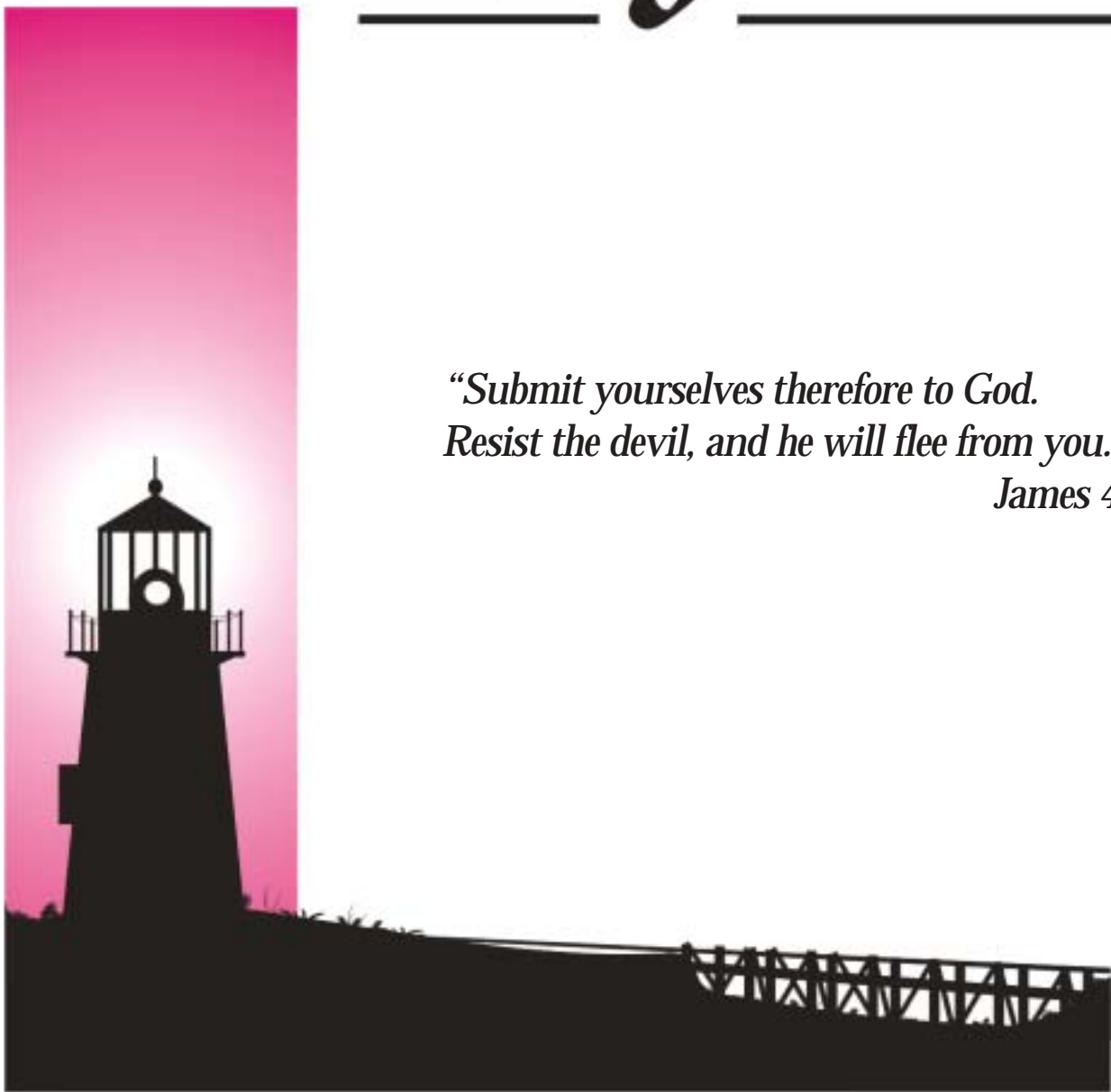


# *Beacon Lights*

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*“Submit yourselves therefore to God.  
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”  
James 4:7*



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# Trinity and Covenant

Reviewed by John Huizenga

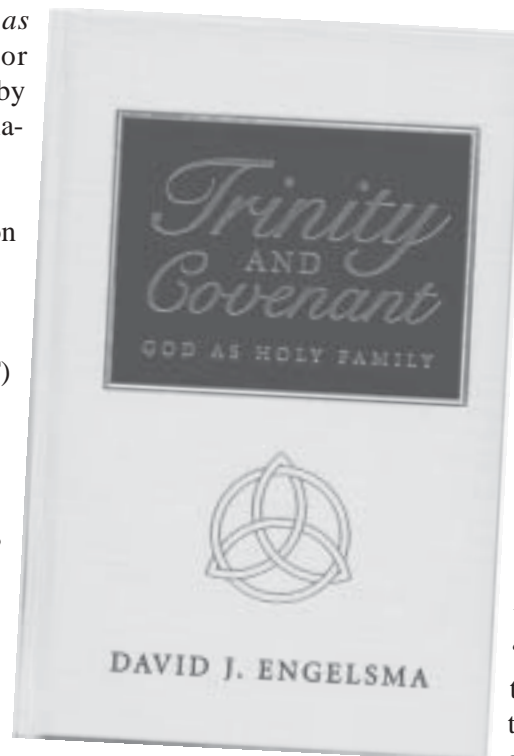
**T***rinity and Covenant: God as Holy Family*, by Professor David Engelsma, published by The Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006.

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Are you contemplating marriage? Making confession of faith? Having regular devotions? Leading as head of your family? Raising children? Building a home? Wondering where God would have you go in life? Building a school? Starting a new congregation? Witnessing to the world? Watching the growth of the Muslim religion. Do you wonder where we are in history? How our churches fit into the big picture? Are you soon lost when the minister preaches about the trinity?...you really need to read this book. And then read it again...and again.

No, Professor Engelsma has not hit the publishing market with the ultimate self-help book. Most of the world will probably never know the book exists. Even so, the book is more than a rare gem. I would dare say that it is one of the most important books published since the Reformation.

Important because it carries whole church and its doctrine to a new level where all the old truths, cherished by the church since the beginning, can be explored again with a finer focus. It gathers tools from the treasures of many men of God to mine God's word for the



profound truths about God Himself. For every talent of understanding we gain about our God, our Creator, Savior, and Father; we can invest it in every area of our life on this earth and return one hundred fold for His praise and glory.

This book truly develops the church's knowledge of God. It does not bring a new wind of doctrine, but rather it picks up truths about the nature of God triune revealed to us from the beginning, states these truths boldly and clearly, not holding back and shying away from the awesome truth. The author goes in, like Peter pushing past John into the empty tomb, believing what he sees, and writes: "Only if a doctrine of the Trinity draws the charge of tritheism can it be assured that it is doing justice to the threeness of God" (51). He then puts together two

pieces of the grand puzzle of God and His relation to all creation: the trinity and covenant.

God has used the Protestant Reformed Churches throughout its history to develop the doctrine of the covenant as a relationship of friendship. The doctrine of the trinity was one of the first doctrines that the church developed. It has been handled through the ages, but until now has never been placed more carefully in relation to God's covenant.

Professor Engelsma demonstrates that the doctrine of the trinity, instead of being dry impractical theology, is the most practical doctrine of all. He writes, "Weakness in the church's thinking and teaching about God as three shows up in the practice of the Christian life. The life of God determines the lives of his children, even as the life together of earthly parents shapes the lives of their children" (42). And again, "It calls the church to

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defend the family from the attacks upon it in our day. The earthly family is rooted in the triune being of God (107).

I look forward to application of the doctrine of the trinity in the preaching, publications, and ultimately in our day to day lives. I look forward to the sharpening of iron against iron as the rising tide of Federal Theology is met. I sense the need to have the doctrine of the trinity knit into every fiber of our body and soul as we face a growing religion that passionately holds to a god consisting of one solitary person—Islam.

The book is definitely meat, but nothing that our young people need to shy away from. If you have not yet sampled an adult menu, you will certainly not be disappointed with this. It is my prayer that reading this book will launch you into a further study of God's word. For "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). ❖

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

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## Church Family

# Sir, We Would See Jesus

by Trisha Haak

**S**ometimes you think you won't make it through the week.

I mean that in a spiritual sense. The week seems so long. You battle the enemy, you travel up the hill. The enemy never relents. The incline of the hill never slackens but instead you keep going up, up, up. You wonder where Sunday is. You need it now more than ever. You feel worn out and tired. You just need to lay your burden aside, to close your eyes and let your mind rest a while from the troubles of the world.

And finally Sunday arrives. You reach the top of the hill that you've been climbing all week. You look down and see a beautiful valley full of waterfalls and pools, sweet grass and tall trees that shade you from the sun. You sit and you rest. You could almost close your eyes, so peaceful is the beauty that surrounds you. Then you hear His voice and it is sweeter than the grass that you smell and it shades you from the cruel glare of your sin more than the trees could ever shade you from the heat of the sun. What He has to say fills your soul and quiets you as he leads you by the still waters.

If only this was our response every Sunday. Yet our sinful natures make us incapable of always recognizing Sunday for what it really is. We don't view it as rest for

our souls, as a glimpse of what heaven will be. Instead we use it as another day to mentally and physically accomplish the things we didn't take care of during the week. And it's a shame that we do because we lose the advantage and beauty of the day.

The advantage of Sunday is found in the knowledge that it is a day of rest. The world plows through the day as if it were any other. They think that by doing so it will somehow redeem them, that if they have more time for themselves then at the end of their lives they can feel fulfilled. But fulfillment has never been found within the ego and the only result of self-fulfillment is self-destruction. The secret of the day lies within the words that are spoken over the pulpit. Preaching is the key to true rest for the believer who wearily travels as a pilgrim through this world.

We are particular about the sounds of preaching that come to us over the pulpit. Since it is the chief means of grace and since faith comes by hearing this word proclaimed the only thing we want to hear are the words of Christ Himself. Man's opinion cannot save us and the advice of society can only leave us frustrated as if there were no end to our misery. The comfort of salvation comes to us through the peace that Christ gives to us by

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the Spirit. He uses the preaching to show us the horrible condition of our sin, the dangerous state that we live in and the knowledge of the cross as being the act of God that will completely save us.

When Christ was on the earth He instructed the people in parables because in His wisdom He chose to make the simple things confound the wise and the Pharisees. By speaking in parables He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Psalm 78: 2, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old." The words and parables of Christ were so great that certain Greeks came to the feast to inquire of Jesus. John 12: 20 and 21 state, "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip...saying, Sir, we would see Jesus."

