the *Three Forms of Unity* as a concise and accurate presentation of the truth of God’s Word.

We ought also to notice that the command of II Thessalonians 2:15 to hold the traditions is not addressed to church officers (pastors, elders and deacons) but to all the “brethren.” For the Bible is given to all God’s people, for they all have the Spirit of Christ to enable them to understand and cling to the truth of God’s Word. All the people of God are commanded to hold the faithful traditions because, negatively, this is the way of avoiding destruction (10-12). There is vast apostasy in the professing churches and “*the falling away*” is coming (3; the Greek has the article “the”). The man of sin will say that he is God (4). He will work miracles (9) and be incredibly deceptive (10) and most in the church will be fooled (4). Moreover, God will send “strong delusion” (11). How then will we stand? Only by holding fast to the truth! Those who do not hold fast to the biblical traditions will be deceived and perish.

True, the manifestation of *the* man of sin may not happen in our day, though it might, since no one knows when he will be “revealed” (3). But the apostle teaches that “the mystery of iniquity *doth already work*” (7). Many today are falling for false doctrine. Unbiblical worship corrupts many churches. Millions are swept away by the false miracles of Roman Catholicism and of charismaticism, all over the world. What will happen when *real* miracles are wrought with “all power” “after the working of Satan” (9) “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (10)?

Though they may *say* that they believe the truth, many do not receive “the *love* of the truth” (10) and so do not actually believe the truth (12). Instead, they believe “the lie” (11; the Greek has the article “the”) and thus they shall be “damned” (12).

The imperatives, “stand fast” and “hold,” are in the present tense. Thus, right now, you must cling to the truth as it is developed through the NT age. This includes holding fast to the biblical doctrine of the last times (eschatology) as taught in II Thessalonians 2 and elsewhere, for even in apostolic days there was false teaching on eschatology which deceived and unsettled people (1-3).

Not only must the professing Christian hold fast to biblical traditions lest he perish (10-12), but this adherence to the truth is also the way in which God saves us.

God’s “beloved” people are “chosen” “from the beginning,” “called,” sanctified and glorified (13-14). But God has ordained that the way of salvation (and the blessed experience of salvation) is the way of “belief of the truth” and no other way (14). “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught” (15). ❖

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Where We Stand

All Means All, and That Is All It Means!

by Martyn McGeown

How often have we heard *that* when we try to explain the Reformed faith to Arminians? It is a very common objection, and a gross misunderstanding of Scripture. It is even a misunderstanding of language itself.

What do words such as “all,” “every man,” “the world,” “whosoever” mean in Scripture? The easiest and most reliable way is to start with the axiom, ‘Scripture interprets Scripture’ and allow the Bible to explain itself. Much of this article consists of New Testament passages interspersed with comments to bring out the meaning, or rather what is *not* meant. Many of the passages speak for themselves.

“*When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him*” (Matt. 2:3). Is it true that the entire population of Jerusalem knew about the message brought by the Magi, or that they were ‘troubled’ by it. Of course not! It refers to the leaders of Jerusalem, and could very well be the same

Were the disciples hated by the people who lived in the jungles of Africa...?

“Jerusalem” mentioned in Matthew 23:37 which did not want Christ to gather her children.

“*Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region about Jordan, and were baptized of him*” (Matt. 3:5). Are we to imagine that Jesus baptised everybody? Were there no exceptions? Surely we can reasonably assume that it would have been impossible for the entire population of Judea to be baptised. See also Mark 1:5.

“*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake*” (Matt. 10:22). Were the disciples hated by the people who lived in the jungles of Africa, by people who had never heard of them? Obviously, “all men” means all kinds of men here.

“And all the people were amazed and said, Is not this the son of David?” (Matt. 12:23). Was this universal. Forgetting even about other nations, what about the scribes and Pharisees? Were they amazed, did they entertain for even a moment the possibility that Jesus could be the Son of David? Not at all!

“And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?” (Matt. 21:10). Did Jesus really cause this kind of universal stir?

“All hold John as a prophet” (Matt. 21:26). The Pharisees did not hold John as a prophet, the Romans and Greeks did not either, so obviously the “all” here is not universal.

“Then answered all the people and said, His blood be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). Was the entire population of Jerusalem, never mind the Roman empire, crowded into one courtyard to utter these terrible words? No! But everybody of a strictly limited group is meant.

“And all the city was gathered together at the door” (Mark 1:33). Not everybody is meant.

