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# Beacon

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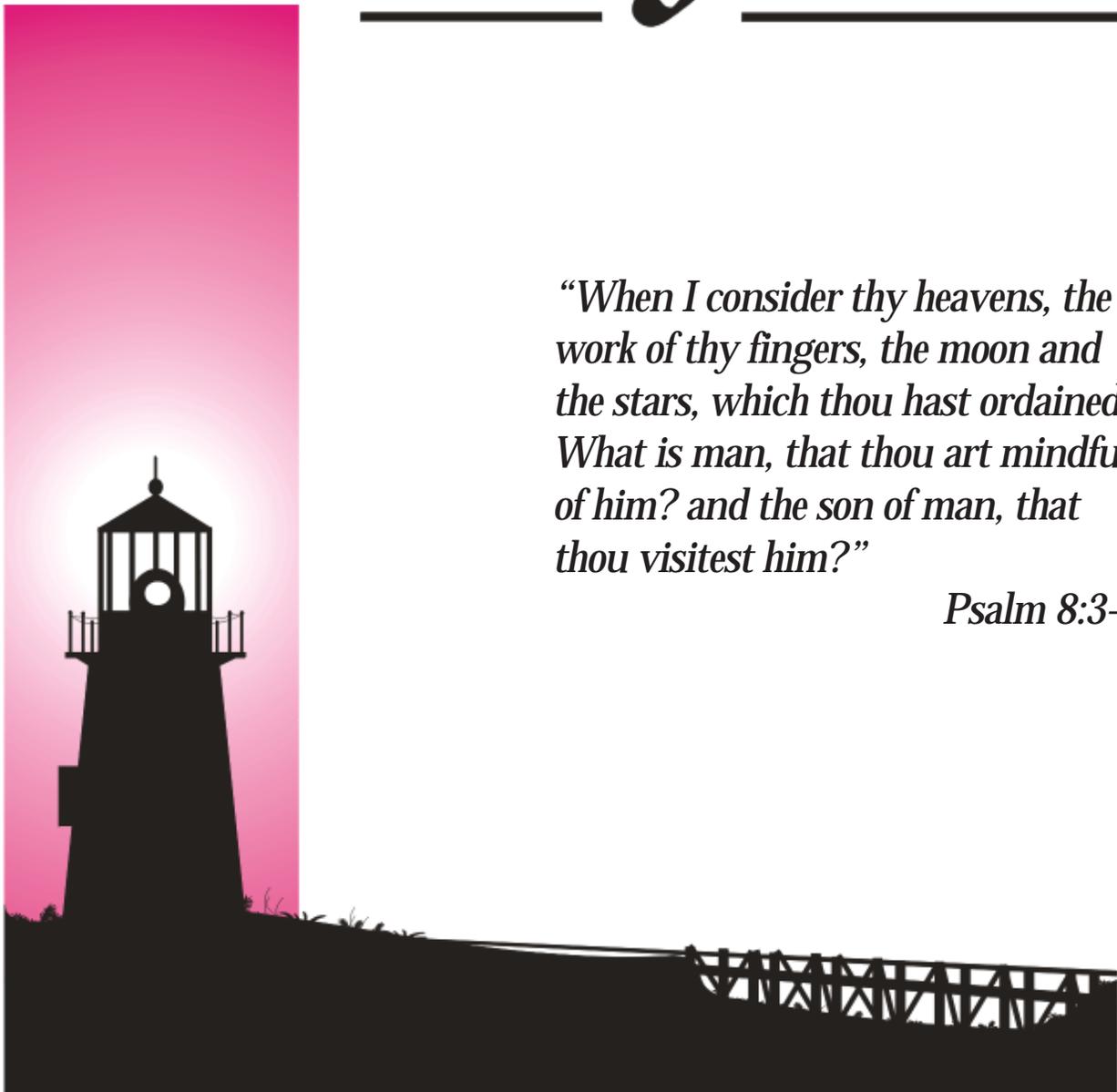
Volume LXV  
Number 8

# Lights

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*“When I consider thy heavens, the  
work of thy fingers, the moon and  
the stars, which thou hast ordained;  
What is man, that thou art mindful  
of him? and the son of man, that  
thou visitest him?”*

*Psalm 8:3-4*



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# Henry M. Morris

1918-2006

by John Huizenga



As God works all of history toward the return of Christ to gather His church, the devil has been relentless, and perhaps has even enjoyed some glimmers of hope that a way exists to defeat the council of the Almighty God. One such glimmer of hope came in 1959 at the great Darwinian Centennial celebration in Chicago commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Here the theory of evolution was flaunted as the ultimate truth. Sir Julian Huxley and other atheistic evolutionists proclaimed the death of creationism and a new age of pure science free from the distortions of a biblical age of superstition. One year later a movie “Inherit the Wind” put the frosting on the evolutionary cake. Phillip E. Johnson, J. D., Professor of Criminal Law at the University of California, Berkeley writes the following about this movie in his paper “How to Sink a Battleship: A call to separate materialist philosophy from empirical science.”

“Inherit the Wind’ is a simple morality play in which the Christian ministers are evil manipulators and their followers are bumpkins who sing mindlessly in praise of “that old time religion.” In the movie, it appears that the theological content of Christianity amounts to threatening people with damnation if they dare to think for themselves. The overthrow of this caricature provides a liberation myth, which goes with the triumphalism of the Chicago celebration. The movie teaches that the truth shall make us free, and the truth, according to science and Hollywood, is that Biblical religion is an oppressor to be overthrown. <http://www.origins.org/mc/resources/ri9602/johnson.html>

It looked as if a giant steam roller was ready to snuff out the last embers of faith proclaiming the truth of God’s word that God created the world in six literal days just as He said in the book of Genesis. Many nominally Christian institutions of higher learning, in an attempt to flee the stereotype of creationist “fools,” forsook God’s word concerning creation and joined the evolutionists in one way or another.

But as so many times before, God demonstrates his sovereign power and grace by delivering His small and helpless Church from what appears to be certain defeat. Men are raised up with certain gifts to serve God in the work that He has prepared for them. One such man has been Henry M. Morris.

While still a boy, Henry’s father deserted him along with his mother and two younger brothers. Extreme poverty at this time of the depression led his mother to send him to his grandmother for awhile. While at Rice University under the dominion of the famous atheist evolutionist Julian Huxley, the godly instruction of his grandmother gave way to evolutionism. Through an intense study of the Bible, attendance at a strong Baptist church, and joining the Gideon ministry, Henry was convinced of the divine authority of Scripture and the lie of evolution.

Henry’s choice of civil engineering as a major served him well in his fight against the evolution giants of his day. Pure science involves theorizing that inevitably leads the ungodly scientist far from God. The applied science of the engineer has to be based upon fact otherwise the products, systems, structures, etc. that are being designed will not work. It was quite obvious to Henry in light of Scripture as well as the world God created that evolution was based on lies, and he set out to expose these lies in his scientific studies done in the light of Scripture.

The results of his work include the publication of many books on creationism. He co-authored *The Genesis Flood: An Investigation of its Geographical Extent, Geological Effects, and Chronological*

Setting with John C. Whitcomb. "He considered the Institute for Creation Research to be one of his 'children.'" (John. D. Morris). He has also been widely acclaimed as the "father of modern creationism." While we may not agree with some of the ideas and goals of these men, I believe they have been used by God to throw down a roadblock to the antichristian scientists. Much time and energy is spent by the evolutionists combating the teaching of creation in schools giving the church a few more years of peace while God continues His work of gathering the church.

I enjoy learning about the findings of the creation scientist's research. It is encouraging to watch the evolutionists squirm and fight back. We must never forget, however, that the foundation of our faith rests not upon the "proof" of biblical truths that can be found in creation, but upon that work of God in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in connection with the word of God.

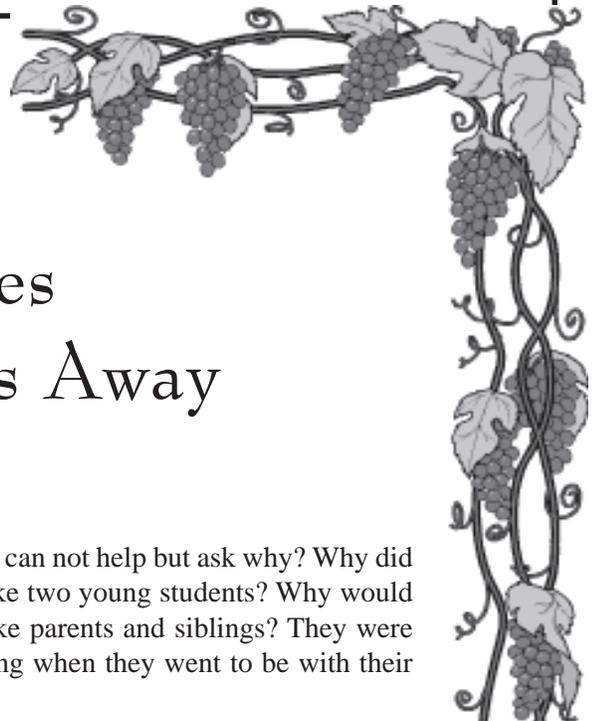
Henry loved to study God's creation, and in his writing from his book *For Time and Forever* he anticipates a study of God's wonders in heaven. I will end this article with what he writes:

But in all probability the Dominion Mandate will not only still be in effect, but may well be extended to apply to the whole universe, not merely this Earth. God surely had a purpose in creating the myriads and myriads of stars and other marvelous things scattered throughout the infinite reaches of space. Our physical bodies will have been changed to be "*fashioned like unto His glorious body*" (Philippians 3:21), and we, as "*His servants shall serve Him*" (Revelation 22:3) in an infinite variety of meaningful job assignments, based on some yet-to-be clarified criteria on our faithfulness in serving Him here in this life.

He has told us, intriguingly, the "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I Corinthians 2:9). We may be able, however, to sense some of these, "by His Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:10), and I, at least, like to think about having an eternity of time to explore and develop and enjoy the endless marvels of His infinite creation.

Although I like to believe that God's primeval Mandate to have dominion over the earth may be enlarged eventually to cover the whole creation, would it not be a wonderful future to be able to travel to distant stars and planets, explore them, and then write about the nature and uniqueness in God's plan for a book in God's library? Others could read our reports, and we could read theirs, and all would still further increase our awe at God's great creation and our love and devotion to Him." ❖

Fruitful Branches



# The Lord Gives and the Lord Takes Away

by Lauren Kraker

**C**ovenant Christian High School has been hit hard with deaths these past two years. Last year we lost a fellow student, Daniel Cammenga; then a father; then a mother; and then a sister. Now this year we lost another fellow student, Paul Noorman.

We can not help but ask why? Why did God take two young students? Why would God take parents and siblings? They were all young when they went to be with their

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Father in their heavenly home. Why would God give us five deaths in two years? Isn't this more than we can handle? Is God punishing us? What is God trying to tell us? So many questions swarm our minds. So many questions that we can not answer.

Job 1:21 says "...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." God gave to us these brothers and sisters in Christ to love and cherish while they were on this earth, whether it was for 16 years or 50 years. Then God took them away, some suddenly, while others suffered the trials of sickness or disease for years.

Romans 8:38-39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things to come, nor height, not depth, not any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." During death we can feel as if God is not by us. We don't understand why God could take someone so close away from us. Everything is in God's plan, and we don't understand it all. Nothing can separate us from God's love. Even during death God loves us and is upholding us. He makes us to grow spiritually, trust and lean more on Him. God alone gives us the grace and strength that we need to make it through these difficult times.

From the deaths of two students, the student body at Covenant Christian has grown together so much. I was a junior when my fellow classmate, Daniel, was killed in an automobile accident. I remember how much our junior class, along with the rest of the school, grew spiritually, and came together. It didn't matter who was popular and who wasn't. All the different groups in school came together. These experiences made us realize what was important in our life. What is important is not how popular one is, or what things you have, but rather the family and friends that God has blessed us with, the Christian school and churches that we have, and all the blessings that God has given to us: grace, hope, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

When I first heard that Paul Noorman had passed away I immediately sympathized with my fellow schoolmates. The sophomores had not experienced the loss of a fellow student like we, as seniors and juniors, had the year before. Many of us headed to Covenant as soon as we heard of Paul's death to be with the sophomores there. We cried, we comforted, recited Bible passages, and reminded each other that Paul is in a much better place. We as seniors and juniors felt the need to comfort the sophomores as best as we could.

"Help me then in every tribulation, so to trust Thy promises O Lord, that I lose not faith's sweet consolation, given me within Thy Holy Word. Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting, e'er to take, as from a father's hand, one by one, the days, the moments fleeting, til I reach the promised land." This verse of *Day by Day* gives us comfort that in everything we face, God is always with us. We must trust that in everything God will give us the strength to make it through. We need to be reminded that everything is in God's hand. Nothing happens without the Father's will. Death is God's will.

Lord's Day 1, "What is thy only comfort in life and death? That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him." We are God's children. No matter if we are alive, or dead we are God's. Nothing happens to us without it being the will of God.

Life is fragile. Anyone can be taken from this earth at any moment. Death serves as a reminder to us that our place is not here on this earth, but in heaven. Our life here on earth is temporary, not permanent as many people would like it to be. John 14:2-3 states, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." When our place is ready for us, Christ will come and get us.

At the end of time, during Christ's second coming all the dead will be raised. I Corinthians 15:42-44, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." We have the hope that when we die we will see our loved ones, our fellow classmates, fathers, mothers, and siblings, in heaven. What a joy and comfort that is for us. ❖

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*Lauren is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

# Study Guide on the Book of Judges (2)

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

## Week 5:

### Judges 4:1-24 - Deliverance from the Canaanites by Deborah and Barak

Chapter 3 recorded God's work of saving Israel from the Mesopotamians, the Moabites, and the Philistines. What wonderful deliverances!

These wonderful works Israel soon forgot, and the familiar cycle of history repeated itself—sin, bondage, repentance, and deliverance. One unique aspect of the deliverance of Israel from the Canaanites is that God used women. He used men also; He used Barak, who is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. But Deborah and Jael play a significant role.

We are convinced that the Scriptures do not allow women to hold any of the special offices in the church. But after examining this chapter, ask the question: What great role, positively, do women play in the church's deliverance from her enemies today?

1. What was the evil that Israel committed in the sight of the LORD? (Hint: look in chapter 5).
2. What part of Israel did Jabin especially afflict?
3. What do you know about the history of Hazor?
4. How oppressive was the bondage of Israel as here described, in comparison with her previous bondages? (Hint: also look in chapter 5 for the answer).
5. In what ways is Deborah a unique judge? Does the fact that she was a prophetess and judge mean that women may be ministers and elders today?
6. How is it evident that Israel's deliverance was a miracle? (Hint: look in both Judges 4 and 5 for the answer).
7. Was Jael's act good or bad—and why? Did her deception (vs 18) make her act worse?
8. What does the chapter teach us about our salvation in Jesus Christ?
9. What points of application to our lives can we make from this chapter?
10. And what is that positive role which women play in the church's deliverance from her enemies today?

## Week 6:

### Judges 5:1-31: The Song of Deborah and Barak

When Israel saw the dead bodies of the Egyptians washing up on the shore of the Red Sea, they sang (Exodus 15). When David was given the victory over his enemies, he composed Psalms (Psalms 18, 60, and others). John, in his revelation, saw the church triumphant singing "the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb" (Revelation 15). Evidently singing is one way in which the church responds with gratitude and joy to the work of salvation.

Also in Judges 5 is recorded a song which was sung on the occasion of that great victory recorded in Judges 4. It is a song quite different from the lyrics and tunes on the lips of unbelievers. Studying this song, we ought to ask the questions: What kind of songs do *we* sing? do we sing? *To whom* do we sing? (Consider that all singing is done to someone, in worship of that being). And *why* do we sing? Are the songs we sing similar to this song—or does this song remind us of the need to throw out our current collection of favorite songs, and replace it with songs with which God is pleased?

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### Questions regarding the singing of the song:

1. Why would God's people *sing* on such an occasion?
2. Exactly who sang this song? Does this indicate that the whole church does not need to sing such songs?

### Questions regarding the content of the song:

1. What does the song teach regarding the trouble that Israel endured at the hand of Jabin? What was Israel's sin? How severe was God's chastisement of Israel on account of this sin? (Some of these questions were also addressed in chapter 4).
2. What does the song teach regarding the battle?
  - Who fought? Who did not fight? What does it indicate that some tribes did not come to help?
  - What does the fact that Jehovah fought teach about Him and His view of Israel? What particular means did Jehovah use to give Israel the victory? On what basis could Israel be delivered from her enemy?
  - Significantly, this battle was fought by the waters of Megiddo (vs 19). What do you know of Megiddo? And what other great battle does this one point to (Revelation 16:16)?
3. Regarding particular verses:
  - vs 23: What is Meroz, and why is he cursed?
  - vs 23: Did Jehovah really need help against the mighty?

### Questions regarding the application of the song to us:

1. How does the song indicate that it is relevant and instructive for the church of all ages?
2. What lessons do you take to heart, from the history recorded in this song?
3. Do we sing this song regularly? If so, how? If not, why not?

## Week 7:

### Judges 6:1-40: The Call of Gideon

“And...and...and...and...and...and”—notice the first word of verses 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 6. The Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures use the word “and” often in narratives, to describe the various events that follow one an-

other. But the repeated use of the word reminds us again of a cycle of events that is being repeated now for the fourth time in the history of the Judges. We are by now familiar with it.

By now, one might think that Jehovah would cast off His people in disgust. He surely would have done so, if He were not *Jehovah*—faithful and unchanging. But, as He said through Malachi, “I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6).

So the sacred Scriptures record yet another instance of Jehovah's marvelous deliverance of His people from their misery.

How comforting! Though we sin against Him a thousand times, in the way of repentance He will receive us again into His fellowship, and give us the enjoyment of His blessedness!

1. Israel's trouble, verses 1-6.
  - To what sin did Israel again return?
  - Describe how Israel suffered because of the oppression of the Midianites.
  - Why was this oppression so severe?
  - Do we ever experience such severity of oppression on account of our sins?
2. The prophet's message, verses 7-10.
  - Who was this prophet?
  - What was the point of his message?
  - What is the warning for us?
3. God calls Gideon to deliver Israel, verses 11-24.
  - Why is it so important that Gideon be called to this work?
  - By asking for a sign, does Gideon show he is weak in faith?
  - May we ever ask for signs from God to know His will for us? May we regarding the will of His law, which is clearly revealed in Scripture?
  - What does “Jehovah-shalom” mean? Look it up in a Bible dictionary.
  - As judge, Gideon is a picture of Christ. What similarities between Gideon and Christ can you note?
4. Gideon begins his work by cleansing his father's house, verses 25-32.
  - What was this grove that Gideon must cut down?
  - Did the fact that he cut down this grove by night indicate cowardice and fear on his part?
  - Why was it so important that he begin his work in his own father's house?