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**We say to the minister  
every Sunday, "Sir, we  
would see Jesus."**

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It is no different for the child of God who sits in the pew in a church in America than it was for the child of God who lived at the time of Christ. We say to the minister every Sunday, "Sir, we would see Jesus." We want to hear the mysteries of the kingdom revealed to us, explanations of the parables spoken by Christ. We need to hear how the prophecies of old were fulfilled by the child in a manger and how God used the history and the doings of the ancient world to bring this promise to fruition. We need to hear how the sufferings of His life afforded us salvation that was sealed eternally on the cross. We need to hear how He conquered death and left this world with the promise of the coming of His Spirit. We need to hear that Christ is coming again and how the signs of the time point to His return. We need to hear what He has to say to us because the sound of His voice is what pleases our regenerated hearts the most.

Sometimes we think that we don't need to hear these things because we've heard them so many times before. But if you feel that way then you don't know your old man of sin very well. He is so very crafty and persuasive - and above all persistent. He wants you to forget every doctrine that you know. Because if you don't know anything about the teachings of Christ then he knows that you have nothing to fight him with. What do you say to him when you are tempted to gossip about someone? No, I can't gossip about this person. It's wrong. Then he'll ask why. And what do you say? Because my minis-

ter said so. He'll talk you out of it just like the serpent did in the Garden of Eden. The only thing that will defeat him is doctrine, the words and teachings of Christ Himself. Say to your old man, No, I can't talk bad about this person because God commands me to love my neighbor as myself. He commands me of this because He first loved me. And if God so loved me then I ought also to love my brother. Try that with your old man of sin. The word of Christ will break him because the power of Christ's word lives in you. They will break him because it is preordained that they should do such. It is a dark saying of old that God has spoken since forever. He will crush the enemy simply by the fulfillment of His spoken word.

The people of the church need to hear the practical application of the word of God. But they can only know this by knowing the doctrines that define these applications. The two are interwoven. Doctrine means nothing if the people do not apply in to their lives (faith without works is dead). Yet the people are lost in the art of application if they do not understand why they must do these things (Thy word is a lamp unto my feet).

Why does God command that we be holy? Because He is holy and dwells in perfect peace within the Trinity. Why must we love one another and strive to dwell in unity? Because God, the Son and Spirit dwell in unity and love in the Godhead. In His mercy He has brought us into the covenant and made us able to partake of His love and friendship. God could have demanded these things of us and given no explanation. And we would have had to obey them because He decreed them. But in His wisdom He made us rationale creatures capable of thinking, of processing thoughts and using reasoning to come to logical explanations. Why? So that every thought that you have, every idea that comes into your mind draws you to the conclusion that God is great and worthy of all praise.

So if you seek practical application in the preaching that you hear then you would be wise to look in a mirror. *You* are the practical application. As you hear the doctrine and parables revealed and explained to you Christ engrafs them into your heart through the working of the Spirit. Did you recently hear a sermon on the Trinity? Then remember it the next time you are watching the television or on the Internet. You will say to yourself, "I can't watch this because I remember what the minister said about the triune nature of God. So beautiful is the love and unity that the Father, Son and Spirit dwell in that I cannot corrupt my mind by watching this filth."



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This is what it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Salvation has been given to you and by the power of Christ as He renews your heart you spread that salvation to cover every aspect of your life. The words that He speaks to you over the pulpit are the candles that light your way as you walk in a way pleasing to Him.

Guard the vessel that God has ordained to bring you His word. Do not attack the minister with the cruel expectations of your imagination. Sometimes we demand of others what we ourselves are incapable of achieving. But don't let this be with your minister. Demand of him that you would see Jesus. You want to hear about the One you love the most. You don't want the minister's opinions. You can discuss those over coffee sometime if you wish. You don't want anything watered down, nothing minced with pleasant empty words that are nothing more than nothingness. You want to hear the truth because you are sick. Deathly sick. And the Balm of Gilead is the only One that can heal you.

Remember to always do your minister a favor by remembering that he is only a man. Do not exalt him too high or criticize him too incessantly. These are the fruits of darkness. The devil would have us focus on man rather than God. He would also want us to criticize the means that God uses to speak to us. Even Aaron and Miriam complained about Moses because he married an Ethiopian woman. God gave leprosy to Miriam because they doubted the means that God had chosen to reveal Him-

self. It angers God when we critique the man rather than meditate on the message that God brought to us through that man. It is not given to us to judge who is worthy of being ordained. Rather it is commanded of us that we should pray diligently for these men who have been called to feed the flock of Jesus Christ.

Christ speaks to us in a loud voice or in gentle whisper. He speaks to us through ordained men in so many different ways. But it wasn't how well the message was delivered and how hard the church shook from the power of the minister's voice that matters. The exhibitions of men's talents don't delight the Lord. The outward show of our sacrifices don't please Him. He isn't deceived by the vanities of human talents. God looks at our hearts and we must always be mindful of that as we sit in the pew. Let the minister answer to God for any shortcomings he may have. He stands in the need of the cross just like any other child of God. But remember as you listen that God is looking at your heart to see. Here is the test, He says. Hear my words, my dark sayings of old. Now sacrifice your only child. Sacrifice the one thing you love the most: yourself. And listen. And then do. This is the test that is tied into every sermon that you hear. The searching and discerning eye of God to see if there be any wicked ways in you. He looks for the listening ear and the willing heart, for the seed that takes root to become the olive branches of His Zion. ❖

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

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## Sincerely, A Mother's Heart... to Her Children

**W**hat do you want from us? You keep showing, by your actions, that you hate what we've taught you; therefore, you despise us as well. You bring shame to your mother and great dishonor to your father. Why? Why is there no remorse for your deeds? Why do you shrug them off? "Only once" you

say, or "I *only* did it twice."—minimizing the seriousness of the sin. Would you say the same of murder? "I only did it once, don't make such a big deal of it." I don't think so.

We love you too much to leave things as they are. There are consequences—not only for sin (STDs, cir-

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rhosis); but especially for impenitence and lack of sorrow for sin—eternal death. It is *that* which concerns us the most—your eagerness to indulge in sin, and the lack of remorse and repentance. When you plan to commit the same sin repeatedly, you are not truly sorry. We continue to pray for you daily.

We ask that you limit your contact with us and your siblings as long as you are unwilling to fight against fornication and drunkenness which lead to a host of other sins. When you are ready to repent and fight, we can and will again support and welcome you with open arms.

Remember, you cannot fight this battle of life on your own. You need Christ who dwells in your heart. I know that many times it “feels” like he is far from you—those are the times when you fail to pray and search the Scriptures for his guidance.

The lie that the devil used with Eve, he still uses today and it is swallowed up hook, line, and sinker. It is in essence this: To know evil, you must “taste” it and disobey God. This is a lie from the devil, the father of the lie. (See *Doctrine According to Godliness*.)

God says to *forsake* evil and *flee* from it. What happened when Eve listened to the lie? What happened to Adam? Man could no longer tell good from evil. He calls evil, good; and good he calls evil. God is good and totally separated from evil. He works grace in us to separate ourselves from evil.

Our prayer is that God opens your eyes to see your sinful, miserable, undeserving, wretched state, (as he has caused me to see my natural state to be the same), that God may show you how you ARE delivered from that state, and give you a strong, healthy desire to walk in his ways. Even Paul had to declare, “O wretched man that I am—who shall deliver me?” and our comfort, “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*”—our deliverance.

Remember, in your times of weakness, that “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Know that “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” not as stocks and blocks, but as willing servants. And God “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”

So, have you stopped reading yet? After you read the consequences of your impenitence? You then missed the most important part, dear child. Our life in dealing with our sinful human nature makes prayer very necessary. When prayer does not come easily, it is because we

want to hang on to our sin. The Spirit then takes over with groanings which cannot be uttered. Yes, the devil and his temptations are powerful, but there is One who is stronger still, even to the point of limiting the power of the devil.

Or did you stop reading when I began quoting scripture? Is it *that* which turns you off and makes you tune out? Is the scripture what you stop your ears to? Is God’s Word what you walk away from? You would like to live in your sin a little longer? Maybe you think you will be given time to repent just prior to your death, as the murderer on the cross? Sin now, repent later—Is that your attitude?

You were brought up with the Word of God. You walk in the ways of wickedness, worldly ways. Sure, you may attend church when you feel so inclined, but where is your mind wandering during the sermon? What cynical thoughts did you have regarding what the minister said about judgment this morning and how judgment for the righteous is blessed and for the wicked it is fearsome? Or is that the point where you directed your thoughts elsewhere?

Scripture states (Philippians 3:18, 19) “For many walk, . . . the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” The end is destruction, dear child. Paul weeps when he writes this. I weep too, when I pray, “*Lord, why does my child so kick against the pricks? Why must he struggle so? Grant him a repentant and humble heart that desires after Thee.*”

Dear child, know my love for you. Know that for you I do not desire earthly wealth and riches; success by man’s standards does not impress me, for “better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.” Your so-called independence does not make me happy. Rather, poverty and total trust in God would comfort your mother far more. Understanding that you can do nothing outside of God’s grace would give me far more satisfaction. For you to realize that independence means nothing apart from total dependence upon God would be far more beneficial to you.

Know that for you, dear child, “I water my couch with my tears.” Know that for you, “Mine eye is consumed because of grief.” Know that “the Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer. . . the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping” (Psa. 6). May

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your struggle with sin bring you closer to that total dependence on God.

Back to the aspect of “sin now, repent later.” Dear child, please do not take that stance - there are consequences which are serious! Life long consequences! A certain woman married a divorced man, knowing it was wrong, with that very attitude. She said she would marry him, then repent later—then what? Would she divorce him to show her turning from that sin? Do you see how sin leads to sin and it becomes a vicious circle?

Or what about the couple who divorces, and the man, seeing no sign of reconciliation from his wife (for that is what he longs for) decides to take another wife. God leads his first wife (his true wife) to repentance and a desire for reconciliation and restoration of that relationship, after he has wed his second wife. What then? Must he divorce his second wife so he may be restored to the first? Or may she not repent and experience forgiveness and reconciliation because he could wait no longer? You see how ridiculous things become when we give in to sin and do not trust the Lord—His timing, His promises. (God hates divorce and remarriage when one’s spouse still lives is adultery—there are consequences to these sins.)

Dear child, ungodly decisions made when you are young have serious lifetime consequences. Even when you repent and are forgiven, you may have to suffer with a lifelong remembrance of your evil deeds. Because you indulged in fornication, sexual pleasure with your spouse may have its struggles. You may acquire an illness which prevents you from ever having children, the gift of God in marriage. Or you may have a child out of wedlock who reminds you of the sins of your youth. Christ requires us to remain pure for our future spouse, just as the church, the bride of Christ is to remain pure to greet her Husband when he comes again.