“And when they had found him, they said unto him, all men seek for thee” (Mark 1:37). This cannot be taken universally, since there were people in China who were not seeking Him, people in obscure villages of Galilee who were not looking for Jesus.

“And all men did marvel” (Mark 5:20). The Greeks, the Ethiopians, the people in America were not marveling at this time.

“And when he had called all the people unto him” (Mark 7:14). Not everybody is meant.

“All men mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not” (Luke 3:15). “All men” here certainly cannot mean the entire human race. The Chinese were not musing.

“All the people will stone us for they be persuaded that John was a prophet” (Luke 20:6). The Pharisees were concerned about a riot in the population, not one which would involve every man, woman and child of the nation, or even a riot which would spread to all people of the earth!

“Behold the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him” (John 3:26). If all men really were coming to Him, there would have been universal salvation. We know, of course, that relatively few were coming to Christ, certainly not all men head-for-head. It was enough to worry the Pharisees.

“All the people came unto him, and he sat down and taught them” (John 8:2). Not everybody is meant.

“If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:48). If all men believed on Christ that would also include the Romans, and the Pharisees themselves. Rather “all men” means a significant number of converts, enough to attract the attention of the Romans, something the Pharisees feared.

“Praising God and having favour with all men” (Acts 2:47). The early church was hated by many, and certainly did not have the favor of all.

“Many of them which used curious arts brought their books and burned them before all men” (Acts 19:19). “Before all men” means in public, it was a public display of repentance, not a gathering of the population of the entire world to witness a book burning!

“Diana, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth” (Acts 19:27). Evidently, not everybody on planet earth worshipped Diana.

“This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people” (Acts 21:28). Paul had not even reached “all men” yet. What is meant is that everywhere Paul travelled he taught the people the Gospel.

“For you shall be his witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:28). There will never be a time when every person head-for-head will have heard the Gospel. All men will hear, but not all men head-for-head.

“For your obedience is come abroad unto all men” (Rom. 16:19). Did the people in Tibet know about the obedience of the Romans? Of course not!

We have seen, by allowing Scripture to speak for itself, that the term “all men” does not mean “every individual on planet earth from Adam until the end of time.” Rather it means, all of a specific group, or a majority of a specific ground, or all kinds of people without distinction. Some examples from everyday speech illustrate this. If a family is preparing to go to the beach and the father (standing in the garden, within earshot of the neighbors) shouts out, “Right, everybody into the car!” do all the children in the neighborhood jump into the car and think they are included? No, everybody knows that the father means only his family. Imagine that a teacher takes her class to the museum. She tells her class, “OK, the bus is leaving at 5PM. I want everybody on the bus at 5PM sharp. We don’t want anybody left behind.” Nobody interprets the teacher to mean, “I want the entire human race on this bus, and I don’t want any of the entire human race to be left behind.” Such would be absurd! Yet

that is the way Arminians wrest the Scriptures, when they insist that *all* means the entire human race.

The other word misused by Arminians is “world.” Again, the term is taken (when it refers to the extent of God’s love, or the extent of Christ’s atonement) to mean the entire human race without exception. But is that really what the Bible means?

“*That all the world should be taxed*” (Luke 2:1). The Emperor was not planning to tax planet earth.

“*If thou do these things, show thyself to the world*” (John 7:4). Christ’s bretheren were not asking Him to reveal Himself to the Celts or the Africans, but to the general populace of Jerusalem.

“*Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him*” (John 12:19). The Pharisees themselves had not gone after Him, nor indeed had the Russians, the Australians, and people of many other places.

“*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also*” (Acts 17:6). The Apostles’ labors had not caused the slightest stir in Peru! They had caused a stir among Jews and Gentiles alike, wherever they went, but not in “the world” in an absolute sense.

“*That we should not be condemned with the world*” (1 Cor 11:32). The world cannot mean “the entire population of mankind” as obviously believers are not included.

“*And all the world wondered after the beast and they worshipped the dragon*” (Rev. 13:3). Not every man head-for-head did so.

If the term “world” does not mean “every individual person in the world” what does the term mean, and why does the Holy Spirit use it?

If the term “world” does not mean “every individual person in the world” what does the term mean, and why does the Holy Spirit use it?