- What does this say about the work of salvation that Christ will perform in the church?
  - What does this say about our own battle against sin? Find other Scriptures which indicate that we may not go to battle against sin in others without first being conscious of a battle against sin in ourselves.
5. Gideon prepares to go to battle, verses 33-40.
- Who comes to fight, at the call of Gideon?
  - What is the point of the two signs involving the fleece and the dew?

## Week 8

### Judges 7:1-25: Gideon's Battle With Midian

Here is described the battle by which Israel was delivered from the Midianites. We are reminded of the great principle of the saving work of God: He saves in such a way that His own power and wisdom is evident. Jonathan, Saul's son, later showed that he understood this principle, when he and his armorbearer went alone to fight the Philistines: "it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (I Samuel 14:6).

That church is foolish which judges her strength by her numbers; that child of God is unwise who judges his strength by his own human might and earthly courage.

Let us believe and trust in Jehovah, who delivered us from sin by one man, Jesus Christ!

1. The army gathered, verses 1-8.
  - How large was the army of the Midianites (7:12, 8:10)? How large was the army of Gideon at first? How large was the army when most were sent home? What is significant about the great difference between the size of the two armies?
  - What means did God use to reduce the size of Israel's army at first? How is this significant? May we simply refuse to fight the spiritual battles of the church because we are scared?
  - What other means did God use to reduce the size of the army? What did lapping like a dog indicate about those men who would later fight? What did bowing on one's knees indicate about those who were later sent home?
2. Gideon's encouragement, verses 9-14.

- What was significant about the dream and its interpretation, which Gideon overheard?
- Gideon did not ask for this encouragement; God gave it without his asking. Are there ways in which God also encourages us, at crucial moments, without our asking?

3. The battle, verses 15-25.

- With what weapons did Israel go into battle? What is significant about them? How are they a picture of the spiritual weapons we use today (2 Cor. 10:4)?
- The battle cry that Gideon's army was to shout out is this: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!" Why does it speak of a sword, when there was no literal sword? And what is significant about this battle cry?
- How can it be that a large and strong enemy, which overpowered Israel for many years, is sent running, and made to fight against each other, by this simple battle cry by a small band of unarmed men?
- Using a concordance, look up "Oreb" and "Zeeb." In which other passages of Scripture are these names found? How do those passages relate to the battle that Gideon fought?

4. Questions on the chapter as a whole.

- What does it teach us about the salvation God gives us in Christ?
- What points of application to our lives can be made?

## Week 9

### Judges 8:1-35: Gideon's Judgeship.

The judges did not only deliver Israel from their enemies; they also ruled Israel in the fear of God. Previous verses in Judges have made this point only briefly (Judges 3:11, 3:30); but this chapter gives us more insight into the work of the judge after the enemy was conquered (verses 22-28).

Unfortunately, Gideon began his rule well (verse 23), but soon was led astray into sin (verse 27). He who will judge us rightly, and bestow on us perfect blessedness, must be one who is perfectly righteous, hating sin, and never turning aside from God's law. Gideon was but a shadow of our great Judge, Jesus Christ, in whom we have everlasting rest from our enemies.

We are reminded that we who have the victory in Christ must constantly fight against temptations to be brought again into the bondage of sin. Romans 6 calls us

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to such a life of service to God, being freed from sin's yoke.

1. The conclusion of the battle, verses 1-21.
  - Why is it significant that the men of *Ephraim* chided so sharply with Gideon, verses 1-3? What does Gideon's answer teach us about responding to those who are not happy with us (Proverbs 15:1)?
  - Why did the men of Succoth and Penuel answer Gideon as they did? Was Gideon right in responding to them as he did?
  - What lessons must we learn from the attitude of the men of Ephraim, Succoth, and Penuel, regarding cooperation of saints in the work of the church?
2. The judgeship of Gideon and the conclusion of his life, verses 22-35.

- How did Gideon judge Israel after the defeat of her enemies?
  - Why is it significant that Israel asked for a king, and that Gideon refused to be Israel's king? What does the name "Abimelech" (the name of his son) mean?
  - Of what sins did Gideon become guilty?
  - What lesson are we to learn from Israel's ingratitude toward Gideon, after he died?
3. Questions on the chapter as a whole.
    - What does this chapter teach us about the salvation God gives us in Christ?
    - What other points of application must be made to our lives? ❖

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

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## Psalter Number 234—Psalm 68

by Phil Kalsbeek

This is a Psalm of David. In the Psalm David requests deliverance from his enemies and that they be put to shame. As we "Run and Race" may we also seek deliverance from our enemies and from the sin that cleaves unto us. We can do that only by the power of the Spirit. We sing about that in Psalter #234 verse 4: "In mercy turn and look on me, Thy servant true, Thy chosen one; Let me Thy great salvation see, And strengthen me my course to run."

The theme for the convention this year is "Running the Race." We find this in Hebrews 12:1, 2 where the race we are to run is described. As we are running this race, we are surrounded by a great throng of witnesses who are watching our every move. In this race we are to stay on course and to stay away from the burdens and delays that we come to in this life, such as the pleasures of this life, the lusts of the flesh, and worldly cares and

riches. In this race Christ guides us, strengthens us and keeps us on the path we are to run. By his leadership He leads us to the end.

We as young people so easily stray off the path. We are told to run, but so often we get caught up in all kinds of worldly activities. We constantly are to remind ourselves to run with patience and to seek the kingdom of God as our ending prize and not this wicked world.

As Christ endured a dreadful death on the cross, so we are to fight the world and its worldliness no matter the cost. We ask the Lord's blessing to continue to help us in our race here on this earth. It is our prayer that this year's convention focused on this theme will encourage our young people to "Run the Race." ❖

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

# First Protestant Reformed Church

## Edgerton, Minnesota

by Mr. Al Brummel

In 1936 the Protestant Reformed Mission Committee sent out their first home missionary, Rev. B. Kok. As a fruit of his labors in this area, the congregation at Edgerton was organized on April 11, 1938, with thirteen families committed to starting up a new church. Rev. Wm. Verhil became our first minister, serving from 1938 until his unexpected death in 1942.

For the first years the congregation met in a local community building. They then started work on a church building and parsonage, both of which are still in use today. Most of the work of digging the basements, construction, etc., was done by the men of the group themselves, with completion in 1940 or 1941.

Following the death of Rev. Verhil, Rev. G. Vos served our congregation from 1943-1948 and Rev. P. De Boer from 1948-1953.

A school society was formed not long after the congregation was organized and perhaps before the church building and parsonage were completed. This resulted in our own school being built and completed in time for the fall term of 1950.

In 1953 a very traumatic split in the church took place, decimating the congregation. The church building was kept by the group who left, but the school was retained by those who remained Protestant Reformed. The church services were then held in the school until the community building became available.



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In the fall of 1953, second year seminary student Herman Hanko (now professor emeritus) came to bring the word to us for two months. He has often told the story about how he was the only student available, and it was early in his second semester when the professors told him to take a six week break from his classes and preach in the congregation of Edgerton which urgently needed help. He complained that he only had one sermon and reminded the professors that when he had preached it in class for practice preaching, they didn't even think it was very good. The professors did not accept his excuse and said they would give him some sermon help, but that he would also have to try to keep up with his classroom work by correspondence. He had a double load of being a student and a preacher for that fall. He also tells about how he had to step over legs in front of the group as he preached in the small school room. Rev. Herman Veldman came to be our pastor late in that winter and stayed until 1959. Rev. B. Woudenberg arrived to be our minister in 1960 and stayed until 1965.

In 1962 the group which had left in 1953 disbanded and rented the parsonage and church to the Presbyterians. The matter was once more taken to court and this time it was ruled that we were the rightful owners. It was with much joy and thanksgiving that we moved Rev. and Mrs. Woudenberg into the parsonage. Once again we could worship in our own church building.

Ministers following were Rev. G. Lanting, 1966-1974; Rev. J. Slopsema, 1974-1982; Rev. J. Smith, 1982-1985; Rev. M. De Vries, 1985-1995; Rev. A. Brummel, 1995-1998; Rev. D. Kleyn, 1998-2005; Rev. Dennis Lee 2006-present.

Over the years we have done considerable remodeling of the church building: new siding, windows, kitchen, pews, sound system, and had the pipe organ completely revamped. Much work has also been done in the parsonage.

We have 23 families, with 50 communicant members. Mr. Art Bleyenbergh, now in a nursing home, is the only charter member living, but there are several members who were children at the time of the organization and remember those exciting days of helping out and observing the building of the church and parsonage.

The Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church exists in a small community so as a result we have not had the internal growth that would have occurred if all the children could have stayed and raised their families here. With the exception of the Canadian churches and mission churches, I think all of the congregations in our

denomination have some members who have their roots in Edgerton. Three ministers have come out of our little church: Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. Allen Brummel and Rev. Nathan Brummel. Another son of our congregation, Mr. Heath Bleyenbergh is currently a second year student in our seminary. Rev. Dale Kuiper entered the seminary and went into the ministry following teaching in our school here for a few years. His wife Valerie is an Edgerton native.

Our consistory is made up of three elders and two deacons. Current officebearers are elders—Allen Brummel, Andrew Brummel and Harold Brands. Deacons are Gary Boverhof and Dennis Bleyenbergh.

The Free Christian School continued in operation through the spring of 2004. That fall, with great sadness in the hearts of the congregation, the doors remained closed due to lack of students. We now rejoice and give thanks to our heavenly Father that two teachers have again been hired and the school doors are set to re-open in this fall of 2006 with an enrollment of nine students. To God be the Glory! ❖

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*Al is an elder of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota.*

Letter to the Editor

## Correction

**Dear Sir:**

In the November 15, 2005 issue of the *Beacon Lights*, an article was written about the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa. However, there was an error in that article which is very minor. When Rev. H. C. Hoeksema left Doon, he did not take the call to seminary. He took the call to South Holland, Illinois and after serving there, took the call to Protestant Reformed Seminary. ❖

# Guide Our Thoughts on Immigration

by Scott Van Uffelen

Ever since Betsy Ross penned the *Star Spangled Banner* and the twelve original colonies drafted our Bill of Rights, Americans have demanded that their popularly elected leader(s) uphold the religious freedoms that this great country was founded upon. Are you one of them?

Hopefully you were able to recognize the errors in the above paragraph readily. If not, you are in the “good company” of 60% of America’s students. Recognizing that there are mistakes in the above paragraph is one thing, knowing the correct answers is another. What is Betsy Ross most famous for? Who did write the *Star Spangled Banner*? How many original colonies were there? Who drafted our Nation’s Bill of Rights? Why was it necessary to amend our Constitution ten times immediately after writing it? Do Americans directly vote for all of their leaders? Is there religious freedom in this country? What were the reasons people formed the United States of America (not why they came, but why they formed a nation)? These are all history trivia questions you might argue, yet they are standardized questions that need to be properly answered for those desiring citizenship in this country. Those legally applying for citizenship take a test where these questions, and many more, are asked of them. How many of us could become citizens of our own country if we had to take this test?

Legally we might not be able to become citizens of our own country based upon today’s standards, but, by God’s grace, we do not have to worry about that. Our parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents came to this country to escape economic hardship and religious persecution. They came because America was a land of freedom, a land of opportunity. Sailing under the maternal gaze of a statue in Ellis Island they were welcomed into our country and given the opportunity to make it on their

own. There were hardships here, there was corruption and deceit waiting for them, and there were other economic and political hardships to endure, but they survived through it all. They called America their home and planted themselves, their culture and their faith in our land. Together, with all of the other plantings from abroad, our nation has blossomed and grown on the world scene. Can we now deny that opportunity to anyone else? Have things drastically changed over the past 100 years that makes this impossible?

“But our ancestors came here legally! Those Mexicans are just coming over the border, having babies and stealing our jobs.” There is truth in those commonly heard sentiments, and they do need to be addressed, but other, underlying, sentiments remain our focus in this article as reformed young people. Briefly, in the first place, we need to ground ourselves in a proper historical perspective of the issue. Secondly, we need to honestly identify our true impetus for dissatisfaction. Thirdly, we need to see how we are to view this issue as Christians, and finally, we need to realize that we need to be careful what we wish for in light of all three.

The United States of America is an immigrant nation. The terms “melting pot” and “salad bowl” represent theories that historians have used for years to describe our cultural and ancestral makeup. Why did explorers come to the New World? Who did they find already here? The imperialist nations and explorers were greeted with a land already occupied wherein the inhabitants had little use for the valuable resources that they themselves craved. The European white man came with hungry appetites, diseases and slaves. Mix in with them a little revolutionary spirit, a handful of imperialist countries, a healthy dose of economic and religious persecution, a couple of tyrannical rulers overseas and bake to-

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gether with the concepts of Liberty and Freedom for about 250 years and you get our current situation.

Knowing our history is the easy part. Truly knowing ourselves is another. As Americans we understand what the concepts of Liberty and Justice are supposed to mean. We also appreciate the concept of religious freedom better than others. So why is there dissatisfaction, mainly against the Mexicans, over their immigration into our country? I commonly hear “because they are doing something illegally.” Let us take a look at this statement more closely. As Christians we are supposed to be offended at the breaking of a law and find justice only when laws in place are enforced. That is why we always pay our taxes to our federal government and never try to hide any of our income. That is why we always drive the speed limit and wear our seatbelts while we do so. That is also why we never shoplift, or try to steal time or resources from our employers. It is abnormal for us to be smoking and drinking underage, and never do we use the Internet for improper means. Our hypocrisy may know no bounds but illegality is not the underlying cause for all of the dissatisfaction. The fact of the matter is that “Americans” have preferences for those who they like and will tolerate. It is not an American thing, it is an aspect of our depraved human nature.

As Christians this attitude must never be found among us. Christ does not consider race, culture or skin color for membership within His body and neither should we. If our attitude is anti-Mexican, or even anti-Arab, how do we embrace our evangelism work as a church? We are opposed to them being in “our” country but we would feel comfortable sitting next to them in church for true worship? What about our mission work? We don’t want them coming into our country but we are willing to send a missionary to work among them? This does not make logical sense. By turning to God’s word we are guided in a proper Christian attitude and perspective on this issue. Ezekiel 47:22 immediately comes to mind. The Israelites were given a land rich in resources as part of the promise from the Lord. This land was their land, yet the Lord was informing them that there would be strangers in their midst. Verse 22 instructs the Israelites that these strangers in the land who live among them and have children in their midst were to be received as fellow countrymen that “have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel”. This was an Old Testament picture of the universality of Christ’s church being composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Rejecting them from the Promised Land was akin to attempting to remove

them from God’s grace. Does this verse apply to our situation today? I believe it should: this land is not my land, nor your land, this land is the Lord’s. We are called to be wise stewards of it, to take care of it and to maintain it. Our goal is not an earthly goal of kingdoms and national strength but rather giving glory unto the Lord and to His church.

Knowing our own history and the prophesy of scripture should cause us to caution our own thoughts and words on this issue. Pushing for a country with rights only for the “true Americans” will soon be at the expense of the church. Once America begins to make a check list of those who are worthy to be called a citizen of this land, the tables will be turned on the church, for the church is an intolerant body that undermines the current societal trends of abortions, divorce, gay acceptance, wontonous living and vulgar language. How much longer will reformed persons be tolerated and considered profitable citizens in this land when we reject almost every aspect of it? More startling then is to where could we flee?

As we reflect upon the issue of citizenship in this country, let us not be moved out of fear of the tables being turned on us. We have the comfort and the hope of salvation that transcends any earthly power or situation. Rather, we must let the scriptures guide us in our attitude toward others. We are called to help others, especially those of the household of faith. I am not arguing for a careless disregard for the law, but neither should we argue for the adherence to the law as a facade to our hearts desires and in rejection to the blessings we have received, not earned. May we lean on the Lord to guide us as His servants in the application of this issue and in all of our dealings one with another.

In the days, months and years to come continue to discuss this issue with one another. This article is not intended to give you answers, nor limit your thoughts on this issue. Turn to the Bible to guide you and instruct you on how you are to respond as a pilgrim and stranger yourself here below. May many profitable discussions arise as you continue to see how His word applies to every situation and event in our lives. ❖

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*Scott is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.*

# Watching Daily At My Gates

## The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”  
by Skip Hunter

*Reprinted from August, September, and October, 1997*

### **August 16 Read Psalm 27**

**Psalm 27:13-14** People of God do you have the faith to wait upon Jehovah? In this world in which we want instant gratification of our desires do we know how to wait with patience on God’s way? David said he would never have made it except that he believed in God’s goodness. He knew that his victory was not on this earth because this is not the land of the living but is the valley of the shadow of death. David also knew that the courage he needed came not from his heart but from the hand of God. Waiting upon God. What a hard thing to do. Waiting upon God. What a blessed thought! Let us wait with patience upon Jehovah who cares for us throughout all our life. Sing Psalter 73:5-6.

### **August 17 Read Psalm 28**

**Psalm 28:1-2** David begins this Psalm with prayer. He opens by calling God his rock. If you have been exploring this summer, you may have come across some interesting rocks or rock formations. One fact about these wonders of creation is that your parents and grandparents could have seen them and your children and grandchildren could see them yet if they are not moved or destroyed by man. Rock stands for a long time. But yet because rock can erode, it is only an earthly picture of our heavenly God. We like David can pray to Him with the assurance that He will not be silent toward us. David also confesses that God is a heavenly God. We must pray to Him as such. We may never bring Him down to our level because He is not earthly. Sing Psalter 75:1-2.

### **August 18 Read Ecclesiastes 8-14**

**Psalm 28:3-5** The wicked have a certain end. Of this David is sure. David also knows that his human nature would cause him to attain the wicked’s end if it were not for the grace of God. He passed this knowledge unto his son who wrote the reading for today. Do we like Solomon understand that God will have us give an account for every work that we do? David knew sin, and we know sin as well. Daily we must pray for the needed grace to deliver us from sin and hell. Make that your prayer today. Sing Psalter 75:3.