Your drunkenness, when you repent and are forgiven, may have given you a life-long illness, causing many years of suffering for you and your family as well as affecting your other relationships. Think not that your worldly “friends” will stand by you in such difficult times. “The wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth” (Psa. 10:3), and “the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts” (Psa. 10:4). “He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he wilt never see it” (Psa. 10:11). Is that you, dear child? Or is it your friends?

“Sin now—repent later?” No man knoweth the day nor the hour. God decides. Repent promptly, dear child, and resolve to *forsake and flee*. “Flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). I weep and pray for you—God alone will grant you grace.

*“Lord, turn the hearts of our children to thee, to glorify and honor thy name, even when the consequences are hatred from the wicked world in which we live. Give them strength, Lord, and wisdom to acknowledge that thou art all and in all and that this world passes away but the Word, Christ, abides forever. Grant that through their struggles with sin their faith may be strengthened. Strengthen my faith, dear Father, to see that thy ways are best for me and my children. Help me and guide me to pray for them in a way that glorifies thee. For I know that thy ways are not always my ways. Help me to submit to thy will. Forgive all my sins and weaknesses and guide me to do and say the right things to exhort and admonish my children.”*

Dear children, think not, “I would NEVER do that” or “I’m a good person, I don’t do those kinds of things.” You have only to carefully examine your heart to see what your thoughts are. When you are humbled to see the reality of your own sin and how your very thoughts and desires are blackened with pride, God gives you a heart of forgiveness, for you too have been forgiven—how can you not forgive those who have walked in gross public sin? Are you *really* any better? Have *you* no need for forgiveness? Are you as the rich man who declared, regarding the commandments, “All these have I observed from my youth” and proceed to curse the poor and down-trodden?

“Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Prov. 20:9). “Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Prov. 20:11).

Dear children with your proud and haughty spirits, I yearn for your hearts to turn; I pray for you to forgive and love as God for Christ’s sake has loved and forgiven you.

Dear children, do you mock your brother who sins? Do you talk about him and his sin to others in a judgmental manner? Or do you pray for him, go to him in concern and humility, realizing how great your own sin is, and admonish him to turn from his ways and follow Christ? Dear children, I weep and pray for you. I pray that God keeps you away from the sin of being a “tale-bearer that revealeth secrets.” “Whoso keepeth (controls)



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his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23).

“An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin” Because you think you are better than him, will you have nothing to do with him? Or do you yearn for him to turn from sin, and pray for courage to admonish him in love? A word from you may be far more effectual than from his parents...

I pray that our heavenly Father gives you a heart that does not have pleasure in wickedness, in the evil deeds of others to mock and ridicule. I pray that He humbles your pride and gives you great love, so great, that your life depends on it. I pray God gives you grace to walk in that humility and strength to speak to your wayward brother of the things of God’s kingdom. Let God’s Word be your guide, and pray. Pray for strength,

dear children, and wisdom, and peace in your hearts. Pray for strength to hold your tongue when necessary and to speak peaceably, yet forcefully and with courage when needful. Stand on the promises of God, dear children, and walk in His grace in love. *Forsake and flee* sin and evil, dear children.

“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6).

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7).

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam. 5:16). ❖

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*The author wishes to remain anonymous.*

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## From: *The Confessions of Saint Augustine Book VIII*

**B**ut when a deep consideration had from the secret bottom of my soul drawn together and heaped up all my misery in the sight of my heart; there arose a mighty storm, bringing a mighty shower of tears. Which that I might pour forth wholly, in its natural expressions, I rose from Alypius: solitude was suggested to me as fitter for the business of weeping; so I retired so far that even his presence could not be a burden to me. Thus was it then with me, and he perceived something of it; for something I suppose I had spoken, wherein the tones of my voice appeared choked with weeping, and so had risen up. He then remained where we were sitting, most extremely astonished. I cast myself down I know not how, under a certain fig tree, giving full vent to my tears; and the floods of mine eyes gushed out an acceptable sacrifice to Thee. And, not indeed in these words, yet to this purpose, spake I much unto Thee: and Thou, O Lord, how long? how long, Lord, wilt Thou be angry for ever? Remember not our former

iniquities, for I felt that I was held by them. I sent up these sorrowful words: How long, how long, “tomorrow, and tomorrow?” Why not now? why not is there this hour an end to my uncleanness?

So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, “Take up and read; Take up and read.” Instantly, my countenance altered, I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words: nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him: Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow

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me: and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee. Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, in concupiscence. No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

Then putting my finger between, or some other mark, I shut the volume, and with a calmed countenance made it known to Alypius. And what was wrought in him, which I knew not, he thus showed me. He asked to see what I had read: I showed him; and he looked even further than I had read, and I knew not what followed. This followed, him that is weak in the faith, receive; which he applied to himself, and disclosed to me. And by this

admonition was he strengthened; and by a good resolution and purpose, and most corresponding to his character, wherein he did always very far differ from me, for the better, without any turbulent delay he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother; we tell her; she rejoiceth: we relate in order how it took place; she leaps for joy, and triumpheth, and blesseth Thee, Who are able to do above that which we ask or think; for she perceived that Thou hadst given her more for me, than she was wont to beg by her pitiful and most sorrowful groanings. For thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife, nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith, where Thou hadst showed me unto her in a vision, so many years before. And Thou didst convert her mourning into joy, much more plentiful than she had desired, and in a much more precious and purer way than she erst required, by having grandchildren of my body. ❖

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<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/augconf/aug08.htm>

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From the Pastor's Study

# The Calling of a Young Wife (2)

by Rev. Steven Key

In our last article in which we began our study of Titus 2:4, 5, we called attention to the love which a young wife is called to give her husband and children.

According to this inspired Word of God, that calling to love comes to virtuous manifestation, as we see in verse 5.

## **Discretion**

In the first place, we note that the young wife is to be marked by discretion.

To be discreet is to be of sound judgment, wise in conduct and management. To be characterized by discretion is to have a spiritual-minded perspective and approach to all decisions necessary in the home.

The discreet woman avoids that which would injure her own soul and influence, or that would injure her husband and children. She realizes that what she takes into her life and what she does will have its effect through the years. She realizes that what is in harmony with God's will shall certainly have a good end, but the bad is a means to a grievous outcome. Therefore she seeks to do what is right in God's sight, and rejects the bad.

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And she knows, because the heart is deceitful above all things, that she may not rely upon her own feelings or opinions as to what is right in a given situation; but she must seek God's will in all things.

The young woman who is discreet is a young woman who prays. She prays for wisdom, for sound judgment, for the fervent desire to walk according to all God's precepts. And God grants her request. The enemy is not able to "pull the wool over her eyes." She seeks the glory of God and His praise.

And when she errs, for she still struggles with her sinful nature, that error is the exception, and her husband and children will recognize it as such.

### **Chaste**

The young wife must also be chaste.

That is a reflection of the love she has for her husband, love flowing forth from the love of God in her heart.

She is chaste, pure, expressing a life of holiness. She is careful about her conduct, her influence, her plans and purposes. She guards her tongue, that source of much impurity and evil. She is careful concerning her dress. She does not live for extravagance, is not wasteful. She is cautious about where she goes and doesn't keep company with those who are unholy and impure.

To this godly young woman, pure and upright womanhood is a pearl of great price. She possesses self-control, not to be led astray like the silly women who are worldly and ungodly.

This holiness characterizes her life because she anchors her life to Christ, the Rock.

These are among the attributes that you women who are older are to set before the young women.

### **Keeper at Home**

In addition, a God-fearing young wife is to be a home-worker and good.

In our society and in the day and age in which we live, this text has become one that most preachers would like to avoid. The expression "keepers at home" is so unmistakably clear, that in churches where young mothers working outside the home has become the norm, rather than the exception, the teaching of this Word of God presses upon the waywardness of many. That makes it uncomfortable, not only for those who have disobeyed this Word, but also for the preacher who must preach it without regard to the faces of men and women.

The consequences of disobedience to this commanded place of the mother are seen even by society.

Many want to deny those consequences, but they are evident in undisciplined children, broken marriages, two-income families filled with financial strife over where money shall be spent, and many other societal evils. But we do not make judgments in the matter on the basis of bad results in society when mothers leave their God-given calling in the home.

We stand before the Word of God Himself. As Christians the Word of God is the standard for us, both concerning what we believe, but also how we live.

Remember, the Apostle gives instruction here concerning that lifestyle which is *becoming*, i.e., which is consistent with sound doctrine. This is the kind of lifestyle that is in harmony with God's truth.

It is God's will that young mothers are to be "keepers at home," home-workers. For there is a steep price to be paid in the violation of this Word of God.

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Again, you will notice that the text speaks specifically of those young women who have children in the home. And the text speaks not only of toddlers, but children from infancy through the age of adolescence. When you have children who come home to an empty house after school, or who are regularly left during the summer months without mother's direct supervision and guidance; when you have children that are turned over to someone else's care during the day, there is a forsaking of the God-ordained bond between mother and children, and the responsibility that God has given father and mother with respect to their children.

The inspired Apostle puts it this way in I Timothy 5:14: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Mothers with children at home are not to be off working outside of the home, but in their house, serving God, literally, as the "despot of the house." Now, in the usage of our language that term *despot* often carries the connotation of a tyrant. But the meaning is simply that in the home during the day there must be one with au-

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thority, one who is governing. The husband is out of the home, laboring in obedience to God's will for him. The wife and mother must be in the home, governing and giving constant guidance, also spiritually, for the welfare of that home.

No exceptions are mentioned. Sometimes there is argument made that there must be exceptions to this, if financial necessity requires a second income. But where do you find such an exception in the Bible? Where do you find it? I don't find it anywhere.

I find much instruction in Scripture concerning what we must do in times of financial distress.

I learn from Scripture that when I consider myself lacking, I must first examine my own lifestyle and expenditures. Do I have a mistaken notions about what are necessities and what are luxuries? Are there things that we can do without, or lesser things that will suffice our needs?

I learn from Scripture as well, that when I look at my budget and my expenditures and find that I am not mismanaging as a poor steward those gifts which God has provided, nor am neglecting my calling to labor for the provision of my family, then I must seek help from others. I Timothy 5 is clear on that, to mention one passage.