The New Testament was written to people who believed that God was the God of the Jews *only* and that the Gentiles were accursed. John 3:16 was spoken to a Pharisee who held that opinion. To correct this error, the apostles and Christ used words such as “the world” and “all men.” In some texts the term is obviously “all of us”

or all believers or all the elect. That is especially true of 2 Peter 3:9 where the qualifying phrase “longsuffering to us-ward” is deliberately emphasised.

The New Testament is mainly a collection of letters written to believers. The Bible is not written to unbelievers, so when we see words such as “us,” “we,” “beloved,” we should consider, believers are being addressed, not the world at large.

“*For I say through the grace of God given to me, to every man THAT IS AMONG YOU, not to think more highly than he ought to think but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man [among you] the measure of faith*” (Rom. 12:3).

It should not be necessary to point out to Arminians, who claim this means that all men in the world have faith, and that it is up to each individual to use his “portion” aright, that this is *not* what Paul is saying. He is talking about the church.

Again, “*Whom [Jesus] we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*” (Col. 1:28). The “every man” phrases are not universal here either. To say so is absurd. Paul certainly never met “every man” in the world, and could not teach and warn every man.

Arminians criticise Calvinists for “interpreting” the terms “world” and “all men” for their own purposes. But what do the words “*propitiation*” (1 John 2:2), “*taketh away sins*” (John 1:29), “*tasted death*” (Heb. 2:9), “*Saviour*” (John 4:24) mean?

Propitiation means to turn away the wrath of God by means of a sacrifice. Jesus has propitiated the wrath of God and nobody for whom Christ was propitiation can suffer the wrath of God. By latching on to “*the whole world*” in 1 John 2:2 the Arminian fails to understand the meaning of propitiation. The Arminian believes that Christ can be the propitiation for a sinner, and that God still retains His wrath and sends the objects of that propitiatory sacrifice to hell!

A saviour is somebody who actually saves, not somebody who tries to save, wants to save, makes people saveable if they will accept it, but who actually saves. The Arminian believes that Jesus is the “*Saviour of the world*” (John 4:24) yet not all that world are saved!

Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ tasted death for every man. Yet, the Arminian believes, that some sinners for whom Christ tasted death, must drink the dregs of God’s wrath to all eternity. That is the portion of the cup of the wicked (Psalm 11), not of the elect!

Arminians proclaim that Christ is “*the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), yet many of those sinners, says the Arminian, go to hell. Evidently, then, Christ did not take away their sins, nor can it be said that “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (2 Cor. 5:19), if all men head for head (the Arminian understanding of the world) are meant. Many in the world will have their trespasses imputed to them, and will perish in hell.

Words in Scripture have definite meanings, and it is evident that the Arminians wrest the Scriptures in a vain attempt to make salvation available to all. Let us contend for the truth of sovereign, particular, efficacious grace!



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Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 7

Rev. Hoeksema Comes to Eastern Avenue CRC

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Note: The next chapters in our story relate the background to and the history of the origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It is obvious from the length of the chapters that these events were earthshaking for the teenager, Neal Hanko. He treats these matters in depth and with passion; very little editorial comment is needed.

Eastern Avenue CRC still stands as a well preserved edifice, a reminder of better days, in a very unkempt neighborhood with shabby, deteriorated houses and run down, boarded up stores. It is difficult to imagine that sixty or seventy years ago this was a very neat and clean environment occupied almost entirely by Dutch folk, who still spoke and worshipped in their native tongue.

These Dutch folk who had come from the Netherlands during the 19th century were mainly of the Secession (Afscheiding) of 1834 or of the Separation (Doleantie) of 1886. Both parties knew their doctrinal position and were determined to maintain it over against each other. In their visits together they often discussed such issues as infra and supra-lapsarianism, mediate and immediate regeneration, the conditional covenant, pre-supposed regeneration and temporal and eternal justifi-

cation (Would that we could discover similar conversations on doctrine in our day).

Many of the ministers of the Secession preached a general, well-meant offer of salvation to all who hear the Word. They argued that, although God must work faith and conversion, man from his aspect must believe and repent. Therefore it can be said that God offers his salvation to all, even with a sincere pleading, *upon the condition that man repents and believes*. As a result they no longer spoke of eternal predestination, first denying divine reprobation and then election.

Those of the Doleantie followed Kuyper in their teaching, including his presumptive regeneration and common grace theories. They strove for a synthesis, seeking a harmony between the church and the world, sometimes referred to as “spanning the gap between Jerusalem and Athens.” This was plainly a denial of the antithesis.