### **August 19 Read Micah 7:1-7**

**Psalm 28:6** The word blessed means “to speak well of”. It is hard to imagine that we can bless God. But we must because He is the blessed One Who blesses us. Our blessing God is an expression of gratitude for our salvation. David had experienced the answer to his prayer of verses 1-5. He now breaks out in joy for that answer. God’s answer may not always be what we wish to hear, but God’s answer will always be good for us as we confess by saying Romans 8:28. (“And we know that all things work for good to them that love God...”) Sing Psalter 75:4.

### **August 20 Read I Timothy 4:1-11**

**Psalm 28:7** David continues his expression of joy for God’s answer to prayer with a confession of faith. Young people who are contemplating making a public confession of faith before the church, can you make this confession of faith daily? Do you confess by your words and deeds that God is your strength and shield and that it is He that helps you throughout life? You must live your confession daily before men. You must know and be able to sing the songs of Zion in any situation. We read that “out of the heart are the issues of life”. Does your heart rejoice because God makes it glad? If it does that, thank Him often and praise His name whose mercy endureth forever. Sing Psalter 75:5

### **August 21 Read Psalm 28**

**Psalm 28:8-9** David’s confession of faith which started out personal now becomes a confession for the church. Not only does he confess that Jehovah is his strength, but he also confesses that He is the strength for all those who have been chosen from eternity to be the people of God. David now prays for the salvation of all of God’s people. Is this your prayer, people of God? Is this your desire? Do you wish the communion of saints with all the saints in heaven? Do you show that by your actions on this earth? How about you, children and young people, what are your attitudes to those children and young people whom *GOD* has placed around you? Do you love every one of them? If you do, pray for them; if you do not, pray that God will give you the grace to love all the saints. Sing Psalter 75:6.

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## August 22 Read Psalm 29

**Psalm 29:1-2** There are four commands in these two verses. Three of them are the same, and the fourth has the same idea. We are called to give unto the Lord. While this giving does not specifically mention offerings the idea is there, I believe. First of all David makes it clear that the mighty are to give unto God. This does not exclude the lowly but it specifically includes the mighty. Who are these mighty? They are anyone God has endowed with gifts in this life. It may be riches, intellect, gifts in the church, or any other gift God has given us in an extra measure. What are we to give? We are to give to God the glory due to His name. This may be by singing, by offerings, by doing our work to his glory, or by doing anything else to His honor. The last command is more specific. We are to worship Jehovah. The word worship means “to bow the knee toward”. We must bow in humble adoration toward God. Let us think about this as we look toward the Lord’s Day. Sing Psalter 76:1.

## August 23 Read Isaiah 35

**Psalm 29:3-5** The next three verses tells us something of whom we worship. Each of these verses mentions the voice of Jehovah and its majesty. Who among us cannot remember someone whose voice has a nice timber to it. When God speaks however, something happens! Something is moved or is broken. He speaks and a mighty rushing wind causes an effect on the earth. He speaks and war breaks out in the nations. It is to that voice that we must bow in worship to our heavenly Father. God speaks in many ways. Are we listening to His voice? Do we see what is happening in the world around us? Are we taking notice of what happens? God is speaking. Are we listening? Sing Psalter 76:2.

## August 24 Read Revelation 8:1-13

**Psalm 29:6-9** These four verses continue the thought of the previous three. It speaks of the effects caused by Jehovah’s voice. These effects are far encompassing. Even the birth of the animals are controlled by his voice. His voice causes things to happen in the deepest forest. David is teaching us about the omnipresence of our God. Do we confess this attribute of His? Are we conscious that each action is caused by a God who can speak and it comes to pass? What is our reaction to the voice of Jehovah? The last part of verse nine tells us what it should be. We must speak of His glory concerning all that happens on this earth. This is hard to do sometimes. We do not want to give glory to God for a wild storm. We want to take credit for our accomplishments. We must not do that. We must give God the glory for all things are His and are under the control of His majestic voice! Sing Psalter 76:3.

## August 25 Read Psalm 29

**Psalm 29:10-11** In closing this Psalm, David tells us that our mighty God is gracious to His people. Because He is

our king, He rules us by His sovereign power. We need not worry about what may happen. He will care for us. He gives to us the strength which sustains us in any circumstance. Strength in time of our need is His gracious gift to His people. He also blesses us with peace. We can have peace on this earth even when it is shaking around us. Why? Because it is Jehovah’s voice which causes it to shake. We will have peace in heaven when He takes us through death or the second coming of Christ. This is a blessed peace. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 76:4.

## August 26 Read Psalm 30

**Psalm 30:1-2** The title to this Psalm gives to us the information of David’s devotion to God. Even though he was dedicating his own house he gives to God glory. He realizes his ascent to being king of Israel was not his own doing but the Lord’s. He knows that if it were not for Jehovah’s help he would have been defeated by his enemies. Is this our reaction to success in this life? Do we give God all the credit, or are we like Nebuchadnezzar saying, “Is this not great Babylon that I have built...?” David also confesses his sin on such an occasion. This, too, must be our prayer in all that we do. Our sins rise up against us daily; only God can take them away. Give to us a humble heart O Lord in the midst of this world. Sing Psalter 77:1 and 78:1.

## August 27 Read Luke 23:32-43

**Psalm 30:3-4** Facing death the elect thief on the cross found forgiveness in Christ. He was assured that he would spend eternity in heaven. David had this confidence as well. He knew that death was not the end for him. He knew that there was a better life awaiting him. Oh, he could not know it as we do with our full revelation of Scripture. He reminds the church that the redeemed have a reason to sing. They can sing because they are the redeemed. Their song must be the thanksgiving for the holiness of God. The reprobate cannot sing with this assurance. Their singing just sends them further and further into hell. We must sing often, and we must sing only songs which glorify God for our salvation. Sing Psalter 77:2 and 78:2.

## August 28 Read Revelation 21:1-7

**Psalm 30:5-6** The reason for our singing can be found in verse five. We sing because our God is full of lovingkindness. We sing because of his grace which is found in the word favor in verse five. We may have sorrows in this life. Over and over Scripture testifies of the afflictions of the righteous. But when the long night of life on this earth is past, joy comes with our entrance into heaven. God inspired David to write these words. David had a glimpse of the glory that would be his and ours. He realized that in all his riches he had nothing without God. Is this our confession? Do we live that confession? Or are we like the rich fool? Think about it. Pray about it. Live your confession. Sing Psalter 78:3.

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### **August 29 Read Acts 10:1-8**

**Psalm 30:7-8** David continues in this prayer to address the greatness of God. Like Cornelius he knew that prayer was the way to address God with his concerns. David realized that at times because of his sins, God's favor was taken from him. David asked for deliverance and like Cornelius his prayers were answered. The word supplication means an asking. We must ask God for the things he has promised to give us. We ask them not because God wants to make us beg, but rather we ask because it is a means of thankfulness to enter into prayer. It is only unto God to whom we must and can go in time of trouble. Let us bow on our knees in prayer often asking Him for those blessing He is pleased to give us. Sing Psalter 77:3 and 79:1.

### **August 30 Read Luke 18:1-8**

**Psalm 30:9-10** By way of the parable which we read today, Christ taught his people to pray often. He taught them that God was more righteous than any earthly judge and would answer our prayers in His time. David knew that truth as well. David, like Moses, called upon God's promise of eternal life as he prayed for help. He knew that only in the way of salvation from sin would he find peace with God.

He wanted that peace. Is this our desire? Do we want the peace that forgiveness from sin brings? Do we call on God often for such peace? Pray, people of God, and pray often for that peace. Sing Psalter 77:4 and 79:2

### **August 31 Read Psalm 30**

**Psalm 30:11-12** David's prayer is finished with words of joy. He has gone through God-ordained afflictions, and now he participates in God-provided joy. Through the way of sin's forgiveness, David has come to a time of gladness. But that gladness has one object. That object is, of course, to praise his redeemer's name. He can not be silent. He cannot attend the congregation of elect in the temple and just watch. No, David must break forth into singing in gratitude for salvation from his sins. Are you planning to sing with your whole being in church today, people of God? Young people, what are you doing during the songs? Are you lifting your voices in glad adoration of your Savior? If you have trouble opening your mouth in church, imagine what it would be like not to have the opportunity in hell. Singing is the God-commanded way of thankfulness for the believer. Therefore let us sing and give praise to His Holy Name whose mercies endure forever! Sing Psalter 77:5 and 79:3.

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# Watching Daily At My Gates

## **The Song of Zion**

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

by John Huizenga

*Psalm 31 “This song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung.” Spurgeon*

### **September 1 Read Psalm 31:1 & Psalter 80:1**

We can not know the great power and love of our sovereign covenant God if we don't know the greatness of our sins and miseries. Once again we find David in the troubles and distresses of this life which lead to God through Christ. Are you distressed with family troubles, great loss, money problems, or discontent with your lot in life? Do these things weaken your faith and leave you miserable? Does it seem as though the ungodly neighbor is more happy and content than you? May God so work in your heart by the Spirit that you turn to God with these words of David every day as you

walk as a child of God with your Creator and Redeemer. Shame is experienced when we are found wandering away from God in pursuit of our own self fulfillment and lust. God delivers His people from shame in “His righteousness,” i.e. His covenant faithfulness in which He never departs from His eternal plan to save. Sing the Psalter.

### **September 2 Read Psalm 31:2 & Psalter 80:2; 82:1**

David uses language that demonstrates familiarity with God. He knows God as a Friend. He knows God is exalted infinitely above him, yet he does not hesitate to request that God as it were, stoop down and listen to his plea like a child to his father. He prays that God would be to him a rock and a house. God is often called a rock in the Psalms, but we need to experience what this means. David wants to experience security and contentment in God. Fear has taken hold of him, he is weak and unable to go on. Every one of us has

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reason for such distress when we realize how far short we fall in our love and obedience to God. Meditate today upon your sins and pray this prayer of David. Sing the Psalter.

**September 3 Read Psalm 31:3,4 & Psalter 80:3; 82:2**

Notice the titles of the two Psalters from which we are singing: “God Our Resort in Trouble” & “Security in God.” These titles reflect the theme of the first 18 verses of Psalm 31 and our devotions through the next week. We will see how David’s persistent request in time of need is turned into praise of God’s goodness. While seeking security in God, David brings before God various details and truths about his covenant life with God. In the verses we consider today David recalls the truth that God is his rock and fortress. There are many things that we know about God also, but that does not mean our feelings and life reflect this knowledge. We need to pray to God as we know Him, and seek the work of God in our heart to open our eyes to Him. God is pleased to use the meditations of His people to work assurance of salvation and covenant fellowship. Sing the Psalter.

**September 4 Read Psalm 31:5 & Psalter 80:4**

Do you give over your life to Jehovah? This is something you must do continually. By nature we easily imagine that success in school, work, dating, friends, or marriage depends upon our own abilities and we have no need of help from the outside. Though one may prosper in earthly things, one really has not begun to live until he commends his life to God in all things. It is not enough to depend upon our own abilities until we fail, and then, as a last resort, hand over our messed up life to God. It is sometimes easier to commit our life to God after we have utterly failed and can do nothing else, but a godly walk requires that we learn to commend our lives each moment of the day. Knowing that God has washed away our sins, we know that the afflictions we face will draw us near to God, we know that God will bring a suitable marriage partner too in the time appointed or give grace to live as a single. Above all when we commend our lives daily, we will be ready to commend our life to God in death. Sing the Psalter.

**September 5 Read Psalm 31:6, 7 & Psalter 80:5**

Ungodly men thrive on lies as they seek to advance themselves in life. We all face the great temptation to present a false image of ourselves to gain attention and friends. Are you attracted to the popular people who in reality are putting on a big show? Many will say they want to be friends with people who are honest and true, but they will not seek God and friends who love God in whom alone is truth. These people love the false. The child of God hates those who love lying vanities. Separate yourselves from the crowd that hovers around the deadly fumes of lying vanities and put your trust in the Lord. Meditate upon His word. Have fellowship with His people. Stamp out the fires of lying when it appears in your life and friends. In God and His mercy you will find happiness and joy. Sing the Psalter.

**September 6 Psalm 31:7, 8 & Psalter 80:6**

Did you find happiness and joy in God’s mercy yesterday? By nature each one of us has been wooed by Satan, forsaken God, and boarded the train headed for the concentration camp of Satan—hell. By nature our pride lifts us up so that we are willing to forsake the good purpose of God for us in favor of our own idea of happiness in the thrills of this world. An enemy has never had better hold of his captives than the devil with man. Man has no hope of escaping by himself, because he does not want to escape and is even dead in sin and powerless to escape should he want to. Neither does God have any obligation to rescue man. God is perfectly just in sending us with haste to eternal damnation. This truth is gloomy and terrifying indeed. The only hope is God’s mercy; His desire to deliver and reveal His glory and power in doing so. He comes in the power of His Spirit to open our eyes and make us alive to see our plight. Do you see? Sing the Psalter.

**September 7 Psalm 31:9, 10 and Psalter 80:7**

Who is God? We must all have a ready and accurate answer. So many people who may even call themselves Christians think of God as a being who is more powerful than the individual man and influences man, but does not have sovereign control and leaves the destiny of man in a large degree to man himself. The role of Jesus in salvation is minimized to his being a good example. Their concept of salvation is based on man’s ability to direct the affairs of the world. But God Himself makes very clear what He wants man to know. God is the one who has eternally decreed that man fall into the rebellion and death from which He would save. Who is God? He is the Creator of all things, and known by the children of God from day to day as the One who is constantly delivering us from our guilt and shame. He is our Savior. Sing the Psalter “God Our Resort in Trouble.”

**September 8 Read Psalm 31:11-13 and Psalter 80:8**

The way in which we walk in covenant friendship with God is not bustling with friends who want to include you in their fun all the time. God often makes our way lonely from an earthly point of view in order to impress upon us the richness of friendship with God. David is crushed under the burden of his sin and afflictions and human companions have forsaken him. Jesus experienced dismay of friends who turned away when the disciples fled and Peter denied him. Job’s friends turned against him when they came with their criticisms. Though earthly friends are important, God uses hard times to separate us from ungodly friends and strengthen our bond with Christ who never forsakes His own. Sing the Psalter.

**September 9 Read Psalm 31:14, 15 and Psalter 80:9**

“My times are in thy hand” sang David. These words are a most beautiful expression of God’s providence, a doctrine cherished by every believer and strongly defended by the

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Reformers in the Canon's of Dordt Fifth Head of Doctrine. God upholds every sparrow, He sends hurricanes and tornadoes, He maintains life of every form, and every believer confesses that every aspect of his or her life is in the hand of God. There are no "accidents" that just happen by cold chance. Statistics may determine your chance of getting hit by lightning or living to be 100, but statistics only reveal the constant work of God in and through the means He has established to work out His eternal plan. God is intently playing the instrument of your life in the grand orchestra of the universe for His glory and your salvation. Submit to God and pray that He will show you the joy of salvation. Sing the Psalter.

**September 10 Read Psalm 31:15, 16 and Psalter 80:10**

"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant," sang David, another beautiful desire placed by God in the hearts of His children. This desire and its fulfillment is the fruit of "serious repentance" as we read in the Canons, Fifth Head Article 5. Speaking of the times when the saints fall into sin, we read in the Canons, "By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them." Take the time now or sometime today to meditate upon the Fifth Head of the Canons and Rejection of Errors in the back of your Psalter. Sing the Psalter.

**September 11 Read Psalm 31:17 and Psalter 80:11**

Shame overwhelms when the hope which we defend and upon which we govern our actions and words and direct our entire life, is shattered and we stand exposed and naked to all who laugh at our foolishness. We hope in God who has revealed Himself and the way of salvation in His Word. We struggle our whole life to flee the life of sin which God forbids but the world enjoys. We strive to crucify our pride and give God all the glory. We believe God's promise of life with Him in heavenly glory after death. The world laughs and says, "this life is all there is, get all you can now or you will forever miss out on life." God gives us a taste of heavenly bliss now through the preaching of His Word and a life of obedience, but when times of doubt and sin overwhelm, the fear of shame may be strong. The world's trust in science often challenges our hope in order to bring us to shame. We can be certain that God's work will never come to naught. May we ever call upon God that we may never be ashamed. Sing the Psalter.

**September 12 Read Psalm 31:18 and Psalter 80:12**

Lying lips surrounded David with their incessant blather, they surrounded Christ as he taught in the cities and died on the cross, and they surround us today. The discontented factory worker spews forth vulgarities in every sentence, the

scientist relentlessly scours God from every discovery, the "theologians" never give up trying to make myths of God's Word. God speaks in all creation and from the pulpit "I AM" and man responds "He is not, I am." Lying lips; do you hear them and cry out to God that He silence them, or are you listening to them with indifference or even interest? Listen for lying lips today and pray each time you hear them, "Let the lying lips be put to silence." Watch your own lips too that they join not in the grievous speech against the righteous. Sing the Psalter.

**September 13 Read Psalm 31:19 and Psalter 81:1**

The new Psalter number sets forth the tones of praise which always follow the cries of God's people in distress. God answered David's prayer in such a way that David saw the riches of God's goodness. Sin—Deliverance—Gratitude. This is the pattern of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is the pattern of the Psalms. This is the pattern of life. The better we know this pattern, the closer will be our walk with God. God is pleased to show us the riches of His goodness in the way of the troubles and distress of life which He sends. When you find yourself walking the valley of the shadow of death, you know what to do: pour out your heart to God, read His word, listen to His word in church. He will reveal to you something that is not revealed to the ungodly. He will reveal not only that He is good in himself, but also the effect of His goodness, i.e. the salvation wrought by Christ and tasted here on earth. Sing the Psalter.

**September 14 Read Psalm 31:20 and Psalter 81:2**

What are the riches of God's goodness? He hides us in the secret of His presence. The idea here is that He gives His people a share in His own hidden life. He brings them into covenant friendship; into the sphere of His fellowship, a region where the brightness of His glory shines from His face in Christ, a region into which the ungodly are unable to go. Presently we find this secret sphere of God's presence in the hearing of God's Word which is wisdom to God's people but foolishness to the ungodly. In this sphere we have peace which can never be quenched by the pride of man and the strife of tongues. Do you long for the day when we enter into eternal life with God, being forever in His presence? Seek the shelter of God's grace whenever the pride of man and the strife of tongues penetrate your life. Sing the Psalter.

**September 15 Read Psalm 31:21,22 and Psalter 81:3**

These verses tell us about another of God's riches—His marvelous kindness. In the Psalter we sing, "His love beyond compare." David came to know the love of God through the experience of distress. God's love is at the heart of all the riches of His goodness. When David thought about the goodness of God, he was reminded of his weakness. Even though he had felt that he had failed and was cut off from before God's eyes, God did not forsake him. God loves his elect people and will never forsake them. Though we often speak words of foolishness in our haste and weak faith, God

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hears us in Christ. Let us also bless Jehovah for his steadfast covenant love. Sing the Psalter.