The others from whom I must first seek help are my relatives. That is nothing shameful. That is the way God would have us go. And Christian relatives, parents, brothers and sisters, even aunts and uncles, should be sensitive to the needs of such families and stand willing to help them. I Timothy 5:8 is clear: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

And then, the Bible tells us, if our needs are such that our extended family cannot help us, we are to seek the mercies of Christ from His appointed deacons. Again, that is not a shameful thing, when God has providentially placed you in that position. That is a tremendous blessing, to know that God has appointed a means to care for you in time of need. And let me just mention, that includes provision for the godly instruction of our children in our Christian schools. When we are needful for financial assistance, that help must be there, also in order that we may fulfill our covenant obligations in the godly instruction of our children. God's mercies provide for us through the office of deacon. We must not seek another way than the ways which God points us toward.

The Bible tells us how to deal with financial distress. Let us heed God's wise instruction.

But never does the Bible give as an option, the mother's forsaking of her calling to be a "keeper at home." That is a necessary and tremendously important aspect of her calling, a manifestation of godly virtue on the part of a young wife and mother in the church.

As to those who object that the church would make the house a prison for mothers, we will not be led astray by such argumentation, shall we.

You understand that it is not at all the point of this text to confine young women exclusively to the house. She has other callings within the body of believers that will take her out of the house from time to time, often with her children.

Besides being an integral part of her husband's household, she is an integral part of the church, and lives in the fellowship of the saints.

### **Good**

The God-fearing young wife also shows love for her husband by showing herself "good." She is to be taught to be "good."

The reference to being "good" is a reference to the fact that she is not only the home-maker, but a helper in the body of Christ. She is ready to come to the assistance of other members of the congregation. She visits others in the church, particular to speak encouraging words. She takes her time by showing pure religion and undefiled, visiting the widows and orphans.

Unlike one who fills her day with work outside the home, this virtuous woman has time for others.

Not only to be discreet, chaste and keepers at home, but good—that is the calling of the young wife.

You older women must teach these things to your daughters and younger sisters in Christ. (*To be continued.*) ❖

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*Reprinted from October, 1998 Beacon Lights.*

# 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 March 1998)

March 16 Read Philippians 4:1-9

**Psalm 48:8** Did you hear the voice of Christ yesterday? Did He speak to you through the sermon? Consider what you heard; have you seen in the church’s history the truths of what you heard? God’s people throughout history have been given accounts of His wonderful works. But they do not just get the history of these works, God’s people experience His wonderful works in their lives. Daily we know that God is on our side, and we need not fear what man may do to us. What we hear and see only happens in one place. That place is the church of God. People of God, you will not experience the goodness of Jehovah anywhere else but in His church. Do not try to find peace and rest in another place. God has spoken and His word never changes. Sing Psalter 131:4.

March 17 Read Lamentations 3:22-32

**Psalm 48:9** We hear men speak of how good God is, and we agree readily. We can say this after a birth of a covenant child, or after some “good” thing that happens in the church. Sometimes we are very quick to acknowledge the mercies and lovingkindnesses of Jehovah. But can we do it in a situation like Jeremiah’s? Jerusalem had been destroyed. He had seen God’s people brutally killed and taken off to slavery. He had seen the king and the priest deny that God was God. It seemed at times that no one wanted to hear the voice of Jehovah. In the midst of that suffering, Jeremiah penned the words of today’s reading. He confessed that God’s mercies were new every morning. Is this your confession, people of God, no matter what the circumstance is? Are you able to say that truly God is good? Notice one other little part of this verse. The confession of God’s lovingkindnesses is done in God’s temple. Does that sound familiar? Sing Psalters 132:1 and 133:1.

March 18 Read Revelation 19:11-21

**Psalm 48:10** This verse is completely God-centered. First of all we see that God’s praise is based in His name. He is God-almighty. Any praise we bestow on Him must be with that realization in mind. When we pray, when we sing, the contents of those prayers and songs must be God-centered. To do anything else would be to blaspheme the holy name

of God. Secondly God is a God of all the earth. There is nowhere where His name is not heard. Even though God’s national blessings were confined to Israel of old, His name was worldwide. Do we confess this today? Do we really confess an holy *catholic* church? Finally we see that these things are so because in God’s right hand of power is righteousness. He is righteous as He judges the nations. He is righteous as He weighs our every action in His scales of justice. Are we found wanting in those scales? We must pray for the grace of Christ so that we be not found wanting in God’s righteous scales. Sing Psalters 132:2 and 134:1.

March 19 Read Romans 2:1-11

**Psalm 48:11** This verse is a continuation of the thought found in the last part of verse 10. God is the righteous judge. The church can be happy about that fact. Israel of old had to wait for God to judge the heathen in a physical way. They, because of the covenant, knew that their God was powerful. This fact gave them great feelings of joy. We, too, must have such feelings. We must know that God’s judgments are just and righteous. We may be impatient at times. Or we may forget that every act of our lives is weighed in His scales. But we must be patient. We must live lives in holiness to our God, the judge of all men and all things. Be glad in that fact, people of God. Rejoice with the rest of the church and teach your children to rejoice even when it appears that Satan is gaining the upper hand. Sing Psalters 132:3 and 134:2.

March 20 Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9

**Psalm 48:12-13** The goal and purpose of catechism instruction is outlined in these two verses. Israel was instructed to walk around Jerusalem and see her strength against attackers. Why? So that it could boast in its power? So that they could claim greatness in the world? Of course not. Israel was only strong because God made them strong. We must never say that the strength of our churches lies within ourselves. To do so would be utter folly. As we walk around the church, we must see in its confessions and teachings nothing but the hand of God. We must see that it is only by grace that the church is what she is. Those confessions which serve as our defense and bulwark in times of trouble have



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been given to us by God. We may not just admire them. No, like Israel of old, we must teach them to our children. Catechism instruction must be precious in our lives. We must not let the church become slack in such instruction, and we must not become slack in such instruction. Our covenant children must know of God, about God, and how great God is. Only in that way will He bless our churches in generations to come. Sing Psalters 132:4 and 133:2.

March 21 Read Psalm 48

**Psalm 48:14** We now come to the verse of trust. After confessions of praise to God in all our lives, we must trust that He will be with us until He takes us from this world. The verse starts with the word *for*. This word indicates that we can have confidence that all we have read before will come to pass. Our God is eternal. He is before time and He will be after this world is destroyed. We can trust the everlasting God to preserve us in whatever situation we find ourselves. Not only can we trust that we will get through such situations, but we also know that He will guide us through them. Just as a guide is helpful through unfamiliar territory on this earth, having a guide through unfamiliar spiritual territory is a good thing. God is our guide; what more do we need? God is our guide; He will be faithful even unto and through death. Sing Psalters 132:5, 133:3, and 134:4.

March 22 Read Psalm 49

**Psalm 49:1-2** People of God, do you hear God speaking to you? Are you listening daily for His voice? Are we, like Samuel, willing to reply, “Speak Lord for thy servant heareth”? This Psalm begins with the command for people of all kinds to listen to the words of Jehovah. God’s speech is for all kinds of people. It is for the office bearers and for the member in the pew. It is for adults, children, and young people. Where does He speak? First of all He speaks through His Word. We must read that Word daily and listen to what He says. He speaks through that primary means of grace—the sermon. Are we eager to hear it and believe it? He speaks through His creation. Do we listen to the signs in nature? Do we hear His voice? Let us listen because He speaks volumes. Sing Psalter 135:1.

March 23 Read I Timothy 4:12-16

**Psalm 49:3-4** The fact that you are reading this probably indicates that you participate in some kind of meditation. It is my hope and prayer that this is daily in nature. I wish this not because of my writings, but rather I wish for you to daily meditate upon the Word of God. The only way that we can speak of God’s wisdom is to know God’s wisdom. Our heart’s meditation will be full of understanding when they are guided by God’s Word. By meditating on God’s Word, we can hope to understand some of its depths. It is only by study that the Word will be opened to us. This passage also speaks of the value of singing the songs of Zion

as part of our meditation. Are we profiting? We will when our meditation is based on Jehovah’s word. Sing Psalter 135:2.

March 24 Read Job 5:17-27

**Psalm 49:5** Job went through many trials and afflictions in this life. These afflictions were for his profit and our instruction. Job had to be taught what the profit was, and how that affliction was profiting. He had to learn that God was God. His experiences are recorded for us. When we are tempted to say, “Why me, Lord,” we need to turn to that record and learn from it. Psalm 49:5 sums up Job’s lesson. That lesson is that the child of God need not fear oppression. We need not fear what the forces of evil may do to us. God is on our side. Evil’s forces can never harm us. Of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 135:3.

March 25 Read Zephaniah 1:12-18

**Psalm 49:6-7** As this passage has instructed us to listen to God’s word, we need to see what these verses are telling us. It is tempting for us to look around and covet the riches of those in the world. We fall into the trap of “trying to keep up with the Joneses.” We want the same material goods that others have. We fall hard to the sin of materialism. The Psalmist brings us up short with this message of reality. Not one penny of earthly wealth can buy salvation for ourselves or even if we felt magnanimous for our brothers. Money cannot buy salvation. Talent cannot buy salvation. Salvation is merited only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. God does not even look at our earthly goods or abilities. He only looks at us through Christ our Savior. Let us learn to be content with what God chooses to give us. Sing Psalter 135:4.

March 26 Read Exodus 15:11-18

**Psalm 49:8-9** What does it mean that we are redeemed? Oh, I am not looking for the theological definition of redemption. That has merit and needs to be understood. But what does it mean for us in this life. Is there any profit in being bought by the blood of the lamb? The answer is yes. Israel experienced this truth as they passed through the Red Sea and watched Egypt’s army being drowned. That is a picture for us. Our redemption means that we will live for ever. Not in this life, of course, but in the life to come. We will not see the corruption that spiritual death brings. God will protect and bring us safe to the promised land of heaven. This should provide for us the confidence that we need as we travel through this valley of the shadow of death. In today’s vernacular; this makes it worthwhile. This makes life worth living. Sing Psalter 135:5.

March 27 Read Ecclesiastes 3:17-22

**Psalm 49:10-11** As men prepare to die many wish to be remembered after they are gone. They wish a son to continue their name. Some even go to great lengths to make this happen. Others make sure that some material structure

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has their name on it so that they are remembered by man. The testimony of Scripture is that all die and go to the grave. What is the attitude of the child of God to death? Does pride cause him to make sure that his name remains? Or does he realize that death is but a passageway to glory? Is death to be dreaded by us? Wisdom looks to the life hereafter which is not spent on this earth. Folly dreads death because its pride is squelched forever. Be wise, people of God, and see that in death is life. Sing Psalter 136:1.