Our minister, Rev. Groen, had been with us for 18 years. He was a follower of Kuyper and among the most liberal of the ministers in the CRC. Besides being a Janssen man (see below), he was known to defend woman's suffrage and the labor union, both of which at that time were still strongly opposed by most of the members. After his retirement, we were vacant for 1 ½ years.

But there were still many in the congregation who had recognized the false teaching of Rev. Groen and were ready to accept a minister like Rev. Hoeksema, who was known for his strong convictions to the truth.

Herman Hoeksema trained for the ministry at Calvin Seminary. It was during this time that he met and heard Rev. Henry Danhof, a staunch defender of the Reformed truth, preach. In 1919 Rev. Danhof gave a paper at the ministers' conference under the heading "De Idd Van het Genade Verbond," The Idea of the Covenant of Grace", in which he rather extensively described the covenant as a relationship of friendship between God and his people in Christ. Rev. Hoeksema in later years was to develop this truth far more fully, a most fundamental truth of Scripture and cherished by us as our heritage.

After he graduated, Rev. Hoeksema became minister in Holland, MI. We as members of the Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church made our first acquaintance with him when he preached for us during our vacancy in 1919. He declined many calls while he was in Holland. But a year after making our acquaintance, he accepted our call. He remained with us for many years, even until the Lord took him to glory. Little did he or we realize the trials and blessings that would follow in and after the birth of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

At that time I was a lad in my teens, and now after many years I can look back with a deep sense of gratitude to God that I knew Rev. Hoeksema as my pastor, as my theological instructor and, above all, as my spiritual father. He caused me to see the errors into which the church at that time had fallen and he instructed me in the blessed truth of God's sovereign grace, especially as that is revealed to us in God's covenant.

There were changes that took place in the congregation when Rev. Hoeksema took up the shepherd staff among us. For years catechism teaching and sick visiting had been left to the elders. When Rev. Hoeksema took charge he was determined to take all the catechism classes, some of the societies and also a lion's share of the sick visiting. In fact, he was very unhappy with the instruction that had been given to the youth of the church, which was often nothing more than a telling of the Bible story with a moral applied.

For the first time in my life I had a minister for my catechism teacher. Rev. Hoeksema stepped into the room that first evening, looked about with his sharp, piercing eyes and brought us immediately to quiet attention. He

insisted not only on order in the classroom, but also that we know our lesson and give him our full attention.

For his inaugural sermon, Rev. Hoeksema preached in Dutch on Colossians 2:1, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you." In the evening he preached in English on Isaiah 40:5-8, "And the voice said Cry, and I said, What shall I cry...?"

He concluded this sermon by saying: "Thus I conceive of my task in your midst. To this task I pledged myself when I first entered the ministry of the Word. And therefore in His name we assume this task of delivering this twofold message. We will proclaim that all flesh is as grass. We will witness against the attempts of human strength. And we will maintain that the Word of our God and it alone stands for evermore."

It soon became evident to the majority in the congregation that they now heard a type of preaching which was quite different from what had previously been proclaimed. Rev. Hoeksema was not only a great orator, a forceful speaker who spoke with conviction, but he was also a meticulous exegete, whose exposition of the Scriptures was clear and concise. Even the common folk who had had little education could understand and be edified by his strongly doctrinal preaching.

There was an awakening in the church. There was an eagerness to hear the preaching of the Word. Finally, the congregation was hearing the sound preaching of the Word, and was being spiritually fed. This was food and drink for which our souls had yearned while we walked for many years in a dry and thirsty land. God had indeed sent us a man for that time.

But there was also a new emphasis. The new minister laid a strong emphasis upon the sovereignty of God. God, not man, stood on the foreground in his sermons. There was a new emphasis on the doctrine of predestination, a truth that was rarely heard in the past. And there was no less a strong emphasis on the antithesis, the marked, spiritual difference between the church and the world. And along with this there was an emphatic denial of the teaching of common grace. Practically the whole congregation had assumed that common grace was an accepted doctrine in the church. The fact that it was being denied in the preaching raised many an eyebrow, as if to ask, "What strange thing is this that we hear?"

The men's society was the first to take action. They approached their new minister and asked him to explain to them this whole matter of common grace. He invited them over to his home for an evening, furnished coffee and cigars and explained his position, patiently answer-

ing their questions. Not all were convinced, but from that time on my father was a staunch supporter of Hoeksema. My mother, who had been raised in the doctrines of the Secession could never quite accept these new views. She actually remained a follower of De Cock until the day she died. But she did enjoy Rev. Hoeksema's preaching.