**September 16 Read Psalm 31:23, 24 and Psalter 81:4**

At the close of this Psalm, David exhorts the saints to love Jehovah and be of good courage. What a marvelous conclusion to a Psalm which began with sorrow and shame. God sovereignly works this love in our heart by means of sin and deliverance. We do not love God blindly, we love in faith knowing all that God has done for us. We read in 1John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." David recognizes the love of God in the doctrine of God's providence. God preserves those whom He has cleansed in Christ. In preserving His people, God rewards the proud doers with their just destruction. Thus a clear knowledge of the doctrine of reprobation which serves the doctrines of election and preservation is necessary for our love for God. May you also find courage in the wonderful works of God. Sing the Psalter.

**September 17 Read Psalm 32:1, 2 and Psalter 83:1**

Psalm 1 speaks of blessedness in a godly walk, and the Psalm we begin testifies of a blessedness that comes after being forgiven an ungodly walk. The sin of David which was covered was his sin with Bathsheba and of killing Uriah. David wrote Psalm 51 *before* he confesses his sin and experienced terrible guilt, but he wrote this Psalm after the heavy burden was lifted from his shoulders. God uses this Psalm in Romans 4:6-7 to teach us that the great blessedness experienced by David comes to the child of God in the way of knowing the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not of our own works. This was a favorite Psalm for Augustine who also was delivered of great sin. Martin Luther also expressed his great delight and peace found in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. May you also know the happiness of forgiveness by God in this day. Sing the Psalter.

**September 18 Read Psalm 32:3-5 and Psalter 83:2**

Guilty silence, what a miserable condition. We sin against someone, we know it, but we are too proud to admit it. We feign joy and peace, we may even speak and talk freely with the one against whom we have sinned, but a wall stands between us and true fellowship is virtually silent. Meanwhile inside we are being ripped violently apart. Though outwardly silent about his guilt, David roared inside and his strength was wasted; all because he was proud and wanted to live in his sin. Left to ourselves, our pride would bring us to death. In grace God sent Nathan the prophet to bring the sharp word of God which cut his festering sore and let the poison of his unconfessed sin drain out. Confession of sin is the only way to experiencing the blessed forgiveness of God. Pray that God would crush our pride and open our hearts to confession of sin. Sing the Psalter.

**September 19 Read Psalm 32:6, 7 and Psalter 83:3**

The child of God who desires covenant fellowship with God must never procrastinate to enter into that fellowship in all its fullness. David's misery only increased when he refrained from seeking God's forgiveness. It is very foolish to seek your own pleasure while you are healthy and strong and wait until you are in desperate need before seeking God. God is near right now as you meditate upon this portion of God's word. He is near in the preaching. May God open our eyes to see the great blessedness we receive when we confess our sins immediately. God saves His people by means of His presence in the preaching of His Word. Woe is he from whom God removes the preaching of His Word. Seek Him diligently now while He may be found. Sing the Psalter.

**September 20 Read Psalm 32:8, 9 and Psalter 84:1**

The doctrines of sovereign grace are often criticized as doctrines which force men to obey God so that men become machines and not willing joyful followers of Christ. God's sovereign power over us, however, works in such a way that we are given a new heart and made willing followers of Christ. Yet the old man of sin remains to make us sluggish and ignorant. Except God constantly and graciously guide and teach us, we would become ignorant and stubborn like a mule. Let us be diligent to study God's word that we might not be ignorant of God's marvelous grace. We can not expect to be found in heaven when we wander in beastly ignorance and indifference to the preaching of God's word. Sing the Psalter.

**September 21 Read Psalm 32:10, 11 and Psalter 84:2**

Under God's gracious guidance, His mercy shall compass us about. This means that when we walk in obedience to God through the trials in our lives, God will always be present and ready to lift us out of our miseries. Don't imagine that a godly walk, due to the demands of God which are contrary to our sinful nature, is a way of greater sorrow than a walk in our own sinful desires. We have sorrow because we know our sin, but when we strive to walk in obedience, we will always be near unto God's word, and the consciousness of God's mercy will quickly restore the joy of our heart when we fall. The ungodly try to cover up sorrow with more pleasure. They may appear happy, but it is only a mask. Those who are cleansed in the blood of Christ have every reason to rejoice. May this be a day of joy for you. Sing the Psalter.

**September 22 Read Psalm 33:1-3 and Psalter 85:1**

Praise is comely, i.e. beautiful and suitable for the righteous. You and I could do nothing better than praise Jehovah. How must we praise God? With our voice moved by our love for God. Musical instruments in themselves do not praise God except they help train your voice to lift up the best music possible. Our love for God, not music, must inspire us to sing. Highest praise comes from the lips of the godly saint who sings from the heart without the aid of

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musical instruments. Sing as loudly as you can without distorting the quality of your voice. Sing a new song. A new song does not mean a different song, but it is a song sung with zeal that is newly inspired by a deeper knowledge of God. Take the time to learn the music of this Psalter and so meditate upon the words that you can sing it joyfully from the heart without musical accompaniment.

**September 23 Read Psalm 33:4, 5 and Psalter 85:2**

We sing praises to Jehovah because His goodness fills the earth. The word of Jehovah is in the Bible, and also includes the entire decree of God's counsel according to which He created all things and governs them for the salvation of His people. In all of His words and works, God is good. We live in a world in which lying, pain, hate, and distress bring sadness and death, but God loves truth and lives in eternal bliss. All the scientific wonders and history of the earth reveal His goodness. Even sin and its terrible effects on the world reveal God's goodness because it is the means whereby God reveals the fullness of His grace to His people. We have much reason to praise God. Show forth His praise as you sing the Psalter.

**September 24 Read Psalm 33:6, 7 and Psalter 85:3**

We sing praise to Jehovah because He has created all the wonders of this world and the universe. The Word of God is Christ (John 1) and His Breath often refers to the Holy Spirit. Thus we praise the triune God. The very existence of every atom and the energy and life within the living creature is upheld each moment by God. He spoke and the massive stars and galaxies of the universe came into existence. If you stand by an ocean you can see the curve of the earth and it appears as though the water is in a big pile. God holds the water in place by the mysterious force of gravity which He has created and upholds every moment of the day. We must remember that God continues to uphold the creation which He created for this too is a reason to sing praise to our God. Sing the Psalter.

**September 25 Read Psalm 33:8-9 and Psalter 86:1**

This Psalm of praise began with an exhortation to praise God and gave reason for praise in the goodness of God and the wonder of creation and preservation of that creation. In the section covered by Psalter 86 everyone in the world is exhorted to stand in awe of and fear God for His providence and grace toward His people. The God who gathers His people to be with Him in heaven has created the world to accomplish this purpose. Because the ungodly hate this fact and seek ever to erase it from their minds, God declares it in His word so that they are unable to hide from God. The doctrine of providence causes the ungodly to tremble, but makes the godly lift up their hearts in praise. Do you find peace and joy in the doctrine of God's providence? Meditate upon this doctrine today and sing the Psalm.

**September 26 Read Psalm 33:10, 11 and Psalter 86:2**

It is very common today to find people who confess faith in God and His salvation in Christ, but deny that His will and plan for them and the world never changes. They do this because they want man to have some control. Some who see the clear language of God's sovereignty in Scripture say God sovereignly decided in His counsel to give man a will that is free to choose Christ if he wants. But God makes it plain that even though man has a will and nations make counsel to do this or that, it means nothing as far as the goal and purpose of man is concerned. God's plan, His eternal and sovereign good pleasure, His counsel according to which He has created all things and governs them stands certain forever. Nothing which He has created will interfere and change it. Blessed are we who belong to God! Sing the Psalter.

**September 27 Read Psalm 33:12 and Psalter 86:3**

Indeed the eternal counsel of God is reason for praise! We can be at peace knowing that everything is in God's hands. The world is so big and so many things are happening every day. We watch developments in the nations and peoples of the world, we stand helpless when denominations of churches slip into apostasy, we fear the power of the world to influence our churches and persecute the faithful. But God is in control of every event and heart of man in the world. Woe is he whose God is not Jehovah, whose god is evolution and the "forces of nature," whose god is man. But we belong to the God who created all things and governs all things for our salvation and to His glory. Blessed indeed are we when we remain near unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

**September 28 Read Psalm 33:13-15 and Psalter 87:1**

The psalmist sets forth yet another reason to praise God: His omniscience and omnipresence, doctrines which comfort God's people in the midst of an ungodly world. Jehovah is exalted above all that is created and looks down upon man which he has placed on earth to care for the earth and live in obedience to Him in love. He gave to man a mind and body suited for His service. But what does He see? We know that God is angry with man who has forsaken Jehovah and serves himself in pride and rebellion. Remember, God is also watching your every move. What does God see when he looks at you and considers your works? Does he see a humble and repentant sinner who hates his sin? Does he see one who seeks a refuge in Christ? Do not look to man for your salvation, come to Christ alone that your works may be seen in Him. Sing the Psalter.

**September 29 Read Psalm 33:16-19 and Psalter 87:2**

Does not a king depend upon his army to deliver the kingdom from the invading enemy? Does not a man depend upon his strength to fight off the foe? Would not a horse be invaluable to escape from danger? Human strength and physi-

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cal power may preserve earthly life for a time, but the preservation of life in time itself only brings every man closer to death. Forget earthly strength. Behold, look over here, look at Jehovah who rules over all. His eye is on those that fear Him and hope in His mercy. His goal and His aim in all things is His glory in their salvation. Devote all your attention to that which is important: a right knowledge of God and His counsel. He is gathering His church. Are you busy in that work? Go to God in prayer and ask how He might use you and show you His great salvation. Sing the Psalter.

**September 30 Read Psalm 33:20-22 and Psalter 87:3**

Above all things, the child of God seeks God's mercy. All the virtues and truths about God's glory, righteousness,

power, and providence bring fear to the sinner apart from the assurance of God's mercy revealed in Christ. It is important that we know God as our help and shield. It is important to know God and put our trust in Him. In all our spiritual growing and hearing God's word, we must always pray, "Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee." Our hope is rooted in our faith which is given to us by God. Our hope grows as we grow in our knowledge of God. We must seek to know God's mercy revealed to us in Christ with every particle of hope that we have. Then we live in peace, our heart shall rejoice, and we will render the praise due unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

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# Watching Daily At My Gates

**The Song of Zion**

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"

by John Huizenga

**Psalm 34-36 Psalter Numbers 90-94**

*Note: Psalm 34 is an acrostic Psalm, meaning that each verse in the Hebrew language began with the next letter of the alphabet. This made it easier to memorize the psalm.*

**October 1 Read Psalm 34;1 Samuel 21:10-22:2 and the titles of Psalters 88-91**

Each day we do foolish things in the weakness of our faith; each day the grace of God toward us is revealed even more. David wrote Psalm 34 after the terrifying experience of being taken before Abimelech ("Father King") Achish. He had put his trust in the strength of a wicked king instead of God and nearly perished because of it. David escaped by his quick thinking and willingness to degrade himself, but in the Psalm he acknowledges God as his sole deliverer. He knew he had been foolish, but he does not parade his sins before others. Rather, he dwells on the grace and power of God to deliver him and instructs us to put our trust in God always. Pray for the grace which strengthens us to flee from the use of our own wisdom for our glory, and may we seek to give God all the glory. Sing the Psalter.

**October 2 Read Psalm 34:1,2; Psalter 90:1; 2Cor 10:12-18; 1 Cor. 1:28-31; Jer. 9:23,24**

Sinful man loves more than anything to boast about himself. Listen to children on the playground, listen to the poor, listen to the wealthy businessmen making new acquaintances, they are all ready to "one up" the other. Repentance and conversion by the grace of God turns us around to face the other direction. The new man in Christ seeks to boast not in himself, but in another, i.e. God. To boast in another is not at all what we want to do by nature. Do you boast in the LORD? It does not mean that we boast about how well we memorize Scripture, understand intricate doctrine, or all the happiness and material success God gives to us. Proper boasting in the LORD is always a very humbling experience. When we boast in the LORD, we confess we are saved by grace alone. We boast in our knowledge of God - a knowledge of our salvation from death by "the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." Sing the Psalter.

**October 3 Read Psalm 34: 1-4; Psalter 88:1 & 90:2;**

Boasting in yourself will drive friends away; boasting in God brings unity among believers. After being delivered

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from Achish, David fled to the cave of Adullam and all who were in distress came unto him and David became a captain over them. As they gathered around him in the dark cave, David met their downcast eyes with a wonderful call to praise and magnify God together. We are united together in Christ. Christ suffered the wrath of God under the burden of our sins, He cried unto Jehovah and God delivered Him from all His fears. Each day we must read God's Word and hear the gospel. We must hear Christ say, "O magnify Jehovah with me." Pray that God may show you the wonder of His grace each day so that you desire to be with God's people in church to sing praises to God. Sing the Psalter.

**October 4 Read Psalm 34:5-6 & Psalter 90:3; Isaiah 60:1-5**

You can be sure that the tired men listening to David in the cave had gloom in their face. David's face was beaming, and God would use him to make the faces of his men shine too. All hope must be found in God alone. Men of old looked unto God and His glory was reflected in them. Isaiah points us to Christ who brings light that never fades to every believer. Did you wake up this morning with gloom on your face? Are you distressed? Turn away from the troubles and trials of this life and look to God. He is working all things for your salvation and true knowledge of Him. By nature we are dead in sin and worthy of eternal hell, but God in his lovingkindness has chosen His people to eternal life. May the light of God's glory in Christ drive away the gloom from your face today. Sing the Psalter.

**October 5 Read Psalm 34: 7, 8 & Psalter 88:2, & 90:4; 2 Kings 6:15-17**

David continues to encourage his men with the word of God as they hide with him in the cave. People of God, are you hiding in a cave from those who threaten you? Turn to God's Word. Don't gulp down sections without trying to understand and taste them. Savor God's Word. Distinguish its different flavors. Pray that your eyes may be enlightened as Jonathan was with a taste of honey. Pray that you may see the Angel of Jehovah encamped round about you. Elisha and his servant saw the Angel of Jehovah in the form of flaming chariots all around. Christ sends His Spirit to surround us with His protecting presence. As a shepherd He protects every one of His sheep and will bring them to glory. Pray to God that you might taste and see the goodness of God and be strengthened in courage for today. Sing the Psalter.

**October 6 Read Psalm 34:9, 10 & Psalter 90:5 & 88:3; Isaiah 55**

If you seek money, you will never have enough. If you seek health, you will never be healthy enough. If you seek an attractive appearance, you will never be attractive enough. If you seek fast cars, you will never find one fast enough. But, "they that seek the LORD shall not want any good

thing." When you seek to love Jehovah with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, you will always be satisfied with the abundance of His grace. Only in God can any man or woman be content. Are you content, or do you pine away for the many things which you think you need but can not have? God knows what is good for you and gives these things in abundance. Pray for contentment for "godliness with contentment is great gain." Sing the Psalter.

**October 7 Read Psalm 34:11, 12 & Psalter 90:6; Job 27**

The fear of Jehovah is at the heart of godly contentment. But how do we fear Jehovah? David comes as a teacher to children with clear and easy to understand instruction. He comes with the tender love of a father. He catches their attention with the rhetorical question, "who wants to live in the enjoyment of happiness?" All men seek happiness, but why is it then, that so few find it? It is because they seek every way to happiness except obedience to God. The fear of Jehovah is happiness and contentment in this life. Are you attentive to this Word of God? Does the title of Psalter 89 catch your attention? Pray for the faith of a child that you may sit at the edge of your chair eager to hear the words of Christ our Teacher. Sing the Psalter.

**October 8 Read Psalm 34:13, 14 & Psalter 89:2; 90:7; 1 Peter 3:8-12**

Will lying relieve you of distress and trouble? Will selfish love for yourself at the expense of others bring happiness? Lying and doing evil lead further into despair and misery. Watch what you say. Tell the truth. Let your tongue be a powerful instrument to build one up, not cut someone down. Guile is subtle and tricky talk. If you speak what is good, you have no need to use subtle language. Do you sense an evil situation developing in your conversation with others or in the thoughts of your mind? Depart from it. Walk away, pray to God for strength. Spend your energy seeking peace. Make peace your goal and pursue it without looking to either side or backwards to see what others are thinking or saying about you. Don't mind your hurt ego, mind your own business, the business of the believer, the pursuit of peace. All this we can do by faith alone in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

**October 9 Read Psalm 34:15, 16 & Psalter 89:3, 91:1; Luke 12:1-12**

Psalter 91 picks up on a section of David's instruction which speaks of the safety of believers under the watchful eye of God. Knowing that God protects us is also important for us to understand if we are to have happiness in this life. God watches you as if you were the only one in the world to watch. He preserves you in the path of righteousness. When the way appears to be dark and you see danger all around, God is near to hear your prayers as well. When it seems as though the wicked enjoy their life of wickedness and re-

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ceive no punishment of God, we must remember that God's face is against them. Though they set up monuments in their name, death will overcome them and they will be forgotten in this earth and forever. But God will not forget even a sparrow which falls to the ground, and even more so will he remember His people. Sing the Psalter.

**October 10 Read Psalm 34:17, 18; Psalter 89:3; 91:2; Luke 15**

God is near unto us at the times when we feel like He is far away. When our boasting heart is crushed, when our zest for life is gone; when we fall into sin and try to cover things up; when we begin to search for life and happiness in the world outside the fold of Christ and find ourselves alone and miserable like the prodigal son, God is very near watching and is in the process of turning us back. God brings us low because the high road we want to travel by nature leads to hell. In guilt we do not want to lift our eyes to God, but God will have us know His love and mercy. Thank God and praise Him for His lovingkindness and steadfast covenant faithfulness. Sing the Psalter.

**October 11 Read Psalm 34:19, 20; Psalter 89:4, 91:3; 2 Timothy 3**

If we think that the doctrine of God's providence means that God will shield us from every danger and temptation, we are mistaken. The Christian must face head on the fact that the afflictions of the righteous are many. The men who came to David at the cave of Adullam must understand that the way to his God ordained place on the throne of Israel would not be easy. No matter how many afflictions there are, however, God will deliver from every last one. Not one bone will be broken. This does not mean we will never suffer broken bones physically. It means that the new man in Christ will never be destroyed. The body of Christ never suffered a broken bone, even so, the strength of church will never be broken. Not one of her members will be lost. Sing the Psalter.

