Beacon Lights

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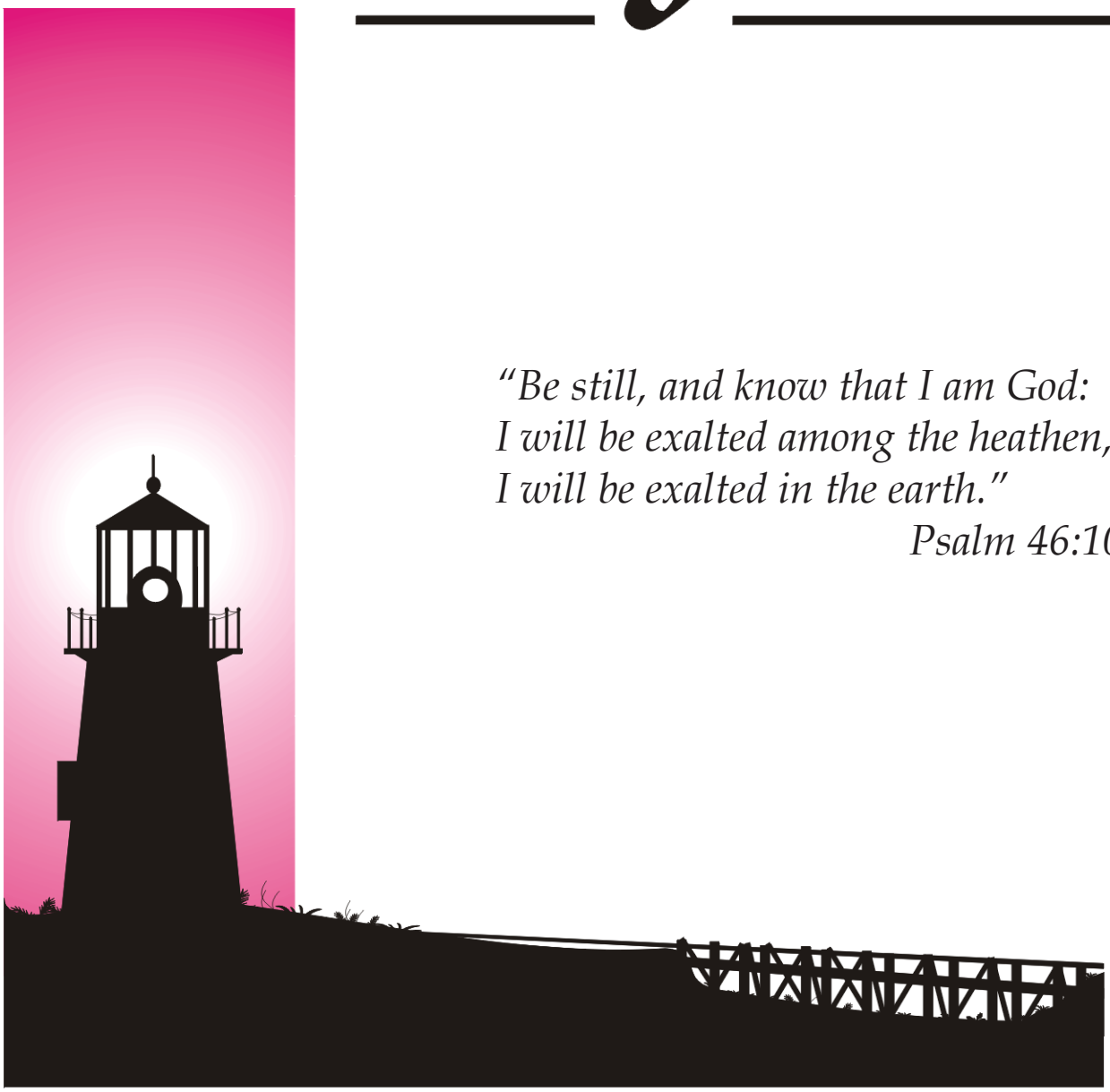

"Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen,
I will be exalted in the earth."
Psalm 46:10

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Be Still

by John Huizenga

The alarm clock rings.
I want to sleep, but it's time to go.
Got a big day ahead.
Fly through the shower.
Choose just the right clothes.
Grab some breakfast.
Get out of my way, I've only a minute to spare.
People are counting on me.
Things just have to work,
Or my world will stop.
Run to the car. Look again.
Can it be? The tire is flat.
No!
It can't be!
I've got places to go and things to get done!
This just can't happen!
Oh, yes it can.
Yes, it must!
Shhhh!
Be still.
Sit down.
Think a moment.
Who are you?
Who's in control?
Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.
It's been a long day.
So many things to get done.
Had to work late.
I need a break.
Turn on the TV.
I don't want to think.
Leave me alone.
I don't want to talk.
I want to drown out the noise.
I've given enough to others.
Now it's time for me.
No.
Turn off the TV.
Let it be silent.
Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.
Go with your Lord
Into the mountain
To pray.

I'm bored.
I want something to do.
I can't stand having nothing to do.
I want something exciting.
My friends are all out—doing something,
I'm sure.
Would you get off the phone sometime this year!
I've got someone to call.
What?
The Internet's down!
I'm going to go crazy!
It can't go down.
Shhhh!
Be still.
Sit down.
Think a moment.
Who are you?
Who's in control?
Be still and know that I am God.

God's fire fell
And consumed the burnt sacrifice
And the wood, and the stones, and the dust
And licked up the water that was in the trench.
"Take the prophets of Baal;
Let not one of them escape"

The heaven was black with clouds and wind
And there was a great rain
What power! What might!
A victory at last!
But Jezebel raged.
"So let the gods do to me, and more also,
If I make not thy life
As the life of one of them
By to morrow
About this time."
Elijah fled.
"It is enough; now, O LORD,
Take away my life.
Where is thy power?
Where is the victory?"
Not in the wind.
Not in the quake.
Not in the fire.
Where?
Be still.
Hear the voice?
Hear the still small voice?
Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.

A job is lost.
Wealth flies away.
A boyfriend breaks up.
Cancer strikes.
A child dies.
Crops fail.
Beauty fades.
A spouse cheats.
Hopes are dashed.
Ruined plans.
This just can't happen!
I don't deserve it.
I've worked hard to get it.
It's just no fair.
Be still.
Be still and know that I am God.

Be still
Push aside the noise, the clutter
That drowns the Voice.
Push aside your will
To hear His.
Set aside your agenda
And hear His council
By the power of His grace
Alone.
Take time today not only
To read His Word
And Pray
But,
Take a moment to
Be Still
And know. ❖

Story Time

Ruth

by Sarah Mowery

It's not that I didn't like Ruth, she just got on my nerves.