March 28 Read Proverbs 14:1-12

**Psalm 49:12-14** Today's verses are a continuation of yesterday's. The Psalmist continues to explore the idea of death and its consequences. Here we see that a man of foolish pride dies and is buried just like an animal. After he dies, he is gone forever. This is true spiritually as well as physically for the reprobate. Death is the end for them. In fact they will be judged by the righteous in the last days. Scripture testifies of this here and in other places. We must remember these things as we live in this earth. There is a heaven and hell. Real people will inhabit both places. Are you wise or foolish? Sing Psalter 136:2.

March 29 Read I Corinthians 15:12-23

**Psalm 49:15** But! Just a three letter word. But what a three letter word! After hearing about the end of the wicked the Psalmist tells the righteous what he can expect. What a difference! We have the confidence that we are redeemed. Even though this earthly body will see destruction, our soul will be redeemed by God through Christ. We need not fear as we face death. There is no uncertainty about our final reward. God will receive us. He will not turn us away because we have been redeemed. The grave has no victory over us. The grave is not our enemy! We are redeemed! Sing Psalter 136:3.

March 30 Read Isaiah 5:11-17

**Psalm 49:16-17** From the confidence given in verse 15, we now have practical advice given to us. We are not to be afraid because of the wicked who is made rich. We might be tempted to worry about what they have and what they might do with their riches. We also must not worry that his riches will affect our salvation. Our salvation is not dependent on what another has. Our salvation is only dependent upon the grace of God in Christ. Many times we compare ourselves to our neighbors for what they have or what they do. We must not do this. God has given to every individual his calling, his talents, and his salvation. The wicked have their reward, and the righteous have theirs. What a confidence! What a blessing! Rejoice and be happy. Sing Psalter 136:3.

March 31 Read Psalm 49

**Psalm 49:18-20** These verses finish the thought began in yesterday's meditation. The plight of the wicked is gloomy. They have no hope! Their end is destruction. They are destined for Hell! Yes, Hell is a real place with real torment. It is for those who have boasted of their greatness throughout their lives. It is for those whose pride rules their lives. The end of the wicked has no hope just like the animals. But for the humble, diligent child of God, he has much in which to hope. His end is heaven. His final condition is eternal life. These facts should afford us great comfort. They should also direct our lives on this earth. Take heed, people of God, and listen to the voice of God. We have a calling on this earth, and we have a reward in heaven. Let us humbly bow in prayer and thank God for His precious gifts to us, and also ask Him to help us live lives that are pleasing to Him. Sing Psalter 136:4.

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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 Skip Hunter (Reprinted from April 1998)

April 1 Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:1-3 God speaks! Do we listen? Everyday God speaks to the world and the church. We know the world does not listen. What about the church? Are we listening to

what God says to us? He speaks to us in creation. He speaks to us in what happens in our daily lives whether that be at home, at school, at work, or where ever He has placed us. Are we listening? Are there troubles around us through which God is telling us that we are not living a life of sanctifica-

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tion or are not walking according to His Word. Verse three tells us that God will speak to us. He will not keep silence about our sins. Our God is a consuming fire and this fire burns both elect and reprobate. Fear not, however, for we do have the comfort that we will not be consumed because He cares for His people. God speaks! People of God, we must listen. Sing Psalters 137:1 and 139:1-3.

**April 2** Read Micah 6:1-9

Psalm 50:4-6 Yesterday we explored the idea of speaking God. Today we see something of the process. First of all there is a gathering together to listen. Do we gather enough to listen to God? We gather often; of that there is no doubt. But are our gatherings devoted to listening to God. This means first of all attendance at the worship service. But this also implies attendance at lectures and Bible studies. These are means the church has historically used to listen to God. Secondly there is the content of that gathering. Micah told us that He shows us what is good. This is not something that we can learn from anywhere else but His Word. God speaks the truth. We must hear it. We see this truth in creation. All creation testifies to the righteousness of God. Finally we see that He is judge. We may never usurp this attribute of our sovereign God. He is Judge and He alone. Sing Psalters 137:2 and 139:4-6.

**April 3** Read Hebrews 10:1-10

Psalm 50:7-8 In two days we go to worship our God. Is our worship totally God glorifying? Are we committed to worshipping Him only in the way He has commanded in His Word? To do otherwise, you know, is a violation of the second commandment. Man loves to tinker with the worship service to make it more palatable for more people. Sermons are shortened or done away with. Hymns or worse are sung or played in the worship service. Much is added which is forbidden by Scripture. Worship is not for man; it is for God! Israel as a nation was reprimanded, taken into captivity, and finally pruned from the vine for not worshipping God or not worshipping Him as He commanded. What about us? Are we worshipping to pay honor to God or to impress man? Sing Psalter 137:3.

**April 4** Read Matthew 6:25-34

Psalm 50:9-11 People of God, have you ever pondered the greatness of our God? Today is Saturday. Many of us may use this break from our everyday labors to get out into His creation. What do you see? Do you realize that everything is God's, and He knows every rock, animal, and plant? He not only knows about them, but He knows where they are and what is happening to them. God does not need us to make Him great. He is great within Himself. He gives to us some pictures of His greatness so that we with our minuscule minds can have some insight into His greatness. Go ahead, look around you, see God's greatness, and then do

nothing which detracts from that greatness. Sing Psalter 137:4.

**April 5** Read Isaiah 43:1-13

Psalm 50:12-13 We are creatures; God is the creator. What are the implications of this truth for us and our lives? First of all we must keep that relationship foremost in our minds. As we carry out our daily work, and especially as we worship we must confess that God is the creator. This confession will help us live lives pleasing in His sight. It will help us in decisions about our family and its life. Secondly we must acknowledge that God is God. How many people wish to do away with this truth and allow man a part in his salvation. God is not a man. God is God! Confess this truth and live this truth until the day that Christ returns to take His church to heaven to live in sweet communion with God. Sing Psalter 137:5.

**April 6** Read Deuteronomy 26:10-15

Psalm 50:14-15 Three commands are given in these two verses. Offer God thanksgiving. Did we do that yesterday? Are we doing it today? Will we do it tomorrow? Pay our vows to God. These are not just the vows of desperation, but these are the solemn vows made in our lives. For example there are the baptismal vows, the vows made at confession of faith, or the marriage vows. Are we keeping those? Finally we are commanded to call upon God in trouble. We need not run to earthly counselors or earthly means of help. Our God is faithful. He has promised to help us in times of trouble. He will deliver us. Why? So that we can glorify Him. Sing Psalters 137:6.

**April 7** Read Acts 17:29-31

Psalm 50:16-17 People of God and especially young people and children, do you hate the instruction of God? What a terrible thing if you do! What is our attitude to the study of God, His Word, and His works whether it be at catechism, school, society, or elsewhere? To disregard it or despise it is horrible. God has terrible punishments for those who despise Him and His Word. Paul warned the Athenians about this terrible sin. That warning is for us as well. We have many opportunities to learn and study about our God. First of all we must make good use of them. Secondly we must do it out of love and gratitude for our God. Sing Psalters 138:1.

**April 8** Read Proverbs 24:21-29

Psalm 50:18-20 I am always amazed and sobered when I hear the commandments preached in church. We tend to dismiss them as either being general guidelines or being against really bad sins. The three verses of today's text are for us. When we hear the commandments preached, we must realize that we sin against them daily. We do it by actions, and as these verses tell us we do it by not reprimanding or stopping another who is sinning. The principle of corporate responsibility is very important for all of those who are mem-

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bers of God's church. We must be holy even as our God in heaven is holy. Let us live a life of sanctification in gratitude for our salvation. Sing Psalter 138:2.

**April 9** Read Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm 50:21 Sometimes it appears to us that God overlooks sin. Is this true? We know that He sees all that happens on this earth, but does He excuse some sins? The answer is no, No, NO! It is an often repeated truth in the Bible that every work of man must be accounted for. What does this verse mean for us then? First of all we see that the character of sin is that we make ourselves greater than God. God will never allow that to stand, will He? It appears that He overlooks sin because one or two things are happening. First of all, the cup of iniquity of the wicked is being filled. Think, for example, of the lives of Ahab and Jezebel. Secondly, He may be using our "lamentable falls," as the Canons call them, to work for our repentance and to cause us to flee back to His love and care. He will reprove us, and He will set our lives in order. Pray that God leads us not into temptation but delivers us from evil. Sing Psalter 138:3.

**April 10** Read Psalm 50

Psalm 50:22-23 The final two verses serve as a summary of the teaching found in this beautiful Psalm. First of all, we see that the wicked will not be delivered but they will be destroyed. This should be a solemn warning about how we must live our lives. Secondly, we see that those who do the commandments of God will be blessed both in this life and the life to come. We see that we must praise Him in all of our lives. We may never do anything that is not praiseworthy to God. We also see that a conscious walk of sanctification will result in the final glory given to us by God. We are saved by grace alone. We will be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. God will lead us to glory and give to us all the blessings of salvation. Thanks be to Him for His gift! Sing Psalter 138:4.

**April 11** Read Psalm 51

Psalm 51:1-2 In this Psalm we not only have David's confession of sin but also his return to grace. The second is not possible without the first. He begins by throwing himself upon the mercy seat of God's throne of justice. He knows that he has sinned against the all-righteous God and now seeks forgiveness for that sin. He knows that God is merciful and has a fountain of mercy for His people. Is this our experience, people of God? Do we confess our sins daily? Do we throw ourselves upon the mercies of God that are new every morning? We must wish to be washed completely clean. Not one speck of filthy sin can remain in us in order to enter the eternal rest. By God's grace and mercy it is possible. Christ died for us! We are washed clean! Thanks be to God! Sing Psalters 140:1, 142:1, and 143:1.

**April 12** Read Acts 5:1-11

Psalm 51:3-4 Ananias and Sapphira thought that their sin was against man. They thought that by fooling Peter and the other apostles they could gain for themselves some notoriety in the church. They were wrong...dead wrong. Sin, though it may be an offense against a brother, is always against God. David thought that Uriah's death would clear him from judgment. After all Uriah was dead and Bathsheba needed a husband, didn't she? God knew as Nathan pronounced with the words, "Thou art the man." Those same words convict us of our sins. We sin and we sin against God. This is what we must confess. Our sins offend the righteous God. We must confess our sins to God, knowing that by His mercy He will forgive us our sins. Sing Psalters 140:2 and 143:2.

**April 13** Read Job 14:1-12

Psalm 51:5-7 The truth of total depravity is not a popular doctrine today, but it is the truth. That is David's testimony in verse five. Job knew it as well, as we read in Job 14. But both men knew that God desires and demands that His people remain truthful. They both knew that by God's grace they would be redeemed and cleansed from the filth of sin. Man can never do this by his own strength; it can only be the work of God. David knew that this was not easy even as he asked God to scrub him clean with strong methods. But David knew that these strong methods were the only way he could obtain the cleanliness demanded by God. We, too, must seek that cleanliness, and we, too, must know that it is only available through the blood of the Lamb. Sing Psalters 140:3 and 142:2.