In the context of these ongoing doctrinal discussions in Eastern Ave., four professors from Calvin College presented a protest against Prof. Ralph Janssen, accusing him of error in his instruction. This professor had studied in Germany under modern theologians and had imbibed much of their modern teachings. He had denied the infallibility of the Scriptures, and denied the miracles. But since these four professors served a protest against their colleague with very few grounds and had not spoken with him about his erroneous teaching, Synod dropped the matter.

Not content with this, the professors appealed to the churches. They, and four ministers, including Rev. Danhof and Rev. Hoeksema, wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Waar

het in de Zaak Janssen om Gaat", "What the Janssen Case Is All About."

The Curatorium of the Theological School appointed a committee of seven, three of whom favored Prof. Janssen and his teachings and four who opposed him. This committee met, but Dr. Janssen refused to cooperate with them. In the meantime, Rev. Hoeksema made an intensive study of the student notes, and since he was editor of the rubric, "Our Doctrine", in *The Banner*, he wrote there condemning Janssen's errors. The committee finally went to Synod with a majority and minority report. At the Synod of 1922 Prof. Janssen's teachings were condemned and he was deposed from office. On the surface of things, it seemed as if the cause of truth and righteousness had prevailed. But that was not the end of the matter. ❖

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Church History

George M. Ophoff (27)

Rev. Ophoff's Last Years

by Prof. Herman Hanko

Now the story is quickly told. It seems as if the Lord had preserved Rev. Ophoff for this last struggle; and now that the struggle was over, the Lord was ready to take him from the battle.

Already in 1952, the year before the split, Rev. Ophoff entered the hospital for stomach surgery. The pressures of many years of work were finally beginning to take their toll. Although the stomach surgery was successful, the doctors told Rev. Ophoff that he would have to lighten his work load. But this he never did. A lifetime of work had developed a habit which could not be broken. The long days of work and the nights of a light shining beneath the study door continued. It was the height of the controversy, and he could not step aside.

In a sense, the years after the split were quiet and peaceful ones. There was all the work of reconstruction to do, and the labors of the Seminary continued unabated. But the storm was over, and quiet returned to the Churches. Standing stronger now than they had perhaps since the beginning of their history, the Churches enjoyed the unity and peace which God, in His mercy, gave to them.

But these years of peace were few in number. In the summer of 1958, Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff went to Canada for a vacation. On the return home, in Toledo, Ohio, in July of that year, Rev. Ophoff suffered a severe stroke. He was moved by ambulance from the hospital there to Blodgett where he recuperated.



Eastern Avenue CRC parsonage.

For many years, in fact since he had laid down his labors in Byron Center, Rev. Ophoff and his family lived in the upstairs apartment on 343 Eastern which is near the corner of Eastern and Wealthy. Shortly after the split, because of his advanced age and the rigors of climbing the long and dark staircase, the family moved to a split-level house on Sylvan. Although this was a new house, Rev. Ophoff never really felt at home there. I suppose the small and cramped apartment on Eastern Avenue had become a part of his life, and the spacious and modern home on Sylvan seemed to him somewhat improper; but he often complained that he wished he were back in his old familiar surroundings. He had been satisfied with but a little all his life, and it was too late to change.

Nevertheless, after his stroke, even the few stairs on Sylvan proved too much for him, and he and his wife moved to the old family home on 1126 Eastern. Here Rev. Ophoff's parents had lived the last years of their life. It was an old home, but here Ophoff felt once again somewhat at ease.

The stroke was a severe one, and it became impossible for him to continue his labors in the Churches. Along with the infirmities of the stroke came also gradual blindness. And so it became also impossible for him to read.

The days were long for there was little which Ophoff could still do. His time was occupied somewhat when the ladies of First Church came to his home to read to him. I picked him up twice a week to take him to Rev. Hoeksema's Dogmatics class in the Seminary. And the rest of the time he could only exercise his mind in the theological problems which had, all his life, been his one great interest.

I can well remember these Dogmatics classes. They were something to witness. Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff, two great warriors of the faith, often discussing together abstruse points of theology with total frankness, total trust in each other, and both aware that their earthly work was all but finished. Those who were present at those sessions were often moved deeply by these discussions.