**October 12 Read Psalm 34:21; Psalter 89:5; 91:4; Esther 7**

In contrast to the righteous who are protected by the righteousness of Christ, the wicked are destroyed by their own wickedness. This truth is made graphically clear in the story of Esther. Haman hated the righteous. He loved schemes of treachery. But God in His wisdom and power turned all his schemes against him for his own destruction. So it is on a grand scale with Satan. He was lifted up in pride against God and determined to take the whole creation with him, but his actions were only part of God's eternal counsel to bring His people into heaven. We need not fret over the terrible things which wicked man does. Let us wait on Jehovah and see how He delivers His people. Sing the Psalter.

**October 13 Read Psalm 34:22; Psalter 89:5; 91:5; Heidelberg Catechism LD 5**

Jehovah redeems His servants. Redemption is that aspect of our salvation and preservation that reminds us of our guilt and worthiness to be punished. In ourselves, we are not innocent. God would do us no injustice to leave us in the hand of the enemy. Before God we are guilty. Redemption means that someone pays the price which would set us free and make us innocent and righteous before God. Only Christ is able to pay the price of death and hell. Knowing our redemption, we are assured of his favor, go into the world as His willing servants, and trust in Him for our every need. Pray that God will increase your faith to know God our Redeemer, and go forth today as His willing servant. Sing the Psalter.

**October 14 Read Psalm 35:1-3; Psalter 92:1; Luke 18:1-8**

We begin a new psalm today in which God reveals to us how David came to Him while he was being afflicted. He came before God as he would come to a judge for help. David knew the law of God and he wanted God to enforce it. Men were fighting against David and trying to kill him without a cause. As we meditate upon this psalm we must understand that David calls for God's judgment upon his enemies out of holy zeal for God's honor, and not out of proud contempt for those who did not like him. Those who were persecuting David were doing so because God was with David, and they hated God. Are you afflicted in your soul when you see and hear God's name taken in vain? Are you filled with zeal for God's honor when you are persecuted as a Christian? Then cry out to God for judgment. Pray without ceasing and do not faint. Sing the Psalter.

**October 15 Read Psalm 35:4-8; Psalter 92:2; 2 Tim. 4:14-18; Romans 11:7-10**

Christ tells us to love our enemies; was it right then, for David to pray for shame, treachery, and destruction upon his enemies? Let us notice first of all that David did love his enemies. Remember how David refused to kill Saul when he had the chance? David was not one to lash out in passion to avenge his own dishonor. Yet he prays for the destruction of his enemies because in their persecution of him, they slander and blaspheme God. David's enemies manifest themselves to be wicked reprobates worthy of death. God alone knows who are the elect and who are the reprobate, so David calls on God to render swift judgment. Christ also could do nothing but bring all the sins of the elect to the cross to be destroyed. Pray that God's grace may rest upon you to give you discernment and zeal for God's honor. Sing the Psalter.

# God's Special Providential Care

## A Hiking Trip in the Wind River Mountains

by Neal, Mike, and Shari Hanko

*Come, hear, all ye that fear the Lord,  
While I with grateful heart record  
What God has done for me;  
I cried to Him in deep distress,  
And now His wondrous grace I bless,  
For He has set me free.*

### Introduction

Our lives are determined and directed by our sovereign God. We sing in our versification of Psalm 139: "My life with all its perfect plan was ordered ere my days began." This is the comfort of every believer. There are times in our lives, however, when God's providence is so obvious, so immediately at hand, that the truth of what we frequently take for granted is driven home with great force.

This is a story of a series of remarkable manifestations of God's special providential care of His people which resulted from escape of what was nearly great tragedy. It is the story of a terrible fall in rugged mountains, serious injury, but deliverance in an astonishing way.

One could ask: If God determines all our pathway, does He not then determine the terrible fall as well as the remarkable deliverance? This is beyond doubt true. And God, all wise in everything He does, had His own purpose also in the fall. In these, what we call accidents, He teaches and instructs. In what was nearly a great sorrow, He brought us closer to Him. In His deliverance He brought us to our knees in adoration.

Three were involved in the story: Neal, Mike and Shari. Each tells the story as each one saw and experienced it

### Our Plans

#### *Neal's Story*

We have been hiking and backpacking in the West for more than ten years. Our travels have taken us to the Canadian Rockies, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and Teton National Park. Mostly, however, we did our hiking and backpacking in the Wind River Range of Western Wyoming. Located between US Highways 191 and 287, The Winds are the crest of the Wyoming Rockies. There are forty summits over 13,000 feet; the highest, Gannet Peak, at 13,804 feet, is also the highest peak in Wyoming. The range is protected by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and is one of the largest wilderness areas in the continental United States. Briefly, the Act forbids development within the wilderness boundaries, and the only access is by foot or horseback. As we became more experienced in hiking in the wilderness, we started doing some off-trail exploration with USGS topographical maps and a compass.



*Squaretop Mountain, where we camped the night before we fell*

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In the late Nineties, Mike (then in his late teens) and I went on a two-day and one-night trip into the Northern Wind River Mountains. We spent half the time working our way cross-country, through boulder fields and scrambling to the summit of Squaretop Mountain, a 11,695 foot high plateau. We sat in the evening on the north edge, looking over the valley 3000 feet below, with views of the Teton Mountains to the north, the Absaroka Mountains, and the Beartooth Mountains, one hundred miles away.

In July of 2005 we decided to do the same trip again, this time with Shari (age 22; Mike was now 24.) We planned to spend three days and two nights camping: the first night in a high valley, and the second night, on the summit of Squaretop Mountain. Jeanne stayed in Pinedale Monday and Tuesday nights and planned to meet us mid to late afternoon Wednesday at Green River Lakes trail head. She had done enough backpacking the week before on a four and a half-day trip in the southern part of the range.

## **The Hike**

### *Neal's Story*

At about 6:00 Monday morning the three of us said good-bye to Jeanne at the New Fork trail head and started up New Fork Canyon. A glorious day of blue sky, sheer canyon walls, rushing rivers, and grassy meadows filled with wild flowers ended with a steep climb to our campsite at about 10,000 feet above sea level.

Tuesday morning we packed up early. We ate breakfast an hour later at Kinny Lake. After breakfast we left the trail and spent the day picking our way over ridges, past Martin Lake, through boulder fields, down the Martin Creek Drainage, up a steep scramble of 600 feet into the col just west of the summit of Squaretop Mountain; and finally up another scramble of 100–150 feet on grassy ledges to the summit. We set up camp on the summit at about 11,500 feet at the head of the gully we planned to descend early Wednesday morning. After supper we walked to the north edge of the mountain and spent an hour or two enjoying the view. Before we went to bed, Mike and I walked down the gully a little distance to see if we would be able to manage the descent in the morning. We both decided that it looked fairly easy.

At 5:45 Wednesday morning we woke up, broke camp and started down the mountain. We soon dropped into the gully, which was about thirty to forty feet wide and about half full of snow. Along both sides there was a trench about three feet wide and five to six feet deep

where the heat of the sun on the rock had melted the snow. The snow field had a vertical drop of 600 - 800 feet at an angle of about 45 degrees, and getting steeper as it got lower. It bent slightly to the left about three-fourths of the way down.

I went first, kicking steps into the snow. I told Shari to follow in my footsteps. Mike stayed in the trench on the right side picking his way through the rocks as we descended.

The snow, which was soft at the top, became harder as we went down. I remember thinking that it would be a relief when we finally got to the bottom.

### *Shari's Story*

Tuesday night Dad and Mike went to investigate the route down to the bottom of Squaretop Mountain. If there was too much snow, we were going to have to go back the way we came. They came back and said that there was a little snow, but it shouldn't be a problem.

We wanted to get an early start Wednesday morning. We had decided to get up at about 5:30. Camp was quickly taken down. Things started out like every other morning in the mountains. Dad always liked to get up early and get going. We were talking about how we couldn't wait to see Mom. She was all excited about getting us treats. We couldn't wait to get to Green River Lakes to get our Snickers candy bars and have a wiener roast.

We did what we normally do. We didn't eat any breakfast, because it was a little chilly. Breakfast always waited until the sun was a little higher in the sky when it was warmer.

At the beginning of the hike we tried to see if there was a better way to go down instead of the snowy way. We didn't see anything that looked much easier, so down the snow we started. It was hardly steep at all at first. Gradually it got a little steeper, but we were going slowly, so everything seemed to be fine. I didn't think anything of it because Dad always knew what he was doing and if he thought it was remotely dangerous, we would try to find something better.

Dad was going first, digging his heels into the snow, making footholds. I was following behind him, using his footsteps. Mike was over on the right side of the snow. He said that he was going to try and make it down that way. Every once in a while Dad would turn around and ask me if I was doing ok. I was.

When the trail started to get steeper, Mike said that we should try to get off the snow because he was not comfortable with us on it. Dad listened to Mike and tried

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to work his way over to the left side. He said that wasn't going to work. He said that it was easier to keep going down. He told Mike that we were going to keep going down the way we had chosen, but we would take it very slowly.

### *Mike's Story*

I had driven Shari's car from home to the Wind River Mountains. Dad, Mom and Shari had left home in the family van July 8; I left home Friday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of July and arrived the next day. I met the rest of the family in Pinedale. Together we took the family van and Shari's car to New Fork Lake, where we began our hike with the three of us.

We got up at about 5:30 so we could get back to the trail head on time. All of us were eager to see Mom again and get some better food. We were ready to hit the trail around quarter to 6:00, and Dad made the comment that we were getting pretty good at breaking camp and getting a fast start. As usual, we were going to hike a little while, then stop for breakfast. Since we started descending right away, and there wouldn't be many places to eat, we planned to stop for breakfast once we crossed the Green River and got to the trail. It was another beautiful day, there were few clouds in the sky and our route was obvious to all of us.

The afternoon before Dad and I walked a little way down the gully to make sure there was no snow blocking the route. If there had been, we were going to go down the other side of Squaretop (the way we came up) and follow the Martin Creek drainage to the Green River Valley. This would have taken us to the river going behind Squaretop instead of going down its side. Going down the side is the way listed in all the guidebooks and is the easiest route to the summit. However, there is no official trail to the summit, but since it is a popular route, there are bits and pieces of trail here and there, and footprints can be seen in many places. We had already seen paths through the snowfields closer to the top, so when we came to the next snowfield, also with footprints, we didn't think twice about descending it. All the snowfields up to this point had been easily traversable and this one seemed the same. The upper end of the snow was quite flat and open, but we could see that it got steeper, and the cliff walls on each side got higher. I guess it is more accurate to say that the ground leveled out on each side, and the chute with the snowfield in it continued at the original slope, slowly getting steeper.

As we started down this snowfield Dad went first, kicking steps in the snow for us to follow in. The pro-

cess was very slow and we all were looking forward to getting back on the trail. Shari followed him and I followed last. After a short distance I noticed a small gap, about 1–2 feet wide, between the cliff and the snowfield where the snow had melted away from the rocks. I decided this looked easier, so I got off the snow and continued down on this path. It was rocky, and at this point not any easier than the route through the snow. However, as we got further down the chute and the snowfield got steeper, I thought maybe we should all get on this path. Whether I said anything to the others at this time or not, I don't remember. A little further down, the slope was still getting steeper, and I did suggest that we all get off the snow. Dad made an attempt and cut diagonally towards the narrow gap between the snow and the cliff on the opposite side that I was on. (I was on the right side of the chute and they were on the left side of the snowfield). This was quickly abandoned, because when going at an angle it is harder to dig into the snow, making the footing even worse, so they continued down the original way. I didn't really think they were in any danger, I just thought it would be a little easier, quicker and maybe safer to get off the snow; so, as they continued down, I wasn't too worried. We were about half way down when I thought we should really get off this snow, but I knew Dad wouldn't do anything stupid, and he was being very careful, and again I wasn't too concerned.

I believe it was about this time, maybe 10–15 feet later when I really started wishing we had all been off the snow. Dad was first, Shari was next, and I was last, behind them but still off to the side.

### **The Fall**

#### *Neal's Story*

About one-half way down the chute my right foot slipped. I do not know what happened: whether my left foot slipped when I kicked back with my right heel to make a step, or whether I just lost my balance. Things happened swiftly. I sat down hard and started to slide. I knew immediately that I was in trouble. Mike told me later that I said "Oh no!" I tried to dig my heels into the snow but it was too hard. I flipped on to my stomach and rammed my hiking pole into the snow as hard as I could. It merely snapped in half. I started hurtling down the slope out of control.

My pants and my pack were made of nylon and were very slippery. I slid about 200 feet completely out of control. I was going head first down the slope. I curled onto my left side, tucked my chin into my chest, and

covered my head with my arms. I slammed into the side of the gully, my left hip and left side taking the impact. I had my tent, sleeping pad, sleeping bag and rain gear in my pack. The pack partially cushioned the blow, but I still hit very hard. The impact tore off my backpack and I tumbled onto the rocks in the trench. I don't think I was knocked out, but I'm not sure. I staggered to my feet with my left shoulder dislocated and I was nauseous with pain. The first thing I saw was Shari lying face down in the rocks below me and not moving, I thought she was dead. Mike heard me say "Oh Shari, Oh girl, Oh Shari" over and over. I thought, because of my mistakes I killed my daughter. I was desperate to get to her, but I couldn't use my left arm. I grabbed my left wrist in my right hand and placed my left hand on an outcropping of rock. I dragged on my shoulder until it popped back into place. I remember doing this, but I don't remember it hurting at all.

I was able to put a little pressure on my shoulder now, although I could feel it sliding around. I worked my way down to Shari. When I got to her, she was starting to move. She stood up and I said, "Are you OK?" She said, "I think so, but my shoulder hurts." She also had a bruise on her forehead. At this point, everything went grey and then black. I was not unconscious very long, but as I came back to consciousness, it was like waking up from a nightmare. I was hoping it was all a dream. I said, "Did we fall?" Shari responded, "Yes, we did." Then reality set in. Pain, cold, wetness, nausea. She asked me whether I was ok. I told her I had broken ribs, but that I didn't know if anything else was injured.

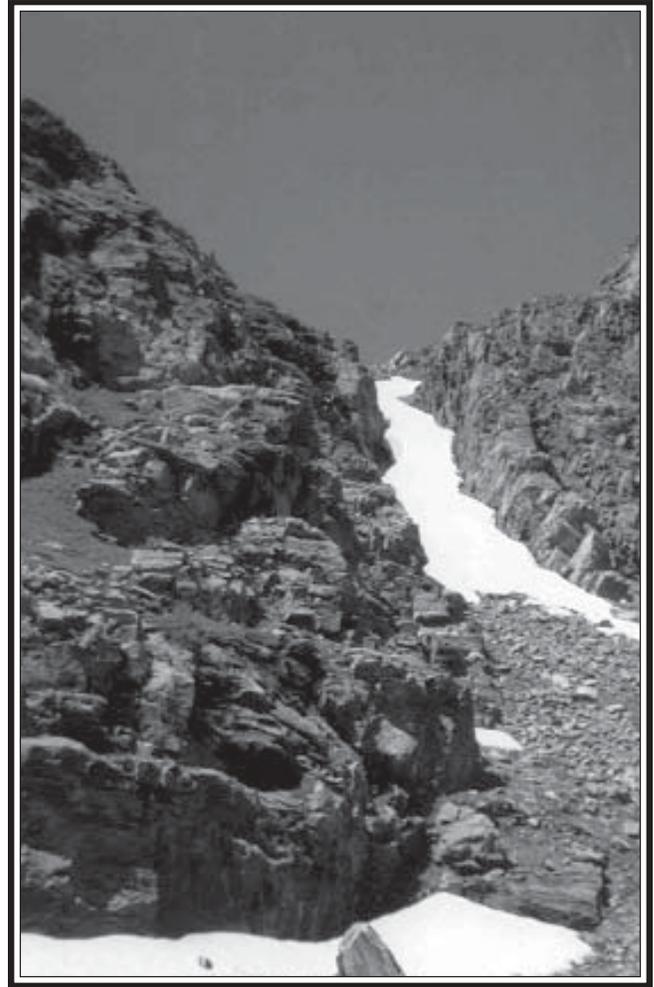
Here already God so cared for us that when we fell, our packs, loaded with sleeping bags, tents, ground pads and clothes hit the rocks first, absorbing much of the impact. Any blow to the head would certainly have been fatal.

We knew we could not stay where we were because we would soon die of hypothermia from the wet and cold. Somehow we had to get out of there.

I went back up to where I hit the wall and where my pack was lying. I tried to throw it up on to the snow so that it would slide to the bottom, but because of my shoulder I couldn't lift it high enough.

### *Shari's Story*

Dad was digging his heels into the snow when his foot slipped. He tried to get his balance, but the trail was too steep and the snow was too slippery. He went down on his butt and started sliding. In about ten seconds I saw him slide down and hit the rocks on the left side of



*The chute down which we fell*

the snow. I had only one thought: I had to get down to Dad. I panicked. I took two steps and my feet went out from under me. I heard Mike yell, "Shari, what are you doing?" I hit the wall of rock and blacked out.

When I came to, everything was kind of hazy. I was really hot, but I had a cold clammy sweat all over me. I couldn't breath very well. It felt like I was hanging by my backpack. I managed to wiggle out of it. I heard Dad saying, "O girl; honey, are you all right?" I was able to answer "Yes". I then heard Mike yelling, "Dad, are you ok? Shari, are you ok?" Dad told him that he was all right, but he wasn't going to be able to carry his pack out. Mike was so strong for us. He stayed calm and kept talking to us.

We were down in between the snow and the rocks. I had lost my glasses, watch and camera. My hiking pole was stuck in some rocks, but I was able to pull that out. My watch and camera were both on a rock down by my

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feet. Dad threw my backpack and hiking stick onto the snow and let it fall to the bottom of the chute, because I wasn't able to carry it.

### *Mike's Story*

Dad took a step, and I believe it was when he planted his right foot that disaster struck. It seemed like it was in slow motion and I remember it like yesterday. As he planted his right foot it slipped out from under him and he sat down with his left leg still curled beneath him. I heard him say "Oh no" in a quiet voice like he knew he was in trouble. Almost instantly he began to slide on his butt. The first thought that entered my mind was if he can stop himself NOW we will be ok, but as he continued sliding and gaining speed I knew only the rocks would stop him. There was a small boulder field at the bottom of the chute (maybe 100 yards down) and for an instant I thought he would hit that. As I mentioned before, they were on the left side of the snowfield. The field must have been crowned in the middle, because as he started sliding, he slid more and more to the left instead of straight down, which would have been much worse. This is all going through my head in a split second as I watched, helpless. Dad had slid about 20–30 feet when Shari reacted. I saw her start running after him. As I saw her move I yelled "Shari, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?" She took two steps before she fell and started to slide, also on her butt and back. I watched them both slide down and to the left an estimated 150–200 feet; about halfway to the bottom of the chute. Dad hit first going very fast and I saw him bounce off the cliff. He was still on his stomach, but at that speed I feared the worst. Shari hit an instant later about 10 yards further down, also sliding on her back.