Other residents detracted from a nurse aide's more unpleasant tasks. There was Minnie, self-appointed greeter of the visitors that entered the nursing home, who thought that she was still in her teens and spent much of her time in the armchair nearest the door, waiting for her long-deceased husband to pick her up for a date. There was stout Margaret, who greeted me with a twinkle in her eye and a "Hi, Toots," every time I peeked in her room door, and skinny Mattie, whose foul mouth made the ladies who lined the east wall of the dining room for

Wheel of Fortune every evening twitter and shake their heads disapprovingly. One hundred and three year old Marie, Ruth's roommate, insisted on keeping her white stuffed cat, "Nice kitty, nice kitty" with her at all times. Sharon, a nurse aide whose vocabulary rivaled Mattie's, enjoyed getting a rise out of Marie by snatching "nice kitty" by its fluffy tail and swinging it in circles above her head.

And then there was Ruth.

Ruth's room was the first room on the right side of North Hall, the hall with the residents who needed the most involved care. Her room door was right next to the drinking fountain, straight across from the employee entrance. Several times a week I changed into my scrubs in the locker rooms at school and drove to Pleasant Acres to punch in for the 3:30 – 10:30 shift. Once there, I hung up my coat, peeked into the kitchen to tell Marcela to figure on me for supper, and then entered North Hall. I would stoop for a drink of water before heading to the nurses' station, and today, before I straighten, I sense Ruth standing in the doorway of her room.

The single black and white wedding photo that sits atop the small television on Ruth's night stand depicts a young woman with dainty features and striking pale eyes. In person, Ruth's eyes are light blue, and they water almost perpetually, the tears pooling in the wrinkles on her face. Her hair is pure white, and continual rubbing on her easy chair flattens the curls on the back of her head into stiff rays. The waxy skin stretched tautly over her pointy nose and her hands are almost transparent, revealing a network of spidery blue veins. She stares blankly at me for a moment, and her bony fingers twitch as she stuffs the crumpled handkerchief in her right hand into her left hand and then moves it back again.

"Hi Ruth," I say, trying to sound nonchalant as I wipe a few drops of water from my face with the back of one hand and adjust the gait belt around my waist with the other. I place both hands firmly on my hips, steeling myself for Ruth's approach, but she is not deterred by my stance. She shuffles stiffly up to me, reaches jerkily for my forearm, and grasps it tightly with both white-knuckled hands.

"What'sa matter, Ruth?" I sigh, noting two of the other nurse aides walking past the end of the hall with the ice cart. Ruth tentatively rests her nervous head on my shoulder.

"Oh girl, oh girl," she quivers. Then again, this time a wail, "Oh, girl, oh girl."

"Oh, Ruth, come on, don't get all worked up," I say, shrugging her bony head from my shoulder and deftly loosening the gait belt from my waist and tying it snugly around hers. I grasp the belt at the small of her back and use it to steady her as I steer her back into her room. Marie is dozing in her mauve-colored geri-chair, her square head cocked to one side, fingers unconsciously stroking "nice kitty" as she mumbles unintelligibly. I maneuver Ruth to the left, align her with the armchair next to her bed, and tug gently on the gait belt until her rigid body bends at the waist and she drops into the brown chair. She cries out as if the plop into her chair hurt her, and I lower myself, leaning on one armrest. The other nurse aides are at the door, filling the two water pitchers that sit next to the sink with fresh water and ice. I glance up at them, and they roll their eyes at me as they move on down the hall.

"Are you OK, Ruth?" I ask, tipping my head to look into her face as I untie the belt and slip it out from behind her back. She closes her eyes and wearily, methodically pats my arm.

"Well, if you're OK, I'm going to go help the other girls fill ice, and then it'll be time to head to the dining room for supper," I say, moving to stand. Instantly her fingers lock on my forearm, and her panicked eyes fly open.

"Oh girl, oh girl, don't leave me," she cries, and then again, gently rocking herself back and forth, she repeats, "Don't leave me."

"But, Ruth, I've got other people to take care of, too," I try to reason with her, knowing what she's about to request.

"Sing with me," she whispers, and I comply.

Janelle, one of the nurses, told me once that when Ruth came to Pleasant Acres, she would sing many different songs throughout a day. Now there are only two songs that Ruth ever sings. One is an old Dutch psalm, and the other is the hymn that she begins now. Thanks to Ruth, I, too, know it by heart, and we sing together: "Take time to be holy, speak oft with the Lord. Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word. Make friends with God's children, help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek."

I unfold as we near the end of the stanza, and I can't help but smile as I look down at Ruth. She sings with her eyes closed, her head resting on the back of her chair, wiry white hairs fanning out to form a halo around her head. She sings loudly, sometimes so loudly that Dottie, who lives down the hall, will hobble over and slam the room door shut, which startles Ruth and makes her sing even more noisily, punctuating her song with little yelping sounds. Now she folds her hands together as we

finish the song, and I tiptoe out of the room as she, gently rocking herself back and forth, begins to murmur out loud, praying the same prayer she always prays:

"Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord…"

Half an hour later, as we serve the first shift of residents their supper, Ruth's voice carries down the hall to the dining room. This time she begins with the Dutch psalm, after which she switches to the hymn that I sang with her only a short time before. Then, as is routine, we can't hear her for a little while as she prays, and then she breaks into song again. Kim, one of the other nurse aides, turns to me while she waits for Marcela to scoop potato wedges and corn onto the next tray.

"Saw Ruth catch you right when you walked in. Too bad for you."

"Yeah," I say with a shrug, "She can't help it, it's just her Alzheimer's, you know."

"I know, but she's so annoying," Kim snickers, rolling her heavily-lined eyes as she turns to deliver the full tray to the next resident on the list. I watch her stiff yellow curls spring as she walks. Though she's only a few months older than I, she's been working here for almost a year more, so she doesn't hesitate to give orders and entitles herself to frequent "smoke breaks" without punching out. On one of my first nights at Pleasant Acres, Lindsey and I were putting Ray and Elsie to bed when I happened to glance out the window as I pulled the curtain shut. Kim was out on the patio at the rear of the building, near the employee entrance, sitting on some boy's lap, cigarette in hand, laughing loudly. When her eye caught my sight of me in the window, she grinned even wider, and winked at me. I have dreaded working with her ever since.

It's 9:45 PM and Lindsey, Janelle and I are sitting at one of the tables in the dining room, munching Lorna Dunne cookies and charting what percentage of their meal each resident ate, if they had a bowel movement, and whether it was small or large. The hallways that branch out in three directions from the dining room are quiet and dark except for the red EMERGENCY EXIT signs at the end. Once charting is done, we start with rounds, moving first down East Hall, then West, then North. It's while we're changing the pads on the bed of Magdalena Jacobmina, affectionally refered to as "Mac" by the staff, that Ruth's terrified screams ring out through the otherwise still halls. Lindsey and I startle, and Janelle scurries into Mac's room, urging me to go try to calm Ruth while she and Lindsey finish with Mac. I hustle down the hall, heart pounding.