In February of 1962, Rev. and Mrs. Ophoff were both moved to the Marne Nursing Home, he because of his failing strength, and she because of hardening of the arteries. They could be alone no longer.

One week before he died, Rev. Ophoff was moved to Pine Rest Hospital, and on June 12, 1962 God called his faithful servant home.

It was but a short time later, July, 1964, that Mrs. Ophoff also died. Her entire life had been devoted to the care of her husband, for in his total absorption in his work, he needed someone to look after his needs. When she was no longer needed, she too soon died, for her work on earth had also come to its close.

And so we come to the end of the story.

It has carried us on somewhat longer than we had originally intended, but if its purpose is attained, the efforts will not have been wasted.

What was this purpose? These articles were written in order that you might know of one who fought so long and valiantly on behalf of the truth of the gospel. We carry with us our history and our heritage. We are part of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and their history is our history. We cannot leave it behind even if we would. To turn our backs on this history, to ignore it, to despise it, to know nothing of it, is to deny it. God forbid that we should do this.

To know it, to cherish it, to love it, to teach it to the generations following, this is to be faithful to it. This is our calling. We deny it to our destruction; we cherish it to our everlasting blessedness.

There is a very sad text in the book of Judges. You can find it in Judges 2:8-10: "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel."

In a way, this is an introduction to the book of Judges, because it explains the terrible history of Israel during that wretched time.

There is another passage, just a few verses later, which explain why the Lord left heathen nations in the land after Joshua's death. It goes like this. "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof" (3:1, 2).

But there is here an abiding truth. When a generation arises which knows not the Lord nor the mighty works which He did for Israel, then trouble comes to the Church. To know the history of our church is to know the mighty works which God has done for us. To know the men

whom God used in our churches is to know how God performed these mighty works.

But faithfulness to what our fathers believed involves, as it did for them, spiritual warfare. It is warfare against false doctrine and worldliness. The Lord sends enemies so that generations who knew not the battles of 1924 and 1953 may learn war. This is our calling. Only in this way can we be faithful. And only in this way will God's blessing rest upon us until the Lord returns. May the devotion and dedication, the faithfulness and zeal, which filled those who were our spiritual fathers, manifested by courage in battle be found in us and our children! ❖

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

2006 Winter Conference

Justification, the Heart of the Gospel

A Winter Conference defending the basic doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

Presented by First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

January 13: Justification by Faith Alone (Speaker: Rev. Ronald Van Overloop)

January 20: Justification and Good Works (Speaker: Prof. David Engelsma)

January 27: Justification and the Believer (Speaker: Rev. William Langerak)

*Sponsored by: The Evangelism Committee of
First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.*

*3641 104th Avenue
Zeeland, MI 49464*

*All three speeches are on Friday evenings at 7:30 p.m.
Tapes of the conference will be available upon request.*

Church News

BAPTISMS

“For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

- Cassandra Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aric Bleyenberg—Byron Center, MI
- Kierra Alice, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Hauck—Byron Center, MI
- Renae Addison, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad DeBoer—Doon, IA
- Jacob Dale, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Kuiper—Doon, IA
- Jenna Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Mantel—Doon, IA
- Spencer Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Holstege—Faith, MI
- Miya Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Meulenberg—Grace, MI
- Timothy David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Haaksma—Grace, MI
- Sydney Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Butgereit—Grandville, MI
- Rebecca Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Hoeksema—Grandville, MI
- Kenton Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt VanOverloop—Holland, MI
- Dustin Wade, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
- Levi John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Houck—Peace, IL
- Paul Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. George Ophoff—South Holland, IL
- Joshua Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Boverhof—South Holland, IL
- Brett Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Cammenga—Southwest, MI
- Eliza Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad VanSingel—Trinity, MI
- Tyler Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Kuiper—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

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

- Emily Boer, Debra Elzinga, Michelle VanOverloop, Tim Boverhof, Joel Hassevoort and Joy Oosterbaan—Byron Center, MI
- Nicole Wagner, Susan Dykstra, Carleen Dykstra, Laura Koole, Denise Kooienga and Ryan Bylsma—Faith, MI
- Tim Dykstra, Emma Engelsma, Kim Faber, and Jeremy Monsma—First, MI
- Will Slager—Georgetown, MI
- Jeremy DeJong, Ginelle Koops, Shari Haveman and Chad Warner—Holland, MI
- Laura Huizinga, Kara Kamps, Aaron Kamps, Leah Koole, Charles Neinhuis, Bennett Meyer, Laurel Lotterman and Tom VanderWaal—Hope, MI
- Audra Kamminga—Hudsonville, MI
- Shelia VanMaanen, Heidi Hoogendoorn, Lora Kroese, Keri Oostra, Jade VandeKamp, and Jason Westra—Hull, IA
- Mary Jo Huisken and Todd Karsemeyer—Redlands, CA
- Cody DeBoer, Karl Dykstra, Faith VanDyke, Eric Pastoor and Erik Prins—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