After they hit, they fell into the gap between the snow and the rocks, which was by this time about 5 feet deep. I could hear Dad moaning in agony, but I didn't know how badly he was hurt. I couldn't hear Shari at first, but almost right away I could see her moving. Since Dad was conscious, I thought maybe broken legs at worst. Dad kept saying "Oh Shari, Oh Shari" over and over, obviously more concerned with how she was doing, and she was asking if he was ok.

### **Mike's Help**

#### *Neal's Story*

By this time Mike had gone down the trench on the right side to the bottom of the snow field. He dropped his pack and was coming up to us. He threw Shari's pack onto the snow and helped her over a steep spot so that

she could walk the rest of the way down. He tried to get around her on the snow, but slipped and fell back into the trench. He didn't fall very far, but it was awful watching him go. He bumped his head and was a little stunned for a minute, but didn't get hurt bad. Then he squeezed past Shari so he could help me.

My camera was smashed. The glass was punched out of the lens, and the camera body was broken in half. It had caught in the rocks, so I cut the straps and let it fall, I tried to pull out my water bottle, but dropped it down onto the rocks.

Mike tossed my pack onto the snow. It slid to the bottom and tumbled end over end through the boulders. I remember thinking that, if we had gone to the bottom, every bone in our bodies would have been smashed. Mike helped me down by making a stirrup with his hands and lowering me over the tough spots. I couldn't manage them by myself. I first thought that I could make it to the trail head (about ten miles away), but after a few minutes I knew that idea was hopeless.

When I could help myself Mike went ahead and started to set up his tent on a grassy knoll in the sun. I said, "Mike, not up there. I'll never make it that far." He was on a high knoll above the chute, so he came back down a little lower.

By this time my body was going numb and swelling up. My eyes were swollen almost shut, and my neck was thickening. I thought that I was bleeding inside from smashed kidneys and who knows what else. Breathing was becoming difficult and my whole body was a sea of agony. If only I could lie down. I thought that would help. But it didn't.

#### *Shari's Story*

Dad threw my backpack and hiking stick onto the snow and let them fall to the bottom of the chute, because I wasn't able to carry them. Mike threw Dad's pack down once he got to him.

I was able to turn around and see Dad about 10–20 feet above me. Mike asked us again if we were ok. That's when Dad told him that he wasn't ok and that he wasn't going to be able to hike out because he was busted up inside. He was already starting to swell up. I told Mike that I was ok except my shoulder which hurt badly.

Dad told Mike to be very careful and that he was going to need help getting down. I figured I was ok enough to get down myself. I tried to move and realized I was wrong. I didn't have strength in my shoulders or arms.

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Mike finally got to me. He said that it wasn't going to be too difficult to get down. There was just one spot that was going to be a little tricky to get to. I was slowly moving down the rocks on my butt. Mike stayed in front of me the whole time. I had to use his hands as a stirrup to get down the tricky part. It was a little bit of a ledge. I tried to go down by myself but it was a little too high and I could not brace myself with my arms at all. Mike had tried to get around the ledge by going out onto the snow. He ended up falling a little ways, but, thankfully, he didn't get hurt. After that, I was able to work myself down to the bottom of the chute. While I was working myself to the bottom, Mike went up to help Dad. It was a slow process.

Finally we were all at the bottom of the snow. Dad told Mike that he had to go to get help. He told him to find a place to set up the tent in case we had to stay over night. Mike found a small hill to set the tent up on. He didn't even bother to stake it down, because he knew he had to hurry. He helped us both into the tent and got us food, water and Tylenol. Dad finally told him that he had to get going. As Mike was leaving Dad told him to hurry because he was hurt bad and didn't think that he was going to make it. That wasn't going to be the only time that I heard that.

### *Mike's Story*

My first thought was to get to them as fast as possible and see if they were ok, but I could not move very fast due to the rocks and slope of the path I was on, plus I had about 100 yards to go to the bottom, then half that much back up the other side. I did not dare to cross the snowfield from my side to the side in which Dad and Shari were lying. Instantly I tossed my walking stick out onto the snow so I could use both hands to get down faster. There was only one spot where it was tricky for me to get down. It was a short drop off of about 6 feet. Difficult, but doable even with a pack. The problem was there were small cascades coming over the cliff in a half dozen spots, about 20 feet above me. This was soaking the entire area both above and below the ledge making it very slippery. I tried going over on my butt, but realized I would still have to jump about 2 feet, and I didn't want to land on a wet slope even if it was from only 2 feet. There was no way I was going to get over that ledge with my pack on, so I took it off and dropped it over the edge. The cascade had melted a cave under the snow and my pack slid about 20 feet down and 5 feet back until it wedged upright at the bottom. I turned around and slid feet first with my stomach towards the rock,

over the ledge. By this time I was soaking wet, freezing cold, and couldn't feel my hands, but I retrieved my pack, not completely comfortable going under that overhang. Since it was faster and easier to get down without my pack, I tossed it onto the snowfield and watched it slide the 50 feet or so to the bottom.

Now that I was down, my next job was to help Dad and Shari get down. As I was coming down, I heard them talking so I knew that at least they were both alive and conscious. As I was getting down, they both said that they were ok, but Dad didn't think he could carry a pack the rest of the way out. As I was going up the other side their story changed. I had asked again if they were sure they were all right and Shari said she was sore but that was it. However, Dad's response was more frightening. He said that he was not good and that he was pretty busted up inside. He figured he had at least a couple broken ribs. He also said he had dislocated his shoulder, but had already popped that back in. As I was coming up to him I could see that he was swelling up, but the way he was holding his dislocated arm tightly against his body did not look good. But I thought maybe the tension and the shock had something to do with it.

There were two spots where I had to help them down. At the lower spot the cliff jutted out in the snow and dropped off a small ledge. I myself had a difficult time getting up that spot and didn't think there was a chance I could get them down. They were sitting just above the ledge, but couldn't get down without my help. I think they had come down as far as they could by themselves from the spot where they had hit the cliff. Dad had slid Shari's pack down the snow and had tried to do the same with his, but because of his injuries couldn't lift it. At this point we were not too concerned with the condition of the equipment. I got his pack and tossed it down, afterwards thinking I should have taken his camera out just in case that hadn't broken. I helped them down by making stirrups with my hands for them to stand in, or grabbing their legs and lowering them. The only way I could help them was from below, so after I got them down the first spot I had to get around them. The only way to do this was to go out on the snowfield. I had to be on the snow for about 15 feet, and when I was next to Dad my feet slipped and I started to slide. I think he made a futile grab at me, but I slid about 10 feet, on my stomach, feet first into the cliff. I hit my head and was dazed for a few seconds, but by that time I had so much adrenaline going I didn't even think about it. The one thing on my mind was to get them down and get help.

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Once they got to the bottom of the snow field it was quite obvious I was going to have to get help while they stayed on the mountain. Dad said to set up a tent for them and get them a couple sleeping pads. While I did this they slowly made their way to the one flat spot on the mountainside. I got them in the tent and gathered the rest of the equipment. I gave them a water bottle and looked for the other two, but Dad said he lost his and I saw mine fall out when I slid my pack down the snow. I then brought them the rest of the granola bars, keeping two for myself, and prepared to leave. When I brought them the food Dad said a few things, which I will never forget. He said he expected it to take me most of the day to get out; he said to hurry but be careful; he said the only way he would be able to get out would be by helicopter; and finally he said that he was busted up inside, he didn't know what was wrong, and he didn't know if he was going to make it. He said good-bye in case he never saw me again. I told him he would be fine, that I would be at the trail head by noon at the latest, and that help would come soon. I didn't feel that confident especially the way he was swollen up, but I wanted him to be positive, if only for Shari's sake.

## **Alone On The Mountain**

### *Neal's Story*

From here on my thoughts were somewhat confused. Mike brought us food and water from Shari's pack. I told him before he left that he had to hurry, but hurry carefully. "We are depending on you, and if you get hurt, we cannot survive the night." I don't remember saying it, but I also said good bye, and what to do if I died. It was between 7:00 and 7:30 when he left, leaving us alone on the side of the mountain.

Shari and I crawled into the tent, but that didn't work. The ground was too uneven and there was no comfortable way to lie, so we went back outside. At first there were a lot of mosquitoes, but as the sun grew warmer they disappeared. Our next concern was sunburn. We were over 10,000 feet above sea level with the blazing sun on our faces. The only position that was somewhat comfortable for me was lying flat on my back with my knees up. Because of the angle of the slope, I was facing directly into the sun. I laid my handkerchief over my face and Shari put hers around her head and sat with her back to the sun.

Shari went down to my pack and got my Bible. When she came back I asked her to pray. I'll never forget what she prayed. "Lord, give Mike speed, send help soon. O

Lord, Thy will be done. We rest in Thee. Help Dad, Lord; help us." After she prayed, she started to read Psalm 23: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.... Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou are with me." We read and sang and prayed for six hours on the mountain. I am so thankful to God for a daughter who is so spiritually strong, who could stand beside me and help me though the long hours.

We read Psalm 27. "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion." Shari said she must have read sixty Psalms. We read John 17, and Revelation 21.

We sang Psalter No. 28: "I know that I shall not be left, forgotten in the grave." Psalter No. 31: "When I in righteousness at last, thy glorious face shall see." Psalter No. 83: "How blest is he whose trespass hath freely been forgiven." Psalter No. 278: "The tender love a father has for all his children dear." The comfort of the Psalms and of the familiar tunes of the Psalter was beyond belief. The Lord used them to carry us through six long and agonizing hours on the mountain. The Lord very really stood by us through the day.

As the morning wore on, I swelled more and more until my whole body was a huge bloated bag. My hands, arms, feet, legs, neck, back, even the top of my head, were soft and spongy.

About mid-morning I thought that the end was getting close. I thought that I was slipping away. Everything was getting dim and it was hard to think and speak. We said good-bye to each other. I told Shari, "I don't think I'm going to make it. My body is broken. It isn't just my ribs." I told her I loved her and to tell Mom, Matt, Jon and Jenn, and Mike, that I loved them too. I told her it would be hard for Mom, and they had to help her and take care of her. It must have been shock, or maybe I was falling asleep, because in a half hour or 45 minutes, I began to revive a little.

We started thinking that it was about time for rescue. It was so easy to become impatient: "Lord, why is it taking so long? Don't You hear us? We need help now. Please send help." Again we had to remind each other, "Rest in the Lord. Wait patiently for Him." Again and again we prayed, "Thy will be done. Lord give us patience. Thy will be done."

Late in the morning we heard a droning in the distance. Is this rescue? Are we saved? But it was only a high-flying plane. Hopes raised and then dashed. Again, "Lord, give us patience. Thy will be done."

We started asking ourselves, What if they don't send a helicopter? What if they come with horses? I told Shari that I couldn't last that long, If they sent horses, I would die, but that would be the Lord's will too.

By now I was at peace. If this was my time to die, then so be it. My only regret was that I couldn't say goodbye to the rest of the family, and I was worried about Shari sitting up there alone.

### *Shari's Story*

After Mike left I wanted to try to get Dad as comfortable as possible. By this time he had swelled up badly. His eye was starting to swell shut. It was a horrible thing to see. He said that he wanted to lie down. As soon as he lay down he wanted to get up again. Lying down made all the pressure go to his head. So I helped him sit up. Sitting up didn't work either. When he sat up the pressure was so bad in his chest that it made him nauseous. This went on for a little while, helping him sit up for a few seconds and then helping him lie back down. He just wasn't comfortable no matter what he did.

The tent wasn't comfortable either. There were too many bumps, so we went back outside. There was a flat area that he was able to lie down on for a while. He started praying that Mike would have swift feet and find help quickly. That was about all he could get out, so he asked me to pray. We prayed that God would be with Mike, and that because we were hurt badly, we needed help desperately.



*The knoll where we waited for rescue*

The day was beautiful with bright sunshine and clear blue skies. Dad was lying with his handkerchief over his face. He didn't want to get sunburned. He kept telling me to put my handkerchief on my face. He was so broken and hurt and he was thinking about me.

The mosquitoes started to bother us, so he asked me to go get the bug spray from his backpack. When I got to his backpack I realized that the spray must have fallen out when he fell. But I found something much more important, his Gideon Bible. When I got back to him I asked him if there was anything he wanted me to read. He said he didn't care, so I decided to start at Psalm 1 and go from there.

Psalm 27:14: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Psalm 28:2: "Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle."

Psalm 18:7: "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

Psalm 30:2: "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me."

Psalm 30:8: "I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication."

Psalm 31:1: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness."

Psalm 31:9: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly."

Psalm 31:14: "But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God."

Psalm 32:7: "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

Psalm 32:22: "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."

Psalm 34:4: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

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Psalm 34:15: “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”

Psalm 34:17: “The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”

Psalm 34:19: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

Psalm 38:15: “For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.”

Psalm 38:22, 22: “Forsake me not, O Lord: O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.”

Psalm 40:1: “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard by cry.”

Psalm 40:13: “Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me.”

There are so many more that I could put in this story. I don't even know for sure how many Psalms we read. All I know is that they helped us pass the six hours on the mountain and were a source of great comfort.

Dad did ask me to read two other passages. They were the high priestly prayer of our Lord in John 17 and the description of the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 21. I knew why he wanted me to read these passages.

One thing that struck me on the mountain was that Dad knew a lot of Bible passages by heart. As I was reading to him, he would start quoting the verse that I was reading. He also would be able to sing the Psalter number to the Psalm I read. Even in the awful pain he had he could remember Scripture.

After reading for a while I would run out of breath, so I would stop reading. Once I stopped reading, Dad would start chanting, “The Lord is my Shepherd, the Lord is my Shepherd” over and over again. It started driving me crazy, so I would start reading again. As I was reading, I would come across a passage about prayers being heard by God, so we would pray. They were always the same prayer. “Please Lord send help quickly, we need help so bad. Give Dad some relief from his pain. Don't let him die. Give Mike swift feet and be with him on the trail. Be with Mom when she finds out, help her to stay calm. But always, Thy will be done.”

Dad would be alert and quoting Bible passages with me, but then he would start drifting off. This happened a few times. When it happened he thought that he was dying. He told me that he loved me so much, and that he was so thankful to have me as a daughter. He told me that I had to be strong for Mom. I had to tell Mom, Jon, Jenn, Mike and Matt that he loved them so much, too.

He wanted to see them so badly. I also was to tell the extended family that he loved them all.

I didn't want to hear this. The first time he was saying goodbye, I told him that I didn't want him to die. I asked him who would walk me down the aisle if I got married, and who would mock me about falling in the creek. He told me not to ask questions like that. He told me whatever happened was God's will and whether I liked it or not I had to submit to that will.

A few times Dad looked at his watch. The first time was about an hour after Mike left. We were thankful that we had something to keep us occupied so we weren't constantly watching the time. We had our faith to keep us from despairing. We could see that our prayers were being answered. Dad was able to lie for longer periods of time. He was at peace with the prospect of possibly dying. He said that to me more often. “Shari, our prayers are being answered, our prayer for rescue hasn't been answered yet, but our prayers are answered.” We knew that we were not alone on that mountain. What a comfort we had in knowing this. God was right there beside us. He was right beside Mike and Mom.

Looking back now I don't think he was dying. I had given him some Dramamine to help him sleep. It probably wasn't the smartest thing to do, but anything I could do to make him more comfortable, I did. I think the Dramamine made him drowsy and he was starting to doze off. The reason I think this is because while we were in Yellowstone National Park I took Dramamine for motion sickness and it knocked me out.

Throughout the course of the day we heard planes going over. Every time we thought it was help coming for us.

### *Mike's Story*

I finally left to get help about half an hour after the fall, probably shortly before 7:00. I had 1–1½ miles to the trail, then about 9½ miles to the trail head. I had to descend about 2,000 feet to the Green River, then cross it at the foot bridge. Since I left Dad and Shari with the water, I had to drink out of the streams. I wasn't too worried about this higher up in the mountains, but once I got closer to the lakes there were more people and better chances of contaminated water. I figured I'd worry about that when the problem came. It took me about half an hour to get to Granite Lake while following bits of trail, but mostly bushwhacking my way through the forests and meadows. At Granite Lake I found a pretty well-used trail and decided this must be the one referred to in the guide books. I followed it for maybe a quarter mile

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before I realized I was going towards Granite Peak instead of around its north side. I decided to leave the trail and plow directly toward the river. I then realized I was ascending the highest point on the mountain so I started working my way further north to cross the shoulder of the peak. Following this route I found the obvious trail and followed the switchbacks almost all the way to the valley. The trail petered out a couple hundred yards above the valley, but I bushwhacked the rest of the way to the valley floor.

Granite Lake is a popular spot to camp for hikers intending to climb Squaretop so once I neared the lake I called out every 10 minutes or so looking for help. I figured I would meet people quite soon after I got to the trail, if not sooner. All the way down I was jumping through deadfalls and scraping my shins, all the while hoping not to fall headfirst down the mountain in my hurry. Going downhill on a slope that steep is very hard on the legs, and by the time I was halfway down I was looking forward to getting on the trail.

I reached the valley floor in about 45 minutes, maybe a little longer. I had to cross the valley to the main branch of the Green River to find the footbridge. I came to the river and realized I was downstream of the bridge. I looked upstream, a quarter mile or less, to a bend in the river and couldn't see the bridge so I decided to wade across here. I could see the trail 10 feet past the far river bank and didn't feel like working my way who knows how far upstream to find the footbridge. There was a spot that looked easily crossable. It was maybe 20 feet wide, but some of it was only ankle deep. The rest looked about waist deep. I took off my socks and boots because I didn't want to run and walk 9½ miles with wet feet. The shallow part of the crossing was easy, but when I got to the deep part I realized it was deeper than I thought. Instead of being waist deep it was an inch or two below my chest with a very strong current. If I had taken my time wading it would have worked, but I was in a hurry and not worried about finding good footholds. I was about 2 feet from the bank when the current knocked me down. I had no choice but to swim the rest of the way. I went under and was starting to get swept down stream when I grabbed the logs on the bank. Other hikers had made a log bridge over some smaller side creeks and swamps up to the main river. By now I was soaked head to foot (boots and socks included) so I just slogged through the swamp to the trail. I had to put socks on dirty feet and wear wet clothes for a while, but I hit the trail right away. I ate two bars I took for myself, but had to choke them

down because I was so thirsty. I drank a little, but I wanted to go as far as I could without water so I wouldn't get sick from contaminated water. I wouldn't have gotten sick for about 2 weeks, but I still didn't want to take that chance until I had to.