Ruth is completely uncovered, her thin nightgown twisted around her neck, bare legs flailing, hands clinging to her bed rail. Her frantic yelling has wakened Marie, who starts hollering, "Who's there? Who's there?" I reach down to cradle Ruth's neck in one arm, and stroke her hair as I lower her head onto the pillow,

"Shhh…Ruth…shhh. You're OK, Ruth, you're OK. Everything's going to be alright," I murmur softly, hoping that Marie will quiet down and go back to sleep.

"What's wrong with her?" Lindsey is standing next to me.

"I don't know, she's pretty worked up, though." I respond, reaching a tentative hand to feel the pads below Ruth's body.

"She's wet," I whisper, nodding my head toward the rounds cart heaped with clean pads. "Let's change her bedding, and then I'll stay with her for a little while if Janelle is willing to help you finish rounds." Lindsey nods in agreement, and quickly, methodically, we roll Ruth's trembling frame from side to side to change her bedding, straighten her nightgown, and tuck her in.

I wriggle between Ruth's nightstand and the bed rail to perch on the top corner of her mattress. Except for an occasional whimper, she's quiet now. I gently begin to stroke her hair again and then bend close to whisper, "Ruth, did you want to sing?"

"Oh, yes…" she whimpers, and so we sing. This time I start, and she joins in. We sing "Take Time to Be Holy," and I then follow her lead through the Dutch psalm she loves so well. Her voice grows fainter as she reaches the last strains of the song. Her hands find one another on the top of the bedspread, and I almost mouth the words as she begins:

"Thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord, thank you, Lord…"

I stay there, perched on the head of her bed, running my fingers through her coarse hair even after she falls asleep. I'm still there when Lindsey peeks in to say goodnight, and I don't stand to leave until I hear Jan, who works the night shift, punch her time card and trot past Ruth's room door. Ruth is curled on her side, hands still folded, eyes closed, releasing her breath in short, rhythmic bursts. I wave down the hall at Jan and Janelle and punch out. The exit door clicks behind me as I unwrap the gait belt from my waist and raise it above my head, using it to stretch my back and shoulders as I walk toward my car.

I walked out that door for the last time a little over a year later. Before I left I hung my gait belt on one of coat hooks that line the wall next to the time clock. The

buckle swung gently back and forth, knocking the wall as I put on my coat, tied my scarf snugly around my head, and slipped outside. The night was still and bitterly cold, and the snow on the ground squeaked beneath my white tennis shoes as I made my way slowly to my car. Above, abundant stars reeled in an inky sky. I looked up as I wriggled the key into the car door lock, and I remembering wondering at their names.

I know some former employees of Pleasant Acres who return regularly to bring goodies for the staff, visit the residents, or provide entertainment for an evening. I wonder if they notice that few of the people living there are the ones for which they provided care. Or if it bothers them that the few residents that they do recognize do not know them. I have never gone back.

* * * * *

I tense and glance out the kitchen window as a truck roars past on our gravel road. My son, asleep in his crib in the next room, wheezes and rolls over, and my daughter, tucked in her bed, stops turning the pages in her book long enough to glance in the direction of the window. The whir of the humidifier and the drone of the stereo on the counter threaten to lull me to sleep, but I load the sink with dirty plates and cups, child-sized spoons, and a casserole dish encrusted with remnants of macaroni and cheese. As I methodically swipe and rinse each dish, the radio DJ reads the three-day forecast and introduces "an old gospel hymn." I pause as a clear, sweet voice breaks through to my weary mind, "Take time to be holy, speak oft with the Lord…" I listen to the words with my chin tipped up and my eyes closed. First one tear, and then another, slides down my face, and I remember Ruth and her watery eyes.

I turn the stereo off as the final strains of the hymn are drowned out by the rousing pulse of the DJ's next selection. For several minutes I stand, chapped hands limp in the soapy water, tears flooding my vision. I draw in a deep breath, and the waistband of my jeans digs deeper into my gently swelling belly. And there, at the whisper of my Savior's Spirit, my quiet kitchen becomes a closet, and I bow my weary head before our gracious Father in heaven, the One who not only counts the stars, but knows the number of the hairs on my head; the One who has given me the two breathing softly in the next room and forgives me when I fail to be to them the mother that I ought to be; the One who has placed and tenderly forms this baby in my womb, and who gently assures me that He will be faithful to provide us all we need to care for another covenant child; the One who forgives this woman who so often uses housework or laundry as an excuse to not speak with Him; the One whom Ruth never forgot, and before whom she now stands, singing an endless repertoire of praise.

Thank you, Lord. ❖

Sarah is a member of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Taxes ... With a Purpose

by Rev. B. Woudenberg

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."

Luke 2:1-5

TAXES! To most people they are a scourge—the scourge of the human race. Actually taxes are as old as civilization itself and its most unpopular part no doubt.

Originally taxes were very subtle. They were called

gifts, and sometimes they really were. So we are told in Genesis that Abraham gave tithes of all that he possessed to Melchizedek king of Salem. This was a willing gift presented by Abraham because he recognized that Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God. His gift was recognition of the fact that all he possessed was his only by the goodness of the God whom Melchizedek represented. And there may well have been other instances also when gifts were given to the heads of other nations or tribes merely as expressions of friendship or gratitude.

Usually, however, when these early gifts of tribute were rendered, there were other, ulterior motives behind them. The gifts so given almost inevitably flowed from the less powerful tribes to the more powerful ones. There were reasons for this. The small and weak tribes were always conscious of their inability to defend themselves from invaders. For them it was a matter of practical importance to establish friendships with more powerful neighbors who could stand by them and help them should an enemy appear.

It did not take long for the mightier rulers to discover that this could be a very lucrative source of wealth. As times went on, the stronger tribes and nations more and more sent forth their armies into neighboring lands to exact from them such tributes or to threaten them with complete destruction. It became a way of life. Perhaps the most successful practitioners of this sort of taxation were king David of Israel and Solomon his son. Under the armies of David the boundaries of Israel and its tributaries were extended from the Nile to the Euphrates River. It was by far the largest kingdom and the most wealthy that the world had seen until that day. Each nation subdued by David's armies was compelled to present a yearly gift or tribute to the nation of Israel. It was from the great wealth so gathered that the famed glory of Solomon's great kingdom was constructed. And, although the strength of Israel was undermined by the division in the kingdom, this method of conquest and taxation continued to dominate the world for many centuries.

It was not, however, until the Romans were ruling the world that an entirely new concept in taxation was introduced. It happened during the reign of Caesar Augustus while Cyrenius was governor of Syria. At that time there was levied a tax, not just upon the conquered nations as a whole, but upon every subject of the Roman Empire individually, no matter to which nation he belonged. This was a tremendous, epoch-making event in the history of taxation. It meant that Romans had to go out and make records of every individual person in their realm. It meant that every individual person had to be contacted and the collection of his taxes had to be enforced. The complexity of that task must have been almost beyond comprehension in that day when it was introduced. This was perhaps the most significant innovation that was ever made in the long history of civilization and its taxations.