- Mr. Kurt Mingerink and Miss Ciri Bossenbroek—Byron Center, MI
- Mr. Kyle Bruinooge and Miss Audra Bol—Faith, MI
- Mr. Nick Dykstra and Miss Lauren Feenstra—Grace, MI
- Mr. Rich DeMeester and Miss Nelle Bishop—Hope, MI
- Mr. John Bishop and Miss Jessica Nicholson—Kalamazoo, MI

Waiting

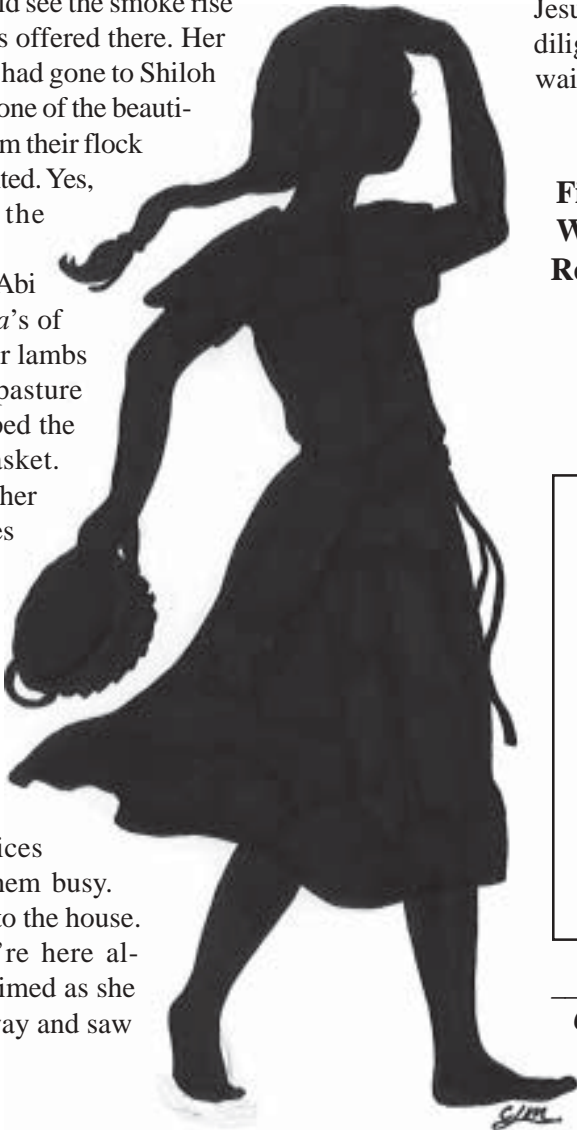
Abi wiped her brow before she lifted the earthen water jug onto her shoulder. The sun was already high in the sky. Mother would need the water for cooking, and it was Abi's job to bring each day's supply. She hurried from the well.

"Abi, I was beginning to wonder where you were. Father and Micah have important business to do today and will be hungry when they come back. Will you please go to the barn and get an omer of barley?"

Abi obeyed her mother without delay. Yet, as she stepped to the barn, Abi could not help but pause to gaze off into the distance. Nestled in a little hillside of Ephraim, Abi's family lived not far from Shiloh, the place where all Israel came to worship Jehovah. On a clear day they could see the smoke rise from the sacrifices offered there. Her father and brother had gone to Shiloh this morning with one of the beautiful young rams from their flock of sheep. Abi squinted. Yes, she could see the smoke.

From the barn Abi could hear the *baa*'s of the sheep and their lambs corralled in the pasture nearby. She scooped the grain into her basket. Yesterday her mother had made flat cakes of finely ground wheat and olive oil for father and Micah to bring to the temple at Shiloh, too. Abi had helped her bake them. The sacrifices and feasts kept them busy. She hurried back to the house.

"Micah, you're here already!" Abi exclaimed as she entered the doorway and saw her brother.