**April 14** Read Isaiah 38:9-20

Psalm 51:8-9 Hezekiah's prayer provides all the commentary we need on these two verses. Read them slowly and savor their full blessings for the child of God. And then turn to God yourself and pray that he will grant forgiveness for all your sins. By this means we find peace with God. Sing Psalters 140:4 and 143:3.

**April 15** Read John 13:1-11

Psalm 51:10-12 Notice David's six requests in these verses. He and we can only ask these things if we feel the work of the Spirit in our hearts. Sometimes we must be brought to the depths of despair in order to see our need of a Savior. Sometimes we need to see that we can do nothing to earn salvation. It is a fearful thing to be cast out of God's sight. Think of Judas Iscariot. Think of Peter. Only through confession of sin was Peter restored to the fellowship of Christ. Salvation's joys are many, but they are not for the unrepentant sinner. Read these requests and then turn with me in prayer and take these requests upon your lips and from the heart confess your sin before God. David did, and he found the joy of salvation once again. Sing Psalters 141:1, 142:3, and 143:4.



# Spring

by Kris Moelker

**T**his month, we are reminded once again of God's covenant faithfulness to us, his people, in the changing of the seasons. For those of us living in the Northern Hemisphere, this year the first day of Spring will be March 21<sup>st</sup>. Genesis 8:22 records God's covenant promise to Noah regarding the seasons. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." For the first two thousand years of history, the whole earth was one climate. Man did not experience the blessing of the seasons before the Flood. One of the lasting effects of the Flood was the creation of the seasons.

When I think about the changing of the seasons, I am reminded of stanza 3 of Psalter 286 where we sing:

*The seasons are fixed by wisdom divine,  
The slow changing moon shows forth God's design;  
The sun in his circuit his Maker obeys,  
And running his journey hastes not nor delays.*

What a comfort this stanza, and all of Psalter 286, gives us as God's children. It reminds us of the sovereignty of our faithful creator over all things including the changing of the seasons. God sent the cold, wet, snowy, dark days of winter to remind us of the curse of sin and death that the world apart from Jesus Christ experiences. Now he sovereignly causes the changes of the moon so that according to his will the seasons change from winter to spring.

Concerning the beauty of the spring season, God inspired King Solomon to write: "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell" (Song of Solomon 2:11-13a). Spring is indeed a beautiful season. Everyone seems to acknowledge this, but we as children of God see the glory of our creator and heavenly Father when we observe though the eyeglasses of faith the beauty of the

springtime flowers, the green grass, and the tiny buds on the trees forming into green leaves.

Although year after year we marvel at the beauty of the springtime, we still must remind ourselves that because of Adam's fall into sin, the most beautiful scenery is under the curse. When Adam fell into sin, God placed the whole creation under the curse. In Genesis 3:17-18, God told Adam that the ground was cursed for his sake and it would bring forth thorns and thistles. Providing for the needs of his family would be so difficult for Adam, that in sorrow he would eat of the crops of the field for the rest of his earthly life. After the Flood, God lifted some of the harshness of this curse off the ground when he created the seasons (Gen. 8:21-22).

Because of the curse, each springtime is just a dim reflection of the eternal springtime of heaven. This is what causes us as children of God to watch with great joy the seasons change from winter to spring. As the creation slowly comes to new life, we are reminded of the new life God has given to each of us whom He has regenerated. We are also led to think of that day when God calls us to close our eyes in death and open our eyes to the glory of heaven. Now we see the glory of each spring gradually take place. When we are brought to our eternal home we will instantly see the full glory of heaven.

We must also think of the end of the world. Even now, the springtime of heaven is not as glorious as it will be when Christ returns as king of this creation to gather his church to himself and to destroy the creation and the wicked world by fire. He will create a new heaven and earth which will be far more glorious than the creation we live in now. Christ revealed this to the apostle John in a vision. Concerning this vision, John writes, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). The new heaven and earth will be far more glorious than they are now, and even more glorious than they were before Adam fell into sin.



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There will be no need for the sun and moon, for the glory of God through Jesus Christ will be the light of the new heaven and earth. This new creation will be glorious because there will be no more sin and death, and all of God's people will be together enjoying perfect fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

Thinking on these things, let us rejoice in the springtime of this year and every year until we are called to

leave the wintertime of this earth and enter the springtime of heaven. As we observe the new life in the creation, let us rejoice as we are led to think about the new life we enjoy in part now and will soon fully enjoy in the new heaven and earth forever. ❖

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Where We Stand

## The Question Must Be Asked...

by Martyn McGeown

If two sinners hear the same gospel message preached, why does one repent (Acts 5:31, Acts 11:18) and believe unto salvation, and the other perish in his unbelief? (1 Pet. 2:8, Lk. 13:5) Is it because one has more insight (Romans 3:11-12), is more intelligent, is more righteous, is wiser (1 Cor. 1:18, 26-31) or more inclined towards God than the other? (Rom. 8:7-8, 1 Cor. 2:14). Or to put it another way: is the difference caused by man, or is there another reason? (1 Cor. 4:7) We have good news: the Bible explains why. Many may be surprised at the answer, or even horrified, but we must believe God's word (II Tim. 3:16-17, Isa. 8:20), not our opinions or emotions. (Jer. 17:9)

The Bible teaches that *before regeneration* (John 1:13, John 3:3, Jam. 1:18), that is before the new birth, man has no will to do good, or to come to Christ. (John 6:44, 65). He has a will, but it is a *fallen will*, and it actively and consistently wills evil and only evil. (Gen. 6:5) All men have lost, *as a result of the Fall*, (Psa. 51:5, 58:3, Rom. 5:12) all will that is pleasing to God (Rom. 8:8). The reason so many go wrong here is because they confuse the nature of man (Adam and Eve) in the Garden of Eden with man's nature today. The two are radically different. Many evangelicals today do not believe that man is born corrupt, and depraved on account of original sin. It is ignorance of this truth that causes many people to think that because Adam and Eve could choose between good and evil, sinners can today.

As a result of the Fall man wants to please himself, and even if he does something which in itself seems to constitute outward obedience to the commandments, it is not a good work in God's sight, because it is not done in faith (Rom. 14:23, Tit. 1:15-16), nor done to the glory of God. Man is in bondage to sin (John 8:34), and his will, emotions, heart, indeed all faculties of his being (Isa. 1:6) are included in that. Therefore the Bible talks about man being *spiritually dead*. (Eph. 2:1, Col. 2:13) There is nothing outside the almighty power of God which can overcome this enmity to righteousness (John 3:19-20). God works a will to come to Christ *in some*, His elect, while leaving others to perish in their stubbornness and sin.

Man is free to choose whatever he desires, but since he is *by nature* fallen, his desires are always evil (John 8:44, Eph. 2:3), so he is not forced against his will to be wicked. (Jam. 1:13-15) He acts in accordance with his own nature (Jer. 13:23), and he enjoys sinning, like a pig enjoys mud (Job 15:16). In conversion God gives a sinner a new heart (Eze. 11:19) so that his new nature does not sin (I John 3:9). However, the old nature of the sinner remains in the regenerated child of God. This leads to a conflict between the two natures (Rom. 7:15-25; Gal. 5:17). While the flesh (the old nature) desires sin, the Christian according to his new nature desires above all things to be with Christ and to please Him (Phil. 3:8-

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9). God *gives* the heart, man does not give himself a new heart. Therefore God gets the glory (Phil. 2:13, Gal. 6:14).

Man, of course, has a will. The Reformed do not view men as robots without wills or as blocks of wood or stone. Having a will does not mean that the will is *free*. Man is not *forced* against his will to sin (Jam. 1:13-15). His wicked nature and his wicked heart desire evil and hate good. Left to himself he could NEVER choose Christ. The wicked see no comeliness in Christ. They do not desire Him. They despise Him. A sinner must have his eyes and his heart opened (Acts 16:14), his understanding enlightened, faith must be granted to him (Philippians 1:29, John 6:65) or he will perish. God grants faith unto some (Matt. 11:27, Mark 4:11-12) whom He chose before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5, Acts 13:48, 2 Thes. 2:13). None deserve this gift, and God “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy” (Rom. 9:15). *God’s will alone is free*. He chooses whom He will save. He is the awesome God (Dan. 4:35, Psa. 115:3, 135:6).

Unregenerate man has no will to do, or choose, or desire good, and since God is the fountain of all goodness, he has no desire to come to God or to His Son Jesus Christ. That some come and others do not *must* have a reason *outside of man*: the answer is that God gives the gift of faith to some and not to others (Eph.

2:8, Phil. 1:29). Since no man deserves this from God, God cannot be accused of being unfair (Rom. 11:35-36, Matt. 20:15-16).

“For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if they didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (I Cor. 4:7). People who believe that God has done everything to provide salvation for everybody, and that then He leaves the outcome open to the freewill of man (not realizing that if God did so, none would be saved) are really guilty of pride. They take the credit for believing. They believe that they have made *themselves* to differ from others. Not the love of God (which they say is for everybody), nor the blood of Christ (which they say was shed for all), nor the work of the Spirit (for they say the Spirit is striving to call everybody), but man’s freewill makes the difference in the final analysis between heaven and hell. Such a doctrine is blasphemy and a false gospel. “For it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). ❖

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## Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

# Rev. C. Hanko

## Chapter 21

### First PRC—1948–1953

edited by Karen Van Baren

*Editor’s Notes: These first five years spent in First PRC of Grand Rapids were years of adjustment for the Hankos. They had to adjust to city living, a busier lifestyle and a far larger and busier congregation. Nevertheless, these years would have been enjoyable, if not for the trouble that was brewing in the churches at this time.*

**S**o the time came in late May of 1948, that we had to bid good bye to the congregation of Manhattan and take up lodging on Bates Street in Grand Rap-

ids. The consistory of First Church had sent me money for moving, suggesting that I might want to dispose of much of my furniture that had been moved so often. So the Doezeumas helped us buy new furniture at a greatly reduced price in Michigan.<sup>1</sup>

The house on Bates Street was very commodious and pleasant, but I missed the view of the mountains that I had from the study window in Montana. Yet I could enjoy the whole row of windows on the south side of the house, over the porch. Besides the study, there were three



*First Church parsonage on Bates Street, where the Hankos lived.*

good-sized bedrooms upstairs, and one downstairs. Also the living room with a fireplace, dining room and a den were downstairs. Both floors had a full bath. The kitchen, with a small breakfast nook, was possibly the most pleasant of all. The house had been completely cleaned and redecorated, which made it very easy for us to get settled.