Unto this day the world still feels the effect of that innovation made by Caesar Augustus when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. There has hardly been an empire or kingdom since that time which has not followed this new method of taxation. Almost every person everywhere who has lived within the pale of civilization has been required to register for taxation after that method first devised when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Although little is known about it, this was one of the great precedent practices of all time.

* * * * *

Oh yes, there is one other event which we should mention concerning that registration which was introduced by Caesar Augustus. Actually, of course, at the time it could hardly have seemed important. It was just one of those regrettable inconveniences which were bound to take place under a command as far reaching as that.

It appears that in Palestine all Jews were required to make their registration in the city of their fathers, regardless of where they happened to live at the time. This was an awkward requirement that meant that everyone who had moved into another territory had to travel back to the city in which his fathers lived. Sometimes this distance was considerable and the hardships could be very great. An instance of this was the case of a man who had to travel to Bethlehem in Judaea all the way from Nazareth in the province of Galilee. And what made this journey especially difficult was that his wife who traveled with him was about to give birth to a child.

We do not know any of the details of their journey, only that they came to the city as complete strangers unwelcome and unknown. Actually they were both people of rather impressive backgrounds. They were both of the family of David, and the young woman was from the line of Israel's kings. She represented the line from which according to promise the Messiah was to come forth. But in that modern day people, regardless of how religious they professed to be, were quite satisfied with things as they were and really did not care whether the Messiah would ever come. The line of David's promised seed was ignored and forgotten. The young couple came to the city

of David and no one cared. Because of the registration, the city was crowded when they came. They went from door to door, but wherever they went there was no room until finally they were left with no choice but to spend the night with the cattle in a public stable. It was during that night that Mary's son was born.

This was one of the more unpleasant consequences of that new form of taxation which was introduced. In itself it was incidental and did not reflect upon the value of this form of taxation as such. And yet, if it were not for that birth, the tax innovation of Augustus during the governorship of Cyrenius would no longer be remembered. Although neither Caesar nor Cyrenius could have realized it, it was actually their epoch-making form of taxation that was really incidental. Finally, it was only a means to bring Mary to the city of her fathers that according to prophecy she might there give birth to her firstborn son. ❖

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Gem of the Month

The Woman at the Well

A woman came to Jacob's well
With drink her thirst to slake;
She's startled when a Jewish
Man Looked unto her and spake:
He asked her for a drink, but she,
Confused, confronts the Man:
Why do you ask a drink from me?
I'm a Samaritan.
You know that we and Jews are not
Supposed to socialize,
So when you asked me for a drink
It took me by surprise.

The Man gave answer unto her:
If you knew of God's gift,
You'd ask of Me a drink instead
Of waters that uplift.
Your thirst would be completely quenched,
You'd never thirst again
'Twould be a well-spring in your life;
It is Jehovah's plan.
He opens up to all his own
Salvation's copious well,
Not only to the Jewish race
But Gentiles drink as well.

For God has promised Japheth's seed
Shall dwell in tents of Shem;
Salvation's not for Jews alone
But also it's for them
Whom God has chosen by His grace
To share the covenant bond;
They'll also enter heaven's gate—
The holy, great beyond.

The woman then perceived that He
Was Christ—He'd come at last.
She testified: Messiah's come!
He told me all my past.
Her friends and neighbors came to see
And many then believed.
God opened hearts of those He chose
And they His word received.
Now we, as Gentiles hear that word—
We come, bereft of sin
For Jesus' blood has paid the price
And made us pure within.

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Jonker

April 4 Read Joshua 1:1-4

The conquest of the land of Canaan is about to begin. Moses, who led the people up to this point died on Mt. Nebo. He was shown the land of Canaan, but might not lead the people into it. Because of his sin of striking the rock in disobedience, he was not fit to finish the work. This task was given to Joshua, the son of Nun. He is described as Moses' minister, both in Exodus 13 and in this section. He was the servant or personal assistant of Moses and is divinely ordained for this calling. His name originally was Oshea. Moses changed it to Jehoshua which means "Jehovah is salvation," and he is actually called "Jesus" in Hebrews 4:8. His calling is to lead God's people into the earthly Canaan, and as such typifies Christ who leads His people through this world of strife and sin into the heavenly Canaan. The Lord assures Joshua that He will give them the land of Canaan and He assures us that we too will possess the new heavens and earth. No enemy can withstand Him! What a glorious promise for us to embrace by faith. Psalter 420;1, 2.

April 5 Read Joshua 1:5-9

The land which the Israelites were promised and are about to enter was inhabited by many peoples. They were strong and would be determined to fight to keep their cities and lands. An essential requirement for Joshua and his army is a reassuring word from the Lord himself, "Be strong and of a good courage." This expression occurs several times, with Moses also speaking these same words to Joshua in the sight of all the people before he died. The Lord added another requirement that was necessary besides strength and courage to overcome the impending enemy. That requirement was obedience to the law. Not only must they keep the law, but must meditate upon it day and night. In this way the Lord would prosper them. Obviously, this word comes to you and me as well as we battle our enemies, the world, the devil, and our own sinful flesh on our way to the heavenly Canaan. Let us then, by faith, with strength and courage from above, follow the perfect Joshua, Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Psalter 149:1, 2, 6.

April 6 Read Joshua 1:10-18

In response to God's command and in the assurance that God would prosper their conquest of Canaan, Joshua instructs the people to prepare food for their journey. Then he reminds the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh that although they were given the land east of the Jordan River for their inheritance, they must help with the conquest of Canaan. Their wives, children, and their flocks will remain on this side of Jordan, but all the mighty men of valor must go with the army of Israel until the Lord would give them rest. It is interesting to note in this regard that not all the men of these tribes assisted in the battles. According to Numbers 26, we read that there were one hundred thirty-seven thousand men able to go to war in these tribes, and Joshua 4:12, 13 informs us that forty thousand crossed Jordan to help their brethren. So that leaves ninety-seven thousand behind to protect and care for the women, children, and cattle. At any rate they willingly respond to Joshua's instruction to accompany the army and threaten those with death who should refuse obedience, and they echo Moses' and the Lord's words, "only be strong and of a good courage." Psalter 188:1-3.

April 7 Read Joshua 2:1-3

Before the army of Israel rises up to invade Canaan, Joshua sent out two men from the camp to spy out the land, especially Jericho. This city was about eight miles from the Jordan River, and was the gateway to Canaan. We may ask the question: "Was this action necessary, since Joshua himself spied out the country earlier and God promised to give them the land?" But we believe there is a deeper reason, and that the Lord had His purpose in this, especially in regard to Rahab. The men entered Jericho and lodged in the house of a harlot, but were spotted by the wicked inhabitants of the city who promptly informed the king. All this was sovereignly determined by God who directed the spies to Rahab's house. Rahab was a changed woman from her old ways as a prostitute, and by God's grace was given faith to believe. This faith comes to manifestation by her works, as we will see. Can this be said of us, dear reader? Is ours a living, active faith? Let us show that faith by being friends of God and enemies of the world. Psalter 403:1-3.