At first I planned to run the whole way, but this didn't last very long. I'd get winded after a couple hundred yards and had to walk. Also, less than 5 minutes into the trip, while running, I tripped and did a face plant into the trail. I thought I'll run when it is flat, downhill (the rest of the trail descended about 400 feet over 9.5 miles so it was a gentle slope, easy for running) and not too rocky. I ended up running for a couple hundred yards then walking a little bit to catch my breath. One thought that kept me going was that no matter how bad my leg and lungs hurt, Dad and Shari were in much more pain. I spent more time walking, but ran about half the distance. I had expected to meet people by now, but so far I hadn't seen anybody.

I had a lot of time to think covering those 9.5 miles. I thought about what went wrong or what we did wrong, and how Dad and Sheri were doing. I kept remembering what Dad said, "I'm pretty busted up; I don't know if I'm going to make it." Hearing those words over and over kept me praying over and over. I asked God to be with them up there, to keep Dad alive, and to give me the strength to get help as soon as possible.

I didn't see any other hikers until I reached the Clear Creek crossing, at the upper end of the lower lake, about 2½ miles from the trail head. I told them the situation and asked if they had a satellite phone to call 911. They had nothing so I continued on. I saw a boater heading towards the campground and he was going faster than I, so I yelled, but he was on the far side of the lake and kept going. I didn't see anyone else until I was about 100 yards from the trail head. It was 9:30 in the morning, 2½ hours after the fall. It was a horse train with about 8 people. I asked if anybody had a satellite phone and the guide said he did; so I told him the situation. He let me borrow it and I called 911. I was connected to the Sublette County Sheriff's Department and told them what had happened. I was on the phone with them for about 15 minutes, and the woman on the phone told me to go to the trail head and wait until some sheriff deputies came. She also told me to wait with the phone in case they needed to call me back. After 15 minutes, I called information to get the Sublette County Sheriff's Department phone number to see what was going on. She told me

they were organizing the search and rescue, but it would take a little while.

While I was waiting I talked with the guy who lent me the phone. He said in situations like this they sometimes send in a team with horses to assess the situation and determine if a helicopter was needed. He said people often exaggerate injuries. When I talked to the sheriffs the second time I emphasized both that Dad was not one to exaggerate anything, and that he needed the helicopter. The guy who lent me the phone also said that with helicopter rescues they only take enough fuel for the victim and might not be able to take the gear. This is not what I wanted to hear, knowing I would be the one hiking back 20+ miles to get the stuff. He also gave me a bottle of water which was much appreciated.

## The Rescue

### *Neal's Story*

About 1:00 p.m. Shari heard the sound of a chopper. I did not hear it immediately, but soon I heard it also. Shari was jumping up and down waving her arms and crying: "They're here! They're here. We're saved. Thanks, Lord. Thanks, Lord. Thanks for sending help."

We saw them flying high overhead. I tried to wave my arms, but I had no strength left. They kept heading north over the mountain until they were out of sight. Complete despair again. "Didn't they see us? They're going too far north. Please, please come back." And then, again, "Lord, Thy will be done," but this time it was a cry of anguish. (Actually, they did see us, as we learned later. When Mike talked with them he had pinpointed

the exact spot where we had fallen and described so accurately where we were, that they saw us as soon as they flew overhead.) I didn't hear them any more, but Shari said that she heard them all the time. A couple of minutes later—it seemed forever—the noise suddenly grew louder and the helicopter rounded the side of the gorge and flew directly overhead. The pilot made this pass looking for a place to land. The only place to land in the whole area, other than the summit of a mountain, was about fifty feet from where we were lying, right where Mike was first going to set up the tent. He circled one more time and landed right next to us. The wind from the rotors pounded us, and just about blew Mike's tent away, but Shari grabbed it in time. Then there were people by us and talking to us. Our prayers were answered. Our ordeal was over. And God's care in providing a place for the helicopter was strikingly evident.

The men could only take one of us at a time. Because I was injured more than Shari, they took me first. I was able to walk with support to the helicopter. This was a rescue helicopter only. They had no medical equipment on board. They said they could get a board for me if I couldn't walk, but they would have to go to Pinedale and get one. There was no way I was going to let them leave without me. They were going to put a helmet on me, but couldn't because of the swelling. They strapped me into a seat. I left with one of the rescue crew and the pilot, while two stayed back with Shari.

Fifteen minutes later I was on the ground at Pinedale airport. From there they took me by ambulance to the Medical Center.

### *Shari's Story*

Finally, at about 1:30 I told Dad to be quiet because I thought I heard something. He told me that it was just another plane and not to get my hopes up. I said, "No, it sounds different; it sounds like a helicopter." I could hear the wap, wap, wap of the helicopter blades. A few minutes later we saw a helicopter high up in the air. I have never had such a feeling of relief. All I could say was, "Thank you God, thank you, God." I kept repeating this. Dad started saying "We're saved." I got up and started screaming for all I was worth and waving my handkerchief. But then the plane went back behind the mountain. Dad started saying that they were leaving us, and that they weren't



*The area where the helicopter landed*

coming back. I told him that they wouldn't stop looking until they found us; besides, I still could hear the helicopter.

While the helicopter was out of sight, Dad asked me if there was anything I could use to make a reflection that they might see. I did have a starlight filter for my camera that maybe would work. I started flashing that at the sun. About twenty minutes later I could hear the helicopter getting closer. I got up and started waving my arms and jumping up and down. When the helicopter came back into sight it was really low. It actually was a little distance below us. Dad started moaning with relief.

I couldn't even cry. It was like I was crying but there were no tears. I don't know how to describe that feeling. It was like nothing I have ever felt before.

The pilot landed the plane about thirty to forty feet above us. When the men came down, the wind was so strong that it almost blew Mike's tent away. I was able to grab it in time.

Four people, three men and one lady, got out of the helicopter. Right away I started yelling that they needed to take care of Dad first and that I was going to be ok. When they got to us, two went to Dad and two came to me. I heard them ask Dad what was wrong and whether he could walk to the helicopter. They said that they could go get a medical helicopter if he wanted them to. He said, "No way"; he was going to walk to the helicopter. After he got up I ran over to him to get a hug. I didn't get one. He had only one thing on his mind and that was to get off the mountain.

As he was heading to the helicopter, I got into Mike's tent, so that, when the helicopter took off, the tent wouldn't blow away. When the helicopter left the ground I completely broke down and really started to cry. One of the two guys that stayed with me on the mountain came over to me and put his arm around me and just let me cry. After I was done crying, I started to pack up the things in the tent. When the helicopter almost blew the



*The rescue helicopter*

tent away, a bunch of stuff had fallen out of my fanny sack. I just started stuffing stuff wherever I could find room.

After Dad was gone, the two men started asking me questions. They wanted to know what had happened. I actually felt stupid because I was thinking that they probably thought we were stupid for trying to go down the snowfield and that we were a bunch of amateur hikers. I told them that there was probably a bunch of stuff scattered at the bottom of the snowfield. They found a water bottle, and Mom's and my hiking sticks. (Mike was using Mom's.) They also asked me how much I weighed because they had to determine whether they could take all the gear back with us.

The two guys started to pack everything up. They put everything in the back packs. I got yelled at for trying to take down the tent. I managed to get one pole taken out before they asked me what I was doing. I wanted everything to be ready when the helicopter came for me.

Tony (one of the guys who stayed back with me) had a satellite phone with him and he tried to get Mom on the phone for me, but Mom and Mike had already left for Pinedale. I was pretty disappointed. I wanted to let her know that I was ok.

Finally the helicopter came back. The men put a helmet on me and led me to the helicopter. They showed me where the barf bags were just in case I needed them.

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I didn't. The ride was awesome considering the circumstances. I actually enjoyed it. Normally I don't like flying, but I was so thankful finally to be off the mountain that it didn't even bother me.

The view was incredible. I have seen these mountains so many times from the ground that I knew them well. It was strange to see such familiar mountains from the air. Tony pointed out Gannet Peak to me (the highest point in Wyoming) and some other sights.

The ride to Pinedale was probably about fifteen to twenty minutes. There was an ambulance waiting when I got there. I was able to walk with help to the ambulance. When I got into the ambulance, I was asked all the standard questions.

### *Mike's Story*

I then hiked to the trail head to wait for the sheriffs. I didn't know if the helicopter would come there or go straight to the mountain. I also worried about what would happen when Mom showed up. She was going to hike part of the way up the trail to meet us, but if I was with the helicopter she would start hiking with nobody to meet. Fortunately, she arrived at 11:30, about 2 hours after I called 911, and about 1½ hours after I got to the trail head. I told her what happened and that I was still waiting for help. We then decided to talk to the campground hosts and see if they could connect us with the sheriffs department for an update. They radioed the Pinedale Ranger Station whose response was quite abrupt "We're working on it, stay off this frequency."

Knowing the rescue was in progress, we then went back to the trail head to wait. About 45 minutes later two sheriff deputies drove up and told us the helicopters were on the way. They said the rescue helicopters have to come either from Jackson or Idaho Falls and that was part of the reason for the wait. They said that there were two choppers, one for search and rescue and one to transport them to the hospital in Idaho Falls, or to Jackson if necessary. They also said that if there was room they would take all the gear with them, much to my relief. I had to describe exactly where they were, which information he then radioed to the helicopter pilots. One thing that I wondered about was where they would land the helicopter. I didn't know if they could land on the summit in windy conditions, and I was hoping they wouldn't have to land in the valley because it would take a while to get Dad and Shari down and it would be difficult and painful. We could hear the conversation back and forth over the radio so I heard them say that they had spotted the victims and had located a place to land, providen-

tially about 50 yards from where they were. It was about the only spot in that huge area that they could land. I kept hearing them say that they were removing the victim, not victims, from the site. This worried me because I thought Shari might have to walk out. The deputies did say the rescue team would walk out with her, but I knew if she had to walk out she would have been devastated. Shari and Dad will be able to tell more about the rescue itself.

### **Aftermath**

#### *Neal's Story*

The people in the medical center put an IV in my arm, oxygen tubes in my nose and plastic tubes and a hollow needle in my chest. X-rays showed two punctured and collapsed lungs, eight broken ribs and seventeen broken spinal processes (These are the bumps on the spine). There was no damage to any organs other than my lungs, and no damage to my neck or spinal column. The breaks were all on the outside of the spine. The bloating was all caused by air that had leaked from my lungs into my chest cavity and then into the rest of my body. When they pushed down on my chest, we could hear the air hissing out the hollow needle.

Because this was not a hospital, they had to take me to Idaho Falls, Idaho. They had strapped me tightly to a board and put a neck collar on, not because I needed it, but because they would be reprimanded if they did not do it. As they were wheeling me out to the ambulance, they said that Shari was coming in. I asked if I could see her, but they said "No".

They took me back to the airport and put me in a Med-evac helicopter to fly me to Idaho Falls—about a 45 minute flight.

At Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center they did a cat-scan before sending me to a room. About 9:00 p.m. Jeanne, Mike and Shari came in. Shari had a bruised shoulder and, it was later learned, a collapsed lung. It was about a three-hour drive from Pinedale to Idaho Falls.

The rescue helicopter was a Forest Service unit from Jackson, Wyoming. It was an evacuation unit only with no medical assistance on board. The rescue service was Tip-Top Rescue, a volunteer group from Jackson and Pinedale.

#### *Shari's Story*

When I finally got to the clinic I was immediately taken to get X-rays done. They asked me what hurt. I told them that I thought I might have some broken ribs and a collar bone. They took X-rays of my chest and

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both shoulders. When the X-rays came back negative I was shocked. As much as I hurt I thought every bone in my upper body was broken. I am thankful that God spared me from serious injury. They gave me a shot to relieve the pain. It helped a lot. I don't know what made them want to take a urine sample, but they did and I had some blood in my urine, but they were not too concerned about that. They gave me three bags of IV and then I gave another sample. That came back clear.

While I was getting the IV, Mom and Mike showed up. Mom thought that I was going to be up and walking around while waiting for them. She was pretty upset when she saw me lying on the gurney. She was ok when the nurses told her that it was just some pretty bad bruising.

Tony had stuck around the clinic until Mom and Mike got there. He wanted to make sure I wasn't alone and that Mike got the gear back. He talked with Mom and Mike for a while and told us to make sure that we let him know how everything turned out.

I am not sure exactly the time we left for Idaho Falls, but I couldn't wait to see Dad again. When we got to Idaho Falls and saw Dad I couldn't believe how much better he already looked.

So many miracles happened that day. What an amazing God we have. So many things could have gone differently. He was with us every second we were lying on that mountain and with Mike every step that he took to get help.

#### *Mike's Story*

Once Mom and I heard that both Shari and Dad were on the way to the clinic in Pinedale, Mom and I left. We had about a two hour drive to Pinedale, twenty miles of rough gravel road and about thirty miles on pavement. On the way out we had to pick up Shari's car from the New Fork Lake trail head, where we had left it.

We got to Pinedale about 5:00 and found out that Dad had been airlifted to Idaho Falls. They told us he had some broken ribs and a punctured and collapsed lung. Shari was bruised and dehydrated, but otherwise she was fine. We had to wait while Shari had 3 bags of IV pumped into her and they told us that Dad was currently being X-rayed, but we could call and talk to him in 45 minutes. When Mom did call they told her he had 8 or 9 broken ribs, both lungs were punctured and collapsed, and many of the spinal processes had been broken. Those are the little bumps on the backbone. She then talked to Dad for a little while, and we left for Idaho Falls at about 6:00 if I remember right. It is about 3 hours from Pinedale

to Idaho Falls but we got there around 9:00 and went to see Dad right away.

#### **Conclusion**

Shari was never admitted to the hospital because her injuries were not serious. This was amazing, for several years ago she had been in a bad auto accident in which her spine had been broken in two places. We are very thankful to God for His care of her. She was a source of strength and encouragement on the mountain.

She returned to Grand Rapids with Mike on Friday and began working the next week on Wednesday.

Neal was in the hospital for about four days. Sharon Kleyn flew to Idaho Falls to be with Jeanne while Neal was hospitalized and to help with the driving on the way home. Rev. Kleyn met them all in Council Bluffs, Iowa and both cars were taken to Grand Rapids so that Sharon could return home with her husband.

Neal was off from work for over a month recuperating and healing. He too is now back on his job.

These events left an indelible impression on the whole extended family. In a forcible way we were all reminded of God's supremely mysterious providential dealings with us in our lives and of His gracious care. May we retain the lessons we have learned.

#### **Two letters from the campground hosts in Green River Lakes Campground**

These two letters were sent by Heather Dina from the campground after the family had returned to Grand Rapids.

*Saturday, July 23, 2005*

*Dear Jeanne,*

*My husband and I are the campground hosts at Green River Lakes, where we met you at the trailhead with the Sheriff. We'd just like to know how your husband was after his accident on the trail, and how everybody is.*

*I was quite impressed by your son's mature and intelligent reaction to the situation, and he should be quite proud of himself. Apparently, you did a good job with both him and his sister, and they reacted properly in the emergency.*

*Although it wasn't a fun experience for any of you, I'm sure after all the dust settles it will give you many memories and stories to tell in years to come, with, thankfully, a happy ending.*

*Heather Dina*

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Monday, August 29, 2005

Dear Shari & Jeanne,

Thank you so much for keeping in touch with us, and letting us know how things turned out. Boy, Neal really battered himself up, didn't he? Shari got in her share, too. I've forgotten your son's name, but he had an ordeal, too, just working to get out quickly to contact the rescue people. Swimming an ice-cold creek wasn't something any of us would want to have to endure, but he did what had to be done, and kept his head about him. I'm so glad everyone is healing now, though, and you were able to get help in time before things got worse. God was watching over you all!

We're "short-timers" here now, and will be leaving right after Labor Day, if we don't run out of propane before then. There's hardly anyone in the campground, and the bugs are gone, so it's glorious. Although we're both ready to "hit the road" and see other places, part of me will miss the beauty and quiet of this place. Maybe we'll bring the kids and grandkids back next year?

Fondly,

Heather ❖

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Neal, Mike and Shari are members of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

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Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

# Rev. C. Hanko

## Chapter 15

### Automobile and Train Travel

edited by Karen Van Baren

*Editor's Note: In this chapter, the author takes us back to the days when automobile travel was a novelty, a rather unreliable novelty at that. Most Americans relied heavily on train travel as is herein described.*

When I was about 8 years old, I had my first automobile ride. One of my uncles had a Studebaker, an open car with carbide lights. He took my mother and me to Hudsonville, where some of my mother's family lived. I can well remember that just as we were leaving the city limits on Chicago Drive, my cap blew off, and my uncle had to stop the car to retrieve it. All in all, this was quite an experience.

Shortly after my first ride, in 1916, my dad bought his first car, a Model T. It was the first automobile in the neighborhood. It was a pickup truck that could be converted into a run-about by taking off the box. This car had one seat, with the gas tank under the seat. It had one door, a half door on the passenger side. It had a brass radiator. It had to be cranked. In cold weather one of the back wheels had to be jacked up and the car put into gear to give added inertia for starting.

The car had a kerosene lamp for a taillight, which went out on rough roads. It also had magneto head lights,

which would dim very low when the engine idled. They were at their best when the engine was revved. One dark, drizzly night my brother and I were riding east on Lake Drive. Visibility was bad. As we slowed to turn at the corner at Diamond we suddenly heard a thump. My brother stepped on the brake, and we saw a dark figure arise in front of the car. As it came under the street light we saw that it was a woman, who ran away like a hunted deer. She was evidently unhurt but sorely embarrassed. We left our name, address and license number at the corner drug store, but never heard any more of it.

On a Fourth of July my parents decided to make a trip to Hudsonville. My dad rarely drove, and was not the best, nor the fastest driver. We left around seven in the morning, went to Fulton St. and then along Market to Chicago Drive. We rode until we came to grain elevators in Jenison. There we turned left, traveled a certain distance, and then turned right to get to Hudsonville. By the time we arrived it was 9:00 a.m. Between three and four in the afternoon we left, arriving home about 6:00 p.m. A long day and a strenuous experience.