Soon after we arrived, there was a welcome program, an installation, an inaugural sermon and the matter of getting acquainted in a new environment. I had grown up in this congregation, but while I was absent for the 19 years of my previous ministry, a new generation had arisen.

Mom did not fancy becoming a part of a large congregation of over 500 families, but did enjoy the fact that now our family was together again, without the threat of some leaving home. Also her relatives were near by. She seemed to adjust quite well, although we had a busy life, which soon took its toll.

After each Sunday morning service, while the kids were in Sunday School, my wife's sister and her husband, Pete and Nell Reitsma, came over for coffee. It did not take long before Herm had made friends with young men of the church, who visited together in their various homes from week to week. Fred also fit in quite readily.

Elaine had made her friends in Manhattan congregation, felt at home there and now had to make another adjustment. From the small school in Montana, she had to go to Christian High in Grand Rapids. But she did find friends in Grand Rapids, Jean Faber (now Mrs. Jason Kortering) being one of her closest ones. Elaine graduated from the eighth grade in Manhattan, and graduated again from the ninth grade in Baxter School in Grand Rapids. Thereupon she went to Christian High. Although she had made up her mind that she had no intention of going to college, she did take the college preparatory course, as the best course offered there. In her last year, she received all A's, so she did not have to take the examinations. She also wrote a paper on nursing, on which the teacher made the comment that she would make a good nurse. But Lans had no desire to take up any more schooling. She obtained a job with Alice Kooienga at Southwest Ice and Fuel Company, where she was trained for office work.

In the same year that Elaine graduated from Baxter School, Herm graduated from Grand Rapids Christian High. I was impressed by the fact that the class came into the Fountain Street Church auditorium singing, "Holy, holy, holy!" Herm started Calvin College in the fall, in preparation for the ministry.

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In his spare time Herm worked for Veldman's Grocery, where Fred worked later. Herm also worked for Rolly Vander Ploeg, who sold vegetables. Later, he spent a summer working in cement.

Allie went to Baxter School. There were two disadvantages there for her. There were far more children in Baxter School than in Manhattan. Besides, there were a lot of steps, both inside the school and out. Allie dreaded the thought of going to school. Sometimes the teacher would call to ask whether Allie was sick, because she was not in school. One time, I went out to look for her and found her sitting on Fuller Avenue. So one noon I drove to the school at the time when the classes would be coming out. I waited until I saw Allie. Then I noticed that when she tried to go down the steps the boys pushed her, so that she would fall. Tenaciously she clung to the railing, waiting for the boys to leave. Kids can be so very cruel.<sup>2</sup>

Things did not go well at all while she was in Baxter, so it was a great relief when our own school, Adams Street Christian, opened in September of 1950. Allie had Mrs. Slomp for a teacher, who had years of experience with children, and all went well. I had told her when Allie entered her class, that if she had difficulty, to send her home at noon. She was certain that there would be no problem, and there was none.

Mrs. Slomp did seem to think that we did not know how to handle Allie. She mentioned occasionally that she would like to have Allie stay with her at her home. So when we decided to go to Florida in January of 1953, we suggested that Allie stay with Mrs. Slomp. She agreed to that, but the very first evening Mrs. Slomp brought Allie back to our house on Bates Street to be with her siblings. She admitted that she knew how to be a teacher, but not a mother.

After Allie finished Mrs. Slomp's class, we decided to send her to Children's Retreat.<sup>3</sup> At 18 years of age, she went into a supervised workshop for a few years.

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At the end of August, 1948, we took a short vacation at Green Lake with Otto and Corrie Vander Woude, my sister and her husband. There, mother had her first epileptic seizure. The doctor who was vacationing there thought it was a heart attack and sent her to St. Mary's hospital. It was only later that Dr. Avery discovered her problem.

In the summer of 1950, we were invited to spend four weeks in Bellflower, CA while Rev. Doezema was on vacation.<sup>4</sup> Mother, Fred, Elaine and I went by car.

They had rented an apartment for us and had it well supplied with food. We were treated royally and taken to various scenic places. There we met Mr. and Mrs. De Groot. She was formerly Dorothy Jansma from our Hull congregation. We found them to be a very congenial couple with whom we spent considerable time. A few times we went to the ocean with their family to ride the waves.

It was toward the end of our stay in Bellflower that Mother had a spell early in the morning. Whenever she did get a spell, it was in the early morning hours. Once we were back home, and another spell occurred, we called Dr. Avery, who sat by her for two hours, watching her reactions. Then he came down and told me that he wanted her in the hospital for a brain scan. For a while she continued to have occasional spells, but when the Dilantin, a seizure medication, took effect, she had her problem solved. She took this the rest of her life.

In the summer of 1951 I spent considerable time working among the Liberated in Canada, first in the Hamilton area and later in the Chatham area. Two churches were organized in Canada, but soon after, when they felt they did not need us and could be on their own, they left us. They also differed with us significantly on the doctrine of the covenant.

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It soon became evident that there was a lot of work to be done in First PRC. There was always a large number of sick and shut-ins, who had to be visited at regular intervals; some almost every day, some once a week, some every two weeks, and many once a month. Since this was one task that had been sorely neglected in the past, the consistory insisted that a complete record be kept of every visit, and that these visits be regularly reported on the weekly bulletin.

The most difficult visits were to those people in mental institutions who could not respond. Whatever message was to be brought to them had to be prepared in advance, in order not to appear to hesitate, wondering what to say. Among these calls were also the wildly confused patients, whom I tried to reach with the Word of God and penetrate, as it were, into the darkness of their confusion to awaken evidence of the grace of God. I was convinced that the Holy Spirit still operated also in those saints, and response could be obtained with a bit of effort. That proved to be true in all cases, except one, who left the impression that there was no spiritual life present.

In August, just before going on vacation, we were handed a stack of cards for family visitation. This first



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year there was a total of 250 calls. That meant sandwiching these calls between sick visits, catechisms, society meetings and other activities. Since this involved using every spare moment to fit in a family visit, extending from September until April, the consistory decided to cut down this number of calls to 125 per year. It would have been nice if we could have visited every family in the congregation in three years, but this taxed us beyond capacity. One hundred and twenty five calls still took the entire winter season. And so, each family had visitation once every four to five years.

To tell the truth, when I accepted the call to First, these sick calls and numerous family visitations troubled me the most. I feared that they would become very wearisome. True, the first summer, these sick calls were very depressing. I seemed to carry all these problems with me day and night. But after the other activities were under way, I began to enjoy that part of the work even more than the rest. Preaching for such a huge audience never had a special appeal. The people seemed too distant from me. After the Split of 1953, that was much better.

Actually, that congregation before the split was much too large and cumbersome, even for three ministers.<sup>5</sup> Rev. Hoeksema took the pulpit on Sunday morning. The Dutch service in the afternoon and the evening service were shared by Rev. De Wolf and me. The two of us took every other wedding and funeral service. The age groups in the catechism classes were split in two, but that still left classes of forty and fifty.

Besides the routine work in the congregation, there were also many family problems that had to be solved. Often on Sunday or late at night, I would be called out for some family trouble.

One night especially stands out in my memory. A lady called that her husband had left the house to commit suicide. So I went to the home, and then accompanied her to Reeds Lake, where she thought he had gone. Arriving there, we saw him in a boat on the lake. After a bit, he came to shore and said that he did not want to talk to that "So-and-so," referring to his wife, but he would talk to me if I joined him in the boat. I knew that he was drunk, but I ventured into the boat anyway. His wife took their car home, and I sat out on the lake in the dead of night trying to talk some sense into a half-drunken man. About midnight he suggested that it would be no effort at all for him to "dump the boat." I assured him that I did not doubt that. But I added, "I know where I am going, but where are you going?" The Lord marvelously pre-

served us, for the man rowed to shore and went home with almost nothing more to say.

Another incident worth mentioning involved a lady who was not a member of our churches, but whom I was asked to visit in Pine Rest. She was there for the third time, because of her suicidal tendencies.

When I approached her carrying my Bible, she told me that the doctors did not allow reading the Bible to the patients. I told her that the doctors could not give me orders. She should listen, and if the Bible spoke about her, she should nod, and if not, she could shake her head, meaning no. I read Psalm 77. By the time I had reached the third verse, "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed," she was nodding, and soon after said, "That's me." When I finished, the dam broke. She poured out her soul about the sins she had committed since leaving home as a girl of 17. I visited her as long as she stayed in the hospital.

It was some time later, on a Tuesday morning, that she called and said that she was ready to end her own life. I would find the back door open. I told her to wait at least until I got there. When I arrived, I saw that her kitchen was set up so that she could put her head in the oven, turn on the gas and die. She was in the living room. I asked her, "Where would you be now if you had carried through?" Coldly she answered, "In hell." After I talked and prayed with her, she agreed to clean up the things in the kitchen. A few years later I happened to meet her, a changed woman, who assured me that she had found peace with God.

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At the close of each society season, there were so many banquets and parties, that I would surely have developed an ulcer if I did not already have one. This ulcer problem, which had been there since my student days, worsened steadily. One time, when Mom and I were all ready to leave for Randolph for a preaching assignment, I could feel the ulcer break. I hoped that the bleeding would not be too bad, so decided to go anyway. This was very foolish, for when we arrived in Waupun, I was bleeding so badly that I had to give up the idea of preaching the next Sunday. Herm came to drive us home.

Then there was the unforgettable Thanksgiving Day, 1952. Mom was in the hospital on account of her heart. I had started bleeding a few days before Thanksgiving. On the day before Thanksgiving, I was walking from Butterworth Hospital when I felt the blood spurting from the ulcer. By the time I came home, I felt weak enough to lie down. It was a good thing that I did not have to



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preach the next day. During the night I began to vomit blood, so that on Thanksgiving morning I was taken by ambulance to Blodgett hospital. When Mom heard that I was hospitalized, she came to see me and then decided to come home. I had three days that I barely knew I was alive, since Dr. Avery kept me on the brink of consciousness.

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At the first council meeting that was held after my arrival in First it already became evident that trouble was brewing. There was a strange tension, caused mainly by the deacons, which was hard to analyze, but could be felt very keenly.

At the first consistory meeting that I led shortly after my arrival, the matter of a different home for Rev. Hoeksema was brought up. I had to appoint a committee to visit Rev. Hoeksema to ask him whether he would be willing to move to a different home. The reason for this was that Rev. De Wolf wanted to live in the parsonage next to the church. Naively, I chose two men, Mr. Jim Kok and Mr. Gerard Koster, who had always been good friends of Rev. Hoeksema. Afterward, I was told that I could not have made a worse choice, because these were two of the worst opponents of Rev. Hoeksema.