April 8 Read Joshua 2:4-13

These verses inform us that Rahab hid the spies from the king's messengers and misled them into believing that the spies had already left. Scripture is silent regarding her lying, and although it is understandable on her part, lying is never to be justified. She informs the spies that Jericho's inhabitants heard about the mighty works of the Lord and trembled

with fear. She confesses that Jehovah is God in heaven and earth, and makes the spies swear that they will save her and her house when Jericho is defeated. Rahab was an elect child of God who lived in the depths of sin for a time, but was converted and plucked as a brand out of the fire in the way of faith. We find her name in Hebrews 11 as one who lived from faith and in God's inscrutable wisdom she becomes a mother in Israel in the direct line of the geneology of Jesus. The lesson therefore, once again, is that we live by faith, die by faith, and are saved by faith. May God be pleased to grant us the necessary grace to emulate the living faith of Rahab in our lives. Psalter 280:1, 3, 4.

April 9 Read Joshua 2:14-24

Rahab is convinced that Israel will be victorious when they come upon Jericho and asked the spies to swear by the name of the Lord that they will save her family alive when this happens. The spies do not know at this time how the Lord will deliver the city into Israel's hand, but they agree, with certain stipulations that must be met, namely that no one utter this business and that she gathers her entire family inside her house which will be marked with a scarlet cord. By this cord, the spies descend from her home and after spending three days in the mountain, return to Joshua. They relate to him all that happened plus the encouraging news that the inhabitants of the land were fainthearted because of them, emphasizing the fact that it was the Lord's doing which caused this fear. This mighty God of Israel is also our God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will fight for us, deliver us from evil, and save us eternally. Blessed be his name! Psalter 399:1, 3, 4.

April 10 Read Joshua 3:1-8

The church of God as comprised by the nation of Israel stood at an important juncture in her life. Joshua led the nation to the banks of the Jordan River. There they beheld an impassible torrent of water which barred the way to the Promised Land. Joshua issues instructions to the people in regard to their crossing the river. They must consecrate themselves to behold the wonders that God will perform for them on the morrow. They must advance, when they see the Ark of the Covenant carried ahead by the priests, but maintain a reverent distance from it. It must be very evident to all that Jehovah is bringing His people into Canaan by His mighty power and not by their own ingenuity. As they pass into the land of promise they must keep their eyes on the ark which symbolized God's presence. We too, as God's people, are making a journey through the wilderness of sin en route to the Promised Land. We encounter many obstacles that would divert us away from the paths of righteousness. But with our eyes upon Jesus, led by His Spirit, we shall by faith overcome them, and enter the Promised Land. Psalter 352:1-4.

April 11 Read Joshua 3:9-17

The moment arrives when the actual crossing of Jordan takes place. Joshua reassures the people that the Lord will drive out the inhabitants of Canaan by this demonstration of His power. The priests who bore the ark stepped into the river and the water ceased to flow. We are informed that God caused the water to stand as a heap near the city of Adam, about fifteen miles upstream, and as a result the rocky bed of the river was laid bare. The Israelites then passed over on dry ground. Truly that was a wondrous and significant miracle that also speaks to us today. The people of Israel had to see that they were not overcome and destroyed by the waters of Jordan because of the priests and the ark which went before them. The ark with its blood sprinkled mercy seat covered their sins and pointed to Christ, the perfect High Priest, who made perfect atonement. We all must cross the Jordan River of death which we fear by nature, but our High Priest and Savior has gone before and opened the way, and by faith we follow Him to Canaan's rest. Psalter 29:1-3.

April 12 Read Joshua 4:1-13

As soon as the last of the people walked out of the river-bed of Jordan, the Lord gave some specific instructions to Joshua. An event of this magnitude must not be forgotten, and Joshua was told to erect a double memorial in remembrance of this miraculous crossing. Twelve men, one from each tribe are selected. Each man must carry a large stone from the midst of Jordan and bring it to the west side of the river. At the same time Joshua was told to take twelve additional stones and arrange them in a heap on the east side of the river where the priests stood who bore the ark. This was to be a tangible sign of this passing event. The number of the stones selected was not an arbitrary number, but consisted of twelve stones corresponding to the twelve tribes which is the number of election. This was a testimony to Israel and to us as well, that God, according to His election, opens up the way into the promised rest. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Psalter 275:1-3.

April 13 Read Joshua 4:14-24

The twelve stones that the men of each tribe carried out of Jordan were set up for a memorial in Gilgal where the people camped on the west side of the river. We read that the memorial had a practical purpose, namely that this was a means for the instruction of their children. God's word deals much with children. He establishes His covenant in the line of generations which means that they are His, and belong to His people. These stones were purposely meant to arouse their curiosity and stimulate questions. Their parents in turn were to teach them the significance of all the signs that the Lord provided. We, who are parents, are called to be faithful in teaching our covenant children the ways and wonders of the Lord. He has given us many means in home, school and

church. May we by God's grace be diligent in this our calling. Children and young people, pray that you may be receptive to this instruction. In this way, God is glorified and we are blessed. Psalter 213:1-3.

April 14 Read Joshua 5:1-9

The effect of God's mighty power as displayed by the drying up of the waters of Jordan was soon made manifest. The kings of the Amorites and Canaanites became so weak with fear that the children of Israel could camp at Gilgal in safety from their enemies. The Lord providentially arranged this, so that the rite of circumcision could take place at this time. Joshua receives instructions from the Lord to administer the sign of the covenant to all who were born during the forty years after leaving Egypt. By this rite of circumcision the Lord rolled away the reproach from off the people, hence the name Gilgal, which means "rolling". Only as a sanctified people could they fight the battles of the Lord and strive successfully to enter into the Promised Land. This certainly speaks to us too, for we fight the battles of the Lord on our pilgrimage to heaven. By virtue of our baptism we are called to "forsake the world, crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life." Thanks be to God that by His Spirit "we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." Psalter 326:1-4.

April 15 Read Joshua 5:10-15

We note in this passage that the people once again resumed the keeping of the Passover. At the same time the manna ceased and they ate of the fruit of Canaan. Then our attention turns to Joshua who stands in the vicinity of Jericho. We may well imagine what is taking place in his mind as he contemplates the task laid upon him and how impossible it appeared. Israel must conquer Jericho, a strong and fortified city, the gateway to Canaan, and although the inhabitants feared Israel, they did not intend to surrender. Suddenly the figure of a man appeared before Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand. In response to Joshua's challenge, he reveals himself as the captain of the Lord's hosts. This was none other than the Old Testament manifestation of Christ, and Joshua falls to the ground and worships. We sometimes wonder, don't we, how we can persevere in our daily battle against sin? We also wonder what our children will have to face as the world grows more wicked and intolerant. Don't fear, people of God, but listen to our Captain: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Psalter 398:1-3.

April 16 Read Joshua 6:1-11

Joshua receives instructions from the Captain of the Lord's hosts about the manner in which Jericho will fall to Israel. He says to Joshua, "See I have give into thine hand Jericho…" This is a crucial statement which indicates that the enemy is already overcome and delivered into Joshua's hands by Jehovah. No battle plans are given, no strategies are drawn up. Instead, a procession of the people must march around the city once each day for six days in succession. The armed men must go first, followed by seven priests with trumpets of ram's horns. Next come the priests who carried the ark of Jehovah, and lastly, the rear guard which follow the ark. This must be a demonstration of the mighty power of God alone, and an exercise of faith on the part of the people. The people might not take the city of Jericho by their own strength. It must be the Lord's work alone. We are not saved either by contributing a single thing to our own salvation. It is the Lord's work from the beginning to the end. All praise and honor belong to Him alone. Psalter 242:1, 3, 4.

April 17 Read Joshua 6:12-19

Obediently following the instructions from the Lord, the daily march around the city takes place. Once each day for six days the procession went around the city with the priests blowing the trumpets. The people however, were silent. It's quite possible that some of the inhabitants of Jericho mocked the Israelites from the safety of the walls, considering this action sheer foolishness. However, they failed to reckon with the fact that the Almighty was in Israel's midst. His presence, symbolized in the Ark of the Covenant, was the source and power of the whole march. He will uproot the kingdom of darkness and establish His typical kingdom in the land of Canaan. Everything in Jericho is pronounced cursed by the Lord. Only Rahab and her family are to be spared and items of precious metals which were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord. Because Jericho was the first city of Canaan which the Lord gave to His people, Israel had to sacrifice it to the Lord as the first-fruits of the land and the city itself laid to ashes. May we also learn from this to keep ourselves away from anything that would pollute our holy walk, and consecrate all that we have and all that we are to the Lord. Psalter 383:1, 4, 5.

April 18 Read Joshua 6:20-27

The trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell flat. What an extraordinary way to assault and capture a city. But it had to be this way. God had said to Joshua, "I have given into thine hand Jericho". The people might not capture the city by their own power. They had to understand that it is God alone who makes possible the entrance into Canaan. God opened the way through the Jordan River and God gave them the city by a wonder of His grace. The people were to receive these blessings by walking obediently in faith. Heb. 11:30 states, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days". Just as the land of Canaan is a gift of grace, so is salvation, and all it entails, a free gift of grace through Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation. This passage closes with Joshua pronouncing a curse upon the man who would rebuild Jericho as a fortified city. This was fulfilled in I Kings 16:34 when Hiel the Bethelite did so, and as a result lost all his sons by death. Psalter 149:1, 3, 6.

April 19 Read Joshua 7:1-5

With confidence bolstered by the fall of Jericho, Joshua makes his plans to attack the city of Ai. Men are sent out to scout the city and they return with the report that it is a small city and that two or three thousand warriors would be sufficient to conquer it. Joshua commissions an army of three thousand men to accomplish this conquest, but they were put to the rout by the men of Ai and thirty-six Israelites were slain. The result was that "the hearts of the people melted and became as water." Apparently they thought that the promise of God had failed. In light of the wonderful victory at Jericho, the fall of Ai appeared certain. But we read in the context that God was wroth with the children of Israel, for someone had appropriated to himself some of the accursed things of Jericho. All sin has consequences, and this was a bitter lesson for Israel to learn. God is just and His ways past finding out. As long as sin remained in their midst, victory would be impossible. Sin must always be confessed, sorrow expressed, and forgiveness sought. Only in this way can reconciliation to God take place and joy restored. Psalter 141:1, 2, 4.

April 20 Read Joshua 7:6-15

The defeat at Ai caused consternation in Israel and brought Joshua to the point of despair. Not realizing that the fault lay in the people, he wonders why the Lord dealt with them in this way. The Lord declares that Israel had sinned by transgressing His covenant and stealing things that were accursed. Israel was expressly commanded to refrain from taking anything to themselves of Jericho's spoils. The inhabitants of Jericho had filled their cup of iniquity and they were ripe for judgment. The Lord's heavy wrath was upon them and their possessions, and severe judgment must be meted out to the guilty one who stole from them. The Lord also prescribed the manner of punishment, namely that the guilty party and all that he had must be burnt with fire. This was a severe punishment, but the sin was great. May all of us learn not to covet the carnal things and pleasures of this sinful world, but rather set our affections on the things above. Psalter 325:1, 2, 3.

April 21 Read Joshua 7:16-26

In order to determine the guilty person who stole the accursed thing, the lot was taken by tribes, families and man by man. Each step was determined by the Lord, and the lot fell upon Achan from the tribe of Judah. We notice that even during this process with its inevitable outcome, Achan does not step forward to confess his sin but must be forced by Joshua to admit his guilt. He confesses to stealing a robe and some silver and gold. In compliance with God's verdict, Achan's entire family is stoned to death, and they, plus their possessions were burned with fire. A great heap of stones were raised over them as a warning to all the generations of Israel. Achan's sin of coveting the riches of a wicked world and persisting in this sin showed that he was profane and ungodly. His family also partook of his sin by not exposing or rebuking him. This sin had been visited upon the nation of Israel as a whole with dire consequences. As a lesson to us, may we never condone the sins of our fellow saints, but seek in the proper way to remove the sin and restore the sinner lest the wrath of God fall upon us as a body. Psalter 83:1, 2, 3.

April 22 Read Joshua 8:1-13

After the sad history of Achan's sin and Israel's defeat by Ai, the Lord appears to Joshua to encourage him and the people. He assures Joshua that Ai will be given to them and gives explicit instructions as to how the city will be taken. Five thousand men of Israel are to lie in ambush on the west side of Ai, while the main body of Israel are to be stationed on the north side. The main army is to draw out the men of Ai as if they were fleeing. Then, when Joshua raises his spear, the men in ambush will come out of hiding and enter the open city. The main army then reverses its direction and closes in on the enemy. This plan involves deception, does it not? Can there possibly be deception ascribed to God? Our answer is emphatically no! God is a God of truth and veracity. But war has a history on earth almost from the beginning, principally the war of Satan's seed against the woman's seed. (Gen. 3:15) Warfare calls for wise deployment of forces to attain the desired end, and generals use various strategies to confound the enemy. We, as God's people, must also fight, being "wise as serpents" (Matt 10:16) in our battle against the evil one. Psalter 92:1, 2, 7.