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

"Yes, we were early in line at Shiloh this time. The priests worked quickly to sprinkle the blood and lay the parts of our ram in the right order on the altar, but many men were still waiting to offer their animals."

"Yes, waiting," said Father as he joined them, "waiting with sheep, oxen, and goats. But it is true," he added, "that our whole life is one of waiting. We wait for the *real* Lamb to come."

We don't know exactly what life was like before Jesus was born, but we know the faithful of God's people diligently watched and waited for that day, even as we wait now for Christ to come again on the clouds of glory. ❖

**Find the following words in the puzzle below.
What do all these things have in common?
Read Leviticus 1-2 to find out!**

blood bullock cakes cattle corn flock flour fowls
frankincense goats herd oil pigeons salt sheep
turtledoves unleavened wafers

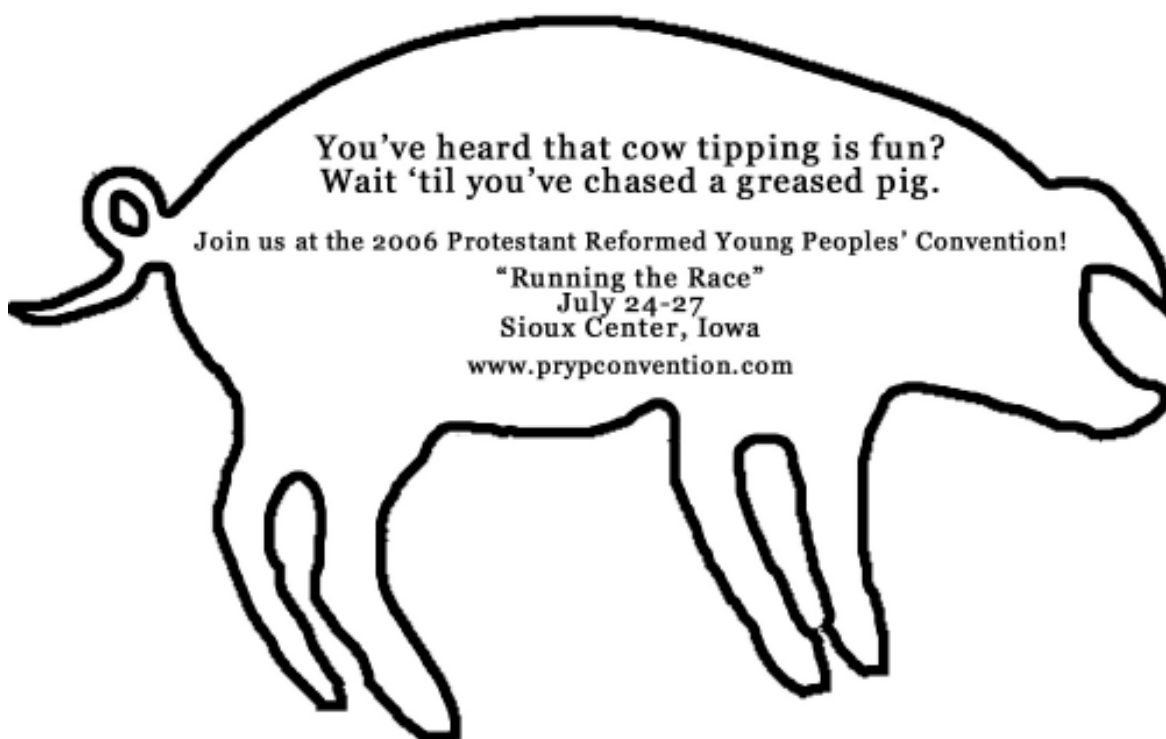
H	F	L	O	C	K	P	A	D	O	W	E
D	O	O	L	B	C	P	E	E	H	S	L
B	W	E	R	U	C	A	S	N	N	E	H
T	L	A	S	L	O	R	B	E	P	V	G
D	S	O	O	L	U	T	C	V	T	O	V
V	L	L	C	O	R	N	A	A	U	D	G
F	W	N	L	C	I	U	K	E	W	E	O
P	A	F	C	K	A	L	E	L	G	L	A
T	F	E	N	I	A	T	S	N	R	T	T
O	E	A	N	M	D	E	T	U	O	R	S
K	R	F	D	R	E	H	B	L	O	U	S
F	S	P	I	G	E	O	N	S	E	T	C

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

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