A few years later, my brother-in-law, Otto Vander Woude, also had a Model T, with enclosed front and rear

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seats.<sup>1</sup> One day, his oil line was clogged, so we took off the pan under the engine, took out the copper oil line, ran a wire through it and soon had the engine put together and running again.

In 1927, Richard Veldman, Gerrit Vos and I were in Doon to supply the pulpits in Doon, Hull and Sioux Center. We went by train to Hull or Sioux Center for Sunday services. But during the week we borrowed a car from one of the farmers. It was usually the extra car that they had. One day, when Vos was driving his wife, son and me to Sioux Center, the steering shaft came loose. The car ended up in the ditch. We walked to Sioux Center, and the farmer had to fetch his car, while we had to find a way back to Doon.

On another occasion Rich Veldman and I had gone to Sioux Center to attend a consistory meeting. It was about 11:00 p.m. when we started for home. Instead of going to the Main Street we stayed on the street of the church and soon settled in the Iowa mud. This was not the first time we had gotten ourselves stuck in the clay, but now we were dressed up and did not feel like digging with our hands in the mud. As we pondered how to get out of this mess, a young fellow returning from his girlfriend's house, came past. He first wanted to change his clothes. We thought that to be an excuse and settled down to sleep there. But soon he returned with a shovel and had us on our way to Doon.

But in the mean time the radiator had run dry, as we noticed a short distance from town. Rich went into a farmyard, pumped a bucket of water and carried it out to the car. But by that time the man of the house came out to check on the disturbance. So Rich threw the bucket into the yard and ran back to the car.

On another occasion I was going to Sioux Center to teach catechism. Immediately I discovered that the Model T had neither clutch nor brakes. To start it rolling one had to push it and hop in. To stop it, one ran against the curb or another obstacle. I left the car on Main Street of Sioux Center. But on the way home as the car was climbing a hill, my hat blew off. That meant that I had to bring the car to the top of the hill, run back for my hat, and then start the car by going downhill.

After staying about three months in Doon, Rev. Vos decided that he, his wife and his son should go home. This meant we had to borrow a car to take them to the Hull railroad station. Having packed his trunk, and having put his wife and son in the back seat, Gerrit, Richard and I took our places in the front seat. All went well, even going downhill, but the problem came when we

tried to climb the next hill. Suddenly the engine kept running, but the car stood still.

Gerrit stopped a passing motorist and informed him of our difficulty and of the fact that they simply had to catch the train in Hull. This fellow felt sorry for him, so the trunk, the wife, the son and Gerrit were off with the motorist. Rich and I sat in the car that had refused to run. Giving it another try, we found that it ran perfectly. So instead of turning back, we went to Hull to see Gerrit off on the train. His first thought was that he was seeing ghosts. Then he decided we had pulled a prank on him. He refused to be convinced that, after we were relieved of him and all his possessions, the car ran well. When we took the car back to the farmer we felt obligated to inform him of our experience.

In June, after coming home for exams, Rich Veldman and I returned to Doon for the summer. This time Andrew Cammenga came with us. During our stay, we decided to ask Nick Buyert of Sioux Center for permission to take his car, which we were borrowing, to the Black Hills. He consented. On Monday morning we were off to South Dakota. Before dawn we rode over a skunk; for a while the smell was almost unbearable. As the day progressed we noticed that the car was heating up. Since it was a borrowed car we felt that we should check. So we stopped at a garage and asked the mechanic if he knew how to prevent the car from overheating. He took a look and told us, "When you get out of town you will see a junk yard. Bring the car there and leave it." That hardly solved our problem, so we went on. After we returned home, Mr. Buyert informed us that he had just had the car overhauled, so the pistons were still tight.

Late in one afternoon of our trip, in torrents of rain, we were approaching Rapid City. When we stopped to ask a passing motorist how much farther we had to go on the muddy road, the other driver asked us how long we had been riding in the mud. By the time we reached Rapid City the car was so hot that we could not shut off the engine. We brought the car to a garage where they set it against the wall and revved the engine till it stopped. The next morning they had to tow it to unlock the back wheels.

Now we were ready to see the park. But the hills were steep. So two walked up the hills, while the third drove the car. The most hazardous part of the trip was going down those steep hills. The brake could not slow up the car at curves, so the driver was forced to reach out frequently for the emergency brake.

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We did have a broken spark plug wire in the park. A piece of fence wire took care of that until we were home again.

We spent one night in a motel that had bed bugs. All three of us were in one bed. The next morning Rich was full of red spots. He had had it. He wanted to go home.

That day we did stand in a railroad station and wonder whether we should avail ourselves of the opportunity to see Denver, since it was likely we would never get there if we did not go now. Our better judgment prevailed and we started back to Doon, making the trip without further mishap.

By the latter part of August we were thinking of going back home and to school. Rev. Vos had accepted the call to Sioux Center and was preparing to go there, but was first waiting for the birth of a baby (Marilyn). We were told to stay until the baby arrived. So patiently we waited it out day by day. Finally the word came that the baby had arrived, so we could make plans to go home and belatedly return to the seminary.

Mr. Cammenga, the father of Andrew, had purchased a new car and decided to come to Doon to bring us home. So on a Monday morning at four o' clock we started out. The roads were still made of gravel and led us through every town along the route. We reached our first brick road about one hundred miles west of Chicago. This was one lane, requiring two wheels off the pavement when we happened to meet a passing car.

Stopping only for gas and a bite to eat we traveled all day and all night. After going through the Loop of Chicago we passed through South Chicago, Hammond, Gary, Michigan City, Benton Harbor, and then on through the woods to South Haven, Saugatuck, Holland, Zeeland, finally to arrive at our destination at nine on a Tuesday morning. That took us thirty hours. Now the trip is made in twelve to fifteen hours.

In July 1934 my wife and I were expecting our third child. We made the trip to Grand Rapids with our two boys and stayed with my folks. They were glad to have us come, but were also eager for us to leave. They did not fancy having a baby born in their home.

This was the summer of the big drought, the summer of grasshoppers devouring the entire crop in South Dakota, the summer of the unforgettable dust storms. It was a hot summer even in Michigan. Therefore we decided to leave for Hull at 2:00 a.m., to drive through the cool of the night at least part of the way. By the time we reached Holland, Michigan we were already turning up the windows. By the time we reached Chicago, we had

to turn the heater on in the car as the car was overheating. This made me feel miserably sick. So we decided to stop early in the afternoon, sleep through the night and get an early start the next morning. Mom made the arrangements at a motel somewhere near Dubuque. But when the manager saw me staggering out of the car, she decided that the deal was off. She wanted no pregnant woman with a drunken husband in one of her rooms. It took a bit of persuasion to convince her that we would create no inconvenience.

There were others also who had interesting experiences in the automobile. Two men of the consistory of Hull PRC were appointed to attend the combined consistory meeting in Grand Rapids. They decided to go by car, even though they had never before ventured on a trip as big as this.

They rode along the gravel road and later in the day came to a detour. Returning from the detour, they found themselves back on the Atlantic-Yellowstone-Pacific Highway and continued on their way. After some time one remarked: "Never before have I seen the sun set in the east." The other agreed. So they decided to stop at a gas station and ask whether this was the highway to Chicago. They were informed that it was but as they were driving off the man at the station called to them, "Are you coming from or going to Chicago?" Being informed that they were on their way to Chicago, they were told that they were going the wrong way. Finally having reached Chicago they discovered that the highway led them right through the heart of the city. Cars passed them on both sides. Never had they experienced anything like this. So at the very first opportunity the driver brought the car up on the sidewalk, where he stopped with a sense of relief. He was reminded that this was not Grand Rapids. So a taxi driver was hired to bring them safely through the city and on their way again to their destination.

On another occasion, delegates from Doon, Rock Valley and Sioux Center respectively had gone by train to Grand Rapids, and were now on their way back home. Mr. Tim Kooima from Rock Valley had stopped in Chicago to buy a car to drive home.<sup>2</sup> Mr. John Broek of Sioux Center and Mr. Harm Zylstra of Doon had gone to the Union Station to await the train to Rock Valley. While they were waiting, Tim Kooima stopped at the station to offer them a ride home. Mr. Broek consented, but Mr. Zylstra decided to go home by train. But somehow the train had pulled out without him. He stayed in the station for 24 hours waiting for the next train. Because of the milling crowd rushing past, he was very reluctant

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even to rise from his seat. During the night a policeman thought him to be a bum and wanted to send him on his way. But in broken English he showed that he had a ticket for the train and was allowed to stay. It was Saturday evening before he could board the train, which brought him into Rock Valley on Sunday morning during the church service. Rather than interfere with the service he waited in a car outside and obtained a ride back home to Doon.

The most common means of travel at that time was by train. Yes, we did go by car when the family traveled, but in those days ministers could travel by train for half price. Therefore, when we traveled alone, we traveled by rail. This was most enjoyable, even though we rarely could afford to take a sleeper. It was a trip we looked forward to when the various delegates from the Midwest would travel by train to classis (At that time, classis was not yet divided into east and west).

Also going to classical appointment by train was a pleasure. Because of the Depression the train carried very few passengers. They would do almost anything to satisfy those few who did still ride their coaches. On one occasion I had gone by train to fill a classical appointment in Pella and Oskaloosa. The train that was to take me from Des Moines to Mason City, where I would transfer to the Chicago Milwaukee line, was an hour late. I told the conductor that, since they were an hour late, I would miss my train in Mason City, and would not be able to get home until the next day. After a bit of investigating he came back and asked me whether I was willing to follow orders strictly. I assured him that there was not much I would not do to get home that same day. So the arrangements were made. As we approached the switches of Mason City, the train had to slow up to almost a complete stop. I stood, as ordered, on the bottom step of the coach, travel bag in hand, and as the train slowed up I jumped into the ditch. Then, still following orders, I waited until the train was past, only to hear a most welcome voice in the distance, directing me to a waiting taxi. Five minutes before train time, we arrived in the Chicago Milwaukee station.

On another occasion I had two chickens, stripped and drawn to take back to Oak Lawn. It was warm in the train, so that I became concerned about my two chickens. I talked to the conductor, who took them to the water cooler, where they stayed on ice until I arrived in Chicago.

At that time Hull was more or less the center of the churches in the Midwest. This congregation had the larg-

est church building, so that classes, lectures, conferences with the German Reformed Churches, and other prominent meetings were held there.

One year comes to mind when a number of delegates from the east were coming by train and were stalled near Spencer because of floods. A few of us got into our cars and drove down to where the train was stalled to pick up the delegates, among whom were Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff. That noon we had thirteen people around our dining room table. Thirteen hungry men and we had but one scrawny chicken. Having come from a large family, Mom did not get too excited about these unexpected impositions. She usually had canned meat in the basement, which could readily be heated up.

On one occasion Rev. Hoeksema was staying with us when two elderly couples came from Kalamazoo. When one of the ladies heard that Rev. Hoeksema was staying with us, she was determined also to stay with us. When told that we had no room, she got herself sick, so that she could not stay "out in the country". The result was that she stayed in bed all day, and then when we were ready to visit a bit in the evening, she got up, once making the remark, "O Dominee Hoeksma, I could sit up all night and listen to you." He answered, "But I'm going to bed."

And so, since the nation was increasingly on the move with these advancements in travel, we were able to keep in touch with our extended family and other churches in the denomination. ❖

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Otto Vander Woude was the father of John, a member in Grandville Church, and Mrs. Corson, a member in First Church, Grand Rapids.

<sup>2</sup> This was the father of Tim Kooima from our Hull Church.

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*Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.*

# The Russian Orthodox Churches

by J. P. de Klerk

**T**he Russian Orthodox Church is the property of the government, financed by the import of cigarettes and spirits at an extremely large scale. These taxed products are at the same time a nice source of income for the Department of Finance in Moscow. No objections, no questions, no problems.

The priests of the Russian Orthodox Church dislike representatives from the Protestant-Christian churches of the Western World. Increasingly, the police keeps them at a distance; sometimes waving people away when they are taking pictures. They fear the preaching of ministers and missionaries from the West; the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church do very little preaching during their services.

Sometimes they remind visitors of an historic conflict they had in 1371 with the sect of the Strigolniki who attacked the State Church.

They have the viewpoint that their followers' salvation depended on their doing good works.

The same priests who worked in the time of the Soviet Union are still at their posts under the Federal Russian Union under President Putin. Russian Christian Radio calls the church government officials a corrupt political power. The common man on the street is not aware of this and does not worry about it.

Visitors from western countries should not be impressed with the beautiful singing choirs of the monks, the pieces of art and the golden ornaments. Some priests are members of the Secret Service (according to "Voice of the Martyrs"). But in the city of Novgorod there exists the one and only Protestant Christian Church of the whole of Russia. It has its own radio and TV studios which reach a big part of Russia. They are helped by ministers and missionaries from the USA (financed by private organizations). They are protected by the bur-



gomaster and the governor of the area, who are both Christians. ❖

*J.P. de Klerk is a writer and journalist in Ashhurst, New Zealand.*

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## A Turn of Events: from Chaos to Comfort (Part 6)

*... let it shine!*

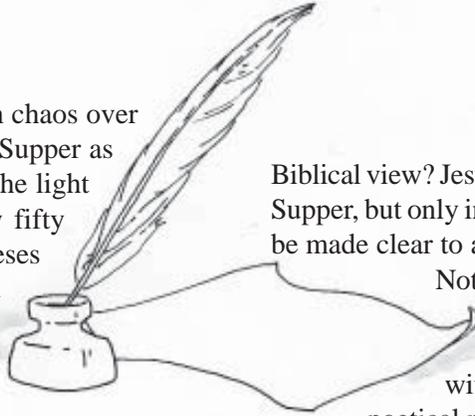
by Connie Meyer

The year was 1562. The land was in chaos over lack of direction concerning the Lord's Supper as well as some other points of doctrine. The light of the Reformation had dawned nearly fifty years earlier when Luther nailed his theses to the door in Wittenberg, but that light had scattered in many different directions and was not yet fully understood. It must be gathered into one, clear beacon of truth. This would be a year for creeds and confessions.

Electoral Frederick III ruled from his castle in Heidelberg, Germany. He saw the need for writing a unifying catechism. His own wife was Lutheran and tried to persuade him to see the Lord's Supper from the Lutheran point of view over against Calvin's, but he was not convinced. There had been much trouble and confusion in Heidelberg over the Lord's Supper, and now he knew not where to turn. He shut himself alone in his rooms to study the Scriptures themselves for direction. God answered his prayer and Frederick emerged with confidence. The Calvinistic view was the Scriptural one. He knew what kind of men ought to write the new catechism as well.

Twenty-eight-year-old Zacharius Ursinus was recently appointed as professor of dogmatics at Heidelberg's university. Twenty-six-year-old Caspar Olevianus was the new pastor of the Church of the Holy Spirit. Both men had already shown themselves to be extremely gifted in teaching and preaching, as well as outstanding in godliness. Both had been taught by John Calvin, Peter Martyr, and other important reformers. Frederick assigned the task to them.

But even Frederick could not have known the full import of the document that would result from their pens. God knew. God had brought these men to Heidelberg. God had prepared them for the task. In all their studies, Ursinus and Olevianus came to understand that Luther had gone too far in saying Christ's body and blood were present in the Lord's Supper in a physical way. They also understood that to say Christ was not present in the bread and wine at all was not enough. What was the



Biblical view? Jesus Christ is indeed present in the Lord's Supper, but only in a spiritual way. This truth would now be made clear to all.

Not only would the Lord's Supper be properly set forth, Olevianus' bold and eloquent preaching would combine with Ursinus' careful teaching and clear, poetical mind to yield a catechism unparalleled in clarity and beauty, useful for both preaching and teaching. God had led both men to see and hear the theme of all of Scripture, a melody that rang in glorious three-step rhythm to comfort the people of God, young and old, in life and in death: misery, deliverance, gratitude. Over and over—the triple knowledge is necessary for comfort.

The Heidelberg Catechism was adopted without reservation in 1563 and was received by the church with much thanksgiving. Centuries later we are still profoundly grateful for God's leading from confusion and chaos to order and comfort by having shown them—and us—this knowledge of the truth. Indeed, according to the plan and wisdom of God, such is the turn of events.



**Unscramble the following words** from the second Q. & A. of Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism (can you quote Q. & A. 1?): "How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?"

HERTE; HET TRIFS, WHO ARGET YM NISS NAD REEMISIS REA;  
\_\_\_\_\_

ETH CONDES, WOH I YAM EB REEDVELID ROFM LAL YM ISSN  
\_\_\_\_\_

DAN SRIEMISE; TEH HITDR, OHW I LASHL SPEERSX YM  
\_\_\_\_\_

DRAUGITTE OT GOD ROF HUSC NEVERILCEAD.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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## 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:  
Hannah Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan DeJong—  
Faith, MI

Michaela Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael  
Noorman—Faith, MI

Carson James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim VanBaren—Faith,  
MI

Gabrielle Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric  
Phelps—First, MI

Samantha Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Voshell—  
First, MI

Owen Tyler, son of Mr. & Mrs. Vance Hayes—First, MI

Leah Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Bleyenbergh—  
Grandville, MI

Lucas Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter J. Boverhof—  
Grandville, MI

Emma Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Kooienga—  
Grandville, MI

Sophia Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis  
VanderKolk—Grandville, MI

Thomas Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Calvin DenHartog—  
Lynden, WA

Abigail Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Moore—  
Lynden, WA

Taylor Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Dykstra—  
South Holland, IL

Ryan David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan J. Regnerus—South  
Holland, IL

### 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:

Katie VanDenTop—Doon, IA

Alyssa VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI

Stephanie Tolsma—Loveland, CO

### 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. Troy Karsemeyer and Miss Danae Kooienga—Byron  
Center, MI

Mr. David Baldwin and Miss Lai Yin Wong—Byron  
Center, MI

Mr. Justin Visser and Miss Nicole Dykstra—Georgetown,  
MI

Mr. Jason Boer and Miss Katy Westhuis—Georgetown,  
MI

Mr. Gerald Feenstra and Miss Debbie Elzinga—Grace,  
MI

Mr. Ross Zuverink and Miss Rhonda Koole—Hope, MI

Mr. Tim Kortering and Miss Hannah Flikkema—  
Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Nathan Buys and Miss Heather Groen—Hull, IA

Mr. Brad Groeneweg and Miss Larissa Groeneweg—  
Hull, IA

Mr. Paul Hoekstra and Miss Tena Feenstra—Kalamazoo,  
MI

Mr. Trent VanBemmel and Miss Michelle Worries—South  
Holland, IL

Mr. Drew Duthler and Miss Lori Van Baren—South  
Holland, IL