April 23 Read Joshua 8:14-29

God's plan to take the city of Ai was carried out by Israel to perfection. The army of Ai was caught between the two forces of Israel's army and completely destroyed. The ban of taking the spoil of wars was lifted and the people took of the cattle and goods of the city. Special mention is made of the stretching out of Joshua's spear during the battle at which time the ambush arose and the main army turned to fight. This symbolized that the battle was of the Lord and that He would surely give them the victory. The city was burned, and the king of Ai was killed and hanged on a tree until eventide (Deut. 21:22, 23). His body was cast on the ground where the gate of the city was located, and a great heap of stones cast upon it as a memorial. We may at times feel overwhelmed by the wicked world around us, but God assures us of final victory as He did to Zerubbabel in Zech. 4:6, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Psalter 389:1, 3, 4.

April 24 Read Joshua 8:30-35

After the conquering of Jericho and Ai, the land lay open for Israel to proceed further into Canaan. They traveled northward to Shechem where the two mounts, Ebal and Gerizim, were located. The ceremony which takes place there is rather briefly noted in this passage but we refer you to Deuteronomy

chapters 11 and 27 where you will read a detailed account of Moses' instructions to the people. Half of the tribes are to be gathered on Mt. Ebal, the mount of the curse, and the other half on Mt. Gerizim, the mount of blessing. The Ark of the Covenant is stationed between the mounts. An altar is built on Mt. Ebal for offerings and sacrifices. After the law of Moses was written on the plaster which overlaid the stones, the ceremony of blessing and cursing took place and the law read to the entire assembly. Space prevents us from delving into all the implications of this rite, but basically it means that God's blessing will rest on the people in the way of love and obedience, while His curse will be upon them if they break the law and follow other gods. Thanks be to God that in the fullness of time, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:16). Believe this gospel, people of God, and rejoice in His blessings. Psalter 113:1, 4, 12.

April 25 Read Joshua 9:1-15

The deception by the men of Gibeon was preceded by a confederation of the kings of Canaan. These kings were well aware of Israel's great victories, so they decided to take the offensive in battle against them. The Gibeonites were of the Hivites and were in the path of Israel's conquest of the land. The men of Gibeon resort to deception by claiming that they came from a far country and sought to prove it by their appearance and moldy provisions. They claim to have come in the name of Israel's God and seek to make a treaty with Israel to the effect that they will not be harmed. Rather naively, the men of Israel agree to this deception and swear to let them live, but Scripture points out distinctly that "they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord". The men of Gibeon were certainly wrong in this deception, but it was a serious error on the part of Joshua and the people. This speaks to us dear reader of the necessity to go to God in prayer constantly for direction and guidance in our daily lives. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7). Psalter 74:1, 2, 3.

April 26 Read Joshua 9:16-27

It took just three days for Joshua and Israel to learn that they were deceived by the Gibeonites. It was the same critical error they made before their initial attack on Ai, and as before it returned to plague them. They had failed to ask counsel of God, and now, because of their oath, they were bound to keep their word and not destroy them. We can scarcely blame the Gibeonites for their actions, but the main fault lay with Israel. Israel was now faced with the problem of how to punish the Gibeonites and still keep their oath to let them live. A solution was reached to make the Gibeonites hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the house of the Lord. This undoubtedly was a fulfillment of the curse Noah pronounced in Gen. 9:25, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." To the surprise of Israel, the Gibeonites reacted with humble obedience. We do not know if they were ever assimilated into the nation of Israel, but they were apparently faithful in the service to which they were assigned. Psalter 194:1, 2, 3.

April 27 Read Joshua 10:1-11

When the king of Jerusalem heard about the utter destruction of Jericho and Ai, he and his people feared greatly. Compounding this fear was the fact that Gibeon made peace with Israel. Gibeon was a great city and was situated on high ground now under control of Joshua. So king Adonizedec formed an alliance with four kings of the south and they advanced upon Gibeon in retaliation for their making peace with Israel. Gibeon immediately sends messengers to Joshua for help. In response to this urgent plea, Joshua assembles his army and travels overnight to meet this enemy. Then we hear the Lord say to Joshua, "Fear them not for I have delivered them into thine hand." This of course proved true, for it was not the might of the armies of Israel, but the might of the Lord that gained the victory. And as the enemy is fleeing before Israel, the Lord miraculously rained down huge hailstones that completely annihilated them. When the Lord is with us, we have peace and confidence. We can't fight our spiritual battles in our own strength. In the way of faith and trust and obedience we experience His guidance day by day until we too, reach our heavenly Canaan. Psalter 358:1, 2, 3.

April 28 Read Joshua 10:12-14

Truly a miraculous event occurred when the children of Israel were fighting the Amorites. Joshua spoke in the name of the Lord and commanded the sun and moon to stop in their courses so the enemy could not escape in the darkness. Did Joshua realize the implication of all that is involved in a commandment such as this? Not likely, but we can be sure that God wished to show His power through Joshua for did He not say to him earlier, "I have delivered the enemy into thy hand"? Many attempts to explain this phenomenon have been given, most of which distorts the text or are farfetched conclusions based on unbelief. We, as God's people believe the account as quoted in the book of Jasher, evidently a poetic book containing many wonderful works of God. God, who made the universe and upholds it daily, is supremely able to make one day into two. Because He has power over all things, they must work for the good of His people and for the destruction of the wicked. Let us bow in humility and praise and exalt His holy name now and forever. Psalter 285:1, 2, 3.

April 29 Read Joshua 10:15-27

Three incidents are brought to our attention in this passage of Scripture. First, in the aftermath of their victory, Israel returns to their camp at Gilgal in peace with no loss of life on their part. Second, a small number of the enemy managed to escape into fenced cities, and none of these,

we read, "moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel". Third, we have the matter of the five kings who fled the battle and hid themselves in a cave, and their subsequent judgment. In regard to the latter, Joshua brings the people to the cave at Makkedah and commands that the five kings be brought out. The captains of Israel's armies are told to place their feet upon the necks of these kings as a symbol of complete dominance over them. The kings are then slain and their bodies hanged until sunset. Some, in today's world, would criticize all this slaughtering as needless and atrocious. But in doing so, they criticize the Most High himself who has eternally decreed all things, and who alone is just and perfect in all His doings. We hope to enlarge on this aspect tomorrow. Let us bow in humble submission and gratitude to this great God in faith. Psalter 146:1, 2, 3.

April 30 Read Joshua 10:28-43

This passage deals with Joshua continuing his conquest of Canaan. No less than six cities are smitten and all their inhabitants killed plus Horam, king of Gezer, with his people who had come to help the city of Lachish. We read that the Lord delivered these people into the hand of Israel. How must we understand this warfare and its total annihilation? Do we claim as some that God is such a God of love that this slaughter should never have happened? Truly God is a God of love for His chosen people, but here we see the execution of divine judgment. The land was promised to Abraham and his seed and the Canaanites were usurpers. Their cup of iniquity was full and they were ripe for judgment. God is sovereign in divine reprobation as well as in divine election. Today, the ungodly are in control in most of the world and they pervert all things to their own wicked ends. They persecute the church that stands as a righteous witness against them. Jesus, the antitype of Joshua, by His death and resurrection will come again to fight the final battle against the wicked. He is our Captain, and the victory is ours by faith. Let us therefore put on the whole armor of God and follow this Captain so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil. Psalter 183:1, 3, 4.

May 1 Read Joshua 23

Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan is over. The nations were subdued, the land divided among the twelve tribes, and six cities of refuge were built. Now Joshua had grown old and his two-fold task was finished. He had successfully subdued the land and divided the inheritance. Many years had since passed and realizing that his death was imminent, he summons all Israel to him for his first farewell address. He reminds them that although the nations have been subdued, there still remained some Canaanites in the land. These remaining enemies must be driven out, but only in the way of Israel being courageous and strong and cleaving with all their heart to Jehovah their God. The people are also warned not to mingle with these unbelievers or serve their gods lest the anger of the Lord be kindled against them and they perish quickly from off their good land. How timely this exhortation is for all of us, especially young people. Keep yourself unspotted from the world, seek godly friends and mates, and pray earnestly for strength to fight the good fight of faith. In this way you will experience blessings abundantly, and the church will prosper. Psalter 99:1, 2, 5.

May 2 Read Joshua 24:1-18

This last chapter of the book of Joshua begins with his second farewell address to the people. He again recounts all the history of achievements attained from the perspective of the Lord speaking to them. It was the Lord who gave them the land and victory over the enemy by His mighty power. Then Joshua speaks from his heart and admonishes the people to fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth. He charges the people in the well known words of verses 14 and 15, but often misquoted, "choose you this day whom ye will serve". This choice is not between Jehovah and idols. Rather it is stated that if it seemed evil unto them to serve the Lord, then they were to choose among the various idols of the nations, which would really make no difference because idols are all the same. Joshua makes his commitment by saying, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." The people respond that they too will serve the Lord. Were the people sincere, dear reader, or was this vow taken too lightly? Surely, some were sincere, but we see from subsequent history that not all remembered God and His wonderful works. May God grant that our walk may be always consistent with our confession that He alone may be worshipped and adored by us. Psalter 360:1, 4, 5.

May 3 Read Joshua 24:19-33

When the people respond in the affirmative to Joshua's exhortation to serve the Lord, he exclaims "ye cannot serve the Lord." This appears to be a contradiction, but it really points out how impossible it is to serve God properly, for He is so holy, righteous and good that man by nature is incapable of serving Him with a perfect heart as He deserves. Only by a heartfelt confession of sins, falling at the foot of the cross, and pleading Christ's righteousness, can anyone serve Him properly. Joshua wrote the words of the people's assent in the book of the law of God and set up a great stone under an oak tree as a witness between them and God. The book of Joshua closes with his death at the age of one hundred and ten years, and he is described as a "servant of the Lord." This is a fitting testimony of one whose work is finished and who has entered into his reward. Mention is made that the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who outlived him. Let all of us thank God for faithful pastors and office bearers who instruct us, comfort us, and admonish us, and may God keep us faithful to Him all the days of our lives. Psalter 55: 1, 2, 3.

The Antithetical Life: Separated to Serve

by Rev Garrett Eriks

God calls all of His people, young and old, to live an antithetical life in this world. You, no doubt, are familiar with that word "antithesis" because you have heard it in sermons, catechism classes, young people's Bible study, and your homes. The danger is that the word becomes a buzzword that means very little for the way that you live your life in this world. As young people saved by sovereign grace, God calls you to live the antithetical life zealously. Take this opportunity to examine yourself. Cry out to God with the words of Psalm 139:23, 24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." May God expose to you where you are not living like you should.

The antithesis addresses how the child of God must live in relation to the world in which God has placed him. It is a life of spiritual separation from the world. You and I must constantly say, "yes" to God and "no" to all that to which God says "no." This is the calling explained in I Corinthians 6:14-18. Verse 14 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (Think about using these verses for your devotions and meditating on them this week.)

The subject of the antithesis is important because it is so difficult for us to live, as God calls us to live this antithetical life. We have within us yet the desire to follow our sinful lusts. Although it is certainly true that the life of Christ lives in our hearts, we still battle against our own sinful flesh. The things found in this world of sin are so enticing to us because we have within us the old man of sin. Be aware of your weakness. There is within you the desire to listen to the corrupt music of this world. There is in you a curiosity about the sexual immorality found in cyber space and movies. You have within you the desire to experiment with the ways of the world just to see what it is like. Do not believe the lie of Satan that experimenting with the ungodliness of this world is not so serious. To follow in this way of sin can leave scars that last a lifetime.

Living the antithetical life requires much. It requires committed fighting against the power of sin and darkness in this world. It requires constant obedience to the Word of God. Even more than this, living this life requires the sovereign grace of God. Only the power of God's grace can enable you to live this life. May God give you His grace.

Remember Who You Are!

Before you can or will live the antithetical life you must know who you are. This is what Paul is teaching in Ephesians 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." Paul is saying here that what you do is determined by who you are. So it is important to know first who you are. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior by the grace of God, you know that you are children of the light. You are children of the light because God has spiritually separated you from the kingdom of darkness.

> …you are children of the light.

Paul makes the same point in II Corinthians 6:14 when he calls us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Why? It is because of who you are by the grace of God. Therefore, you have nothing in common with the corrupt world of darkness.

By nature you and I belong to the kingdom of darkness. This is Paul's point in the beginning of Ephesians 5:8 when he says, "For ye were sometimes darkness…" Paul teaches the same thing earlier in the epistle (Ephesians 2:1-3) when he says, "who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the

power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh…" The kingdom of darkness serves Satan and walks in constant disobedience to the Word of God. This is the kingdom to which we would belong except for God's grace.

But God has saved you! When God saves, He separates a people to Himself. God reaches down into this world of sin and darkness that is seemingly under the control of Satan and He saves a people to live unto Him. Salvation is the work of God by which He separates us from the world of darkness to which we belong by nature. God chooses His people from before the foundation of the world. He sets His people apart from the world by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, by which Christ paid for the sins of His people. But still there is more. The ascended Christ sends His Spirit in the hearts of His people to make them alive spiritually, to convert them, and to sanctify them. By the power of Christ's work, God's people are given the ability to live the antithetical life in this fallen world of sin.

What does this say about you? If you know this salvation, then you know your identity. You are children of the light. Children of the light know that they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. They know that Jesus Christ is their Savior. Do you know this? Then you know that you are "light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8).

…the life of Christ touches everything that they do.

Those who are