This matter of getting the senior pastor out of his house never succeeded. An option was placed on the house on the southeast corner of Fuller and Bates. This was a small house, with no space for any minister's library, much less for Rev. Hoeksema's library. He turned that down flat. So did De Wolf and so did I. Suggestions were made to build a house for Rev. and Mrs. Hoeksema, but when he described the size of the library he wanted, the committee realized that they would never be able to sell a house of that sort. So finally, the entire matter was dropped. But the tension between Rev. De Wolf and Rev. Hoeksema was only intensified.

When it was my first turn to lead a consistory meeting, I received a call from the clerk, requesting that I come to his office to discuss the agenda for the evening. I did this, but on my second visit to his office, I discovered that matters on the agenda were discussed, motions were suggested, and some of the consistory members were encouraged to make these motions. And all of this was done while a highly influential man from the congregation, and supporter of Rev. De Wolf was present, even though he was not a consistory member. After that, I refused to take part in these highly irregular conferences.

Two young men, Henry De Raad and Henry De Bolster, fresh from the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands, joined our congregation and attended our seminary. It was not long before they had the brazen audacity to file a protest with the consistory against Rev. Hoeksema and me, objecting to our preaching. Of course, they got nowhere, but it was evident from which direction the wind was blowing.

In January of 1953, Ed Kooienga called on a Monday and told me to ask the consistory for a ten day vacation so that we could accompany him and his wife to Florida, leaving the next day.<sup>6</sup> The first order of business that night was my request for a break, which was readily granted. The consistory realized that we were under tremendous pressure and that this would be a good rest. So at recess I called home and told Mother to get ready to go.

This was a very pleasant and relaxing trip. We had gone with the Kooiengas more often on their boat on Lake Michigan. Sometimes, on Wednesday afternoons, we turned our backs on the work and went off to rest in the boat. We would have supper together there and then return home. Now we were in for a bigger trip.

We saw Cypress Gardens and spent some time there. Our original destination was St. Petersburg, where we spent a few days. On Saturday, we took the ferry across to Bradenton, where we attended the chapel on Sunday. The visiting minister was an acquaintance from the Midwest. When he met me after the service, he asked whether we intended to attend the evening service. We told him that we did. That evening he preached a sermon on I Timothy 2:1, in connection with inauguration of President Eisenhower that week. He did well on the first part of the text, but he made verse four refer to all men without exception. As he spoke, he looked at me, even so often that it became embarrassing. After the service a man asked whether I was PR. I told him I was. He said, "I thought so. The preacher was afraid of you." If that was the preacher's conviction, why didn't he come with full force to show me that I was wrong?

On our way home, we went by way of Miami, St. Augustine, and through the cotton fields and estates of Georgia. We arrived home on Saturday, but discovered that De Wolf was very unhappy about my absence. He refused to take his turn preaching the next morning, so I had to work into the night to prepare to preach twice that Sunday. This was just one more indication of the ill wind that was blowing through the congregation and the churches in 1953. ❖

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The Doezemas owned Mastercraft Furniture, an important furniture manufacturer, when Grand Rapids was the furniture capital of the country. Many relatives are members of various PR congregations yet today.

<sup>2</sup> Alyce or "Allie" was brain damaged at birth which left her handicapped. Part of her handicap was a spastic condition which made it difficult for her to keep her balance while walking.

<sup>3</sup> Children's Retreat was a branch of Pine Rest Christian Psychiatric Hospital that educated handicapped children.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Doezema later left the denomination in 1953, as did most of the Bellflower congregation.

<sup>5</sup> The 1953 First Church directory lists 437 families and 147 individuals.

<sup>6</sup> Ed was a member of First Church and related to the Kooiengas in our various PR congregations.

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

Gem of the Month

# Vineyard Workers

*The owner of a vineyard left  
His country for a while;  
The men he left in charge of it  
Were filled with craft and guile.*

*The owner sent his servant there  
To get the fruit when ripe,  
But he was beaten and was sent  
Away with many a stripe.*

*Other servants then he sent,  
They did no better fare;  
They all were tortured, stoned or killed:  
Shame and outrage was there.*

*The master then sent his own son;  
He reverence should command.  
But, no, the wicked workers scoffed  
And said, "We'll take the land!"*

*"If we destroy the master's heir  
The vineyard then is ours."  
And so they killed his only son,  
Exulting in their powers.*

*But then the righteous master came  
And utterly destroyed  
The wicked men who killed his son;  
New laborers employed.*

*As the new workers in His field  
We must our Lord obey;  
His servants we must reverence  
And toil from day to day.*

*We're not on earth for our delight,  
Our own desires or gain;  
We're here to serve our Master's cause  
Through pleasure and through pain.*

*The works that He has planned for us  
He gives us strength to do;  
With thankfulness we carry on  
Till our life's walk is through.*

Thelma Westra

## 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:**  
Caleb Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Dykstra—Byron Center, MI

Jonas John, son of Rachel Windemuller—Holland, MI

Clay David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ross Wassink—Holland, MI

Emma Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bosveld—Hope, MI

Liam Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Kalsbeek—Hope, MI

James Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Cleveland—Hope, MI

Eloise Rachel, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak—Hope, MI

Faith Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Michael James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Clossen—Hudsonville, MI

Kerstin Judith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Lane Brummel—Hull, IA

Madelyn Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Seth Vis—Hull, IA

Gracia Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Kooima—Hull, IA

Austin James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Gallagher—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta

Ethan Garret, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew DeJong—Peace, IL

Michael John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Cleveland—Redlands, CA

Noelle Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Marlin Feenstra—Redlands, CA

### 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:**

Erika Slendebroek—Byron Center, MI

Jessica Boone—Faith, MI

Esther Griffioen—Faith, MI

Nathan VanMeeteren—Faith, MI

Phil Clossen—Hudsonville, MI

Jayme Kortering—Hudsonville, MI

Lauren Kraker—Hudsonville, MI

Josh Nagelkerke—Hudsonville, MI

Kurt Zwak—Hudsonville, MI

Jon Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI

Larissa VanPutten—Hudsonville, MI

Jim Westing—Hudsonville, MI

### MARRIAGES

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

**United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:**

Mr. Tim Kleyn and Miss Betsy Kamps—Hope, MI

Mr. Mike Steigenga and Miss Jessica Kerkstra—Georgetown, MI

**The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee is offering scholarship awards to prospective Protestant Reformed teachers and ministers. If you are interested in receiving a packet, please contact Melinda Bleyenbergh at 616-453-8898 or e-mail darylmel@altelco.net by April 2, 2007.**

Martin Luther (6):

The Just Shall Live by Faith

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

Now that one of Martin Luther's duties was to lecture on the Bible at the University of Wittenberg, Luther was growing in his own understanding of Scripture. He began to lecture on Romans in 1515 and struggled especially with this book. How could anyone be saved if God was just in His dealings with all men? All men are sinners. The church of Rome taught that forgiveness came when one confessed his sin enough, visited enough relics, and contributed enough money to the Church. But what was enough? Luther knew he was a faithful monk, but even so, he knew in his heart he could never do enough to be saved. Romans was a book that had much to say about the doctrine of justification, but he still didn't know what it all meant. This was a great dilemma.

"The just shall live by faith." Luther read the words of Romans 1:17 and pondered them. He consulted the Greek translation. How could the just live by faith? How could a righteous God declare a sinful man to be righteous and just?

But God is faithful, and, He imparts faith. Man can't earn his own righteousness. God gives it—because Christ earned it. Christ earned it on the cross in order to give it to His people! It was as if the gates of heaven were opened to the spiritually struggling monk. Luther began to understand. Christ earned it! He, Luther, couldn't earn it at all. "The just shall live by faith" took on a whole new meaning.

All of Scripture took on new meaning. Luther studied the Bible some more. He read Romans again, and the Psalms. Ten years earlier a terrifying bolt of lightning had changed the course of Luther's life from lawyer to monk, but that was just one flash. Now a different sort of light shone upon him in a steady, intensifying beam, effecting a change that was much more profound: he saw and understood.

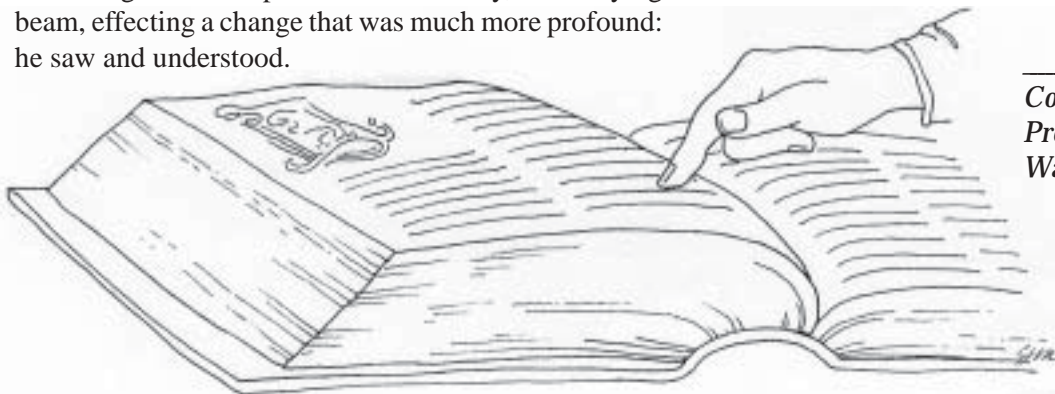
But as the truth of Scripture became clearer to Luther, so did the truth about the Catholic Church. The Church of Rome was corrupt. Her teachings were false. All the monkery, relic-visiting, and contributing in the world would not save a soul out of hell. Yet this is what men relied upon. This is what Luther himself had tried to do. It wouldn't work. Luther was a preacher as well as a teacher. He had to warn the people of Wittenberg that it wouldn't work. He had to discuss these things with his fellow monks at the university.

Little did he imagine these warnings and discussions could so swiftly pass over the walls of Wittenberg to reach all of Europe and the world.

**Find the following underlined words from Romans 1:17 in the puzzle below:**

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith."

F	H	D	T	J	F	O	R	N	T	H	G	H
A	I	E	F	F	E	M	W	J	U	S	T	L
B	H	L	U	A	V	R	I	T	H	I	H	L
T	S	A	V	I	I	W	F	A	A	H	E	F
S	R	E	D	T	L	T	L	F	N	S	R	M
E	R	V	T	H	R	L	H	B	U	S	E	O
S	S	E	N	S	U	O	E	T	H	G	I	R
A	N	R	G	H	J	I	B	Y	T	O	N	F



*Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.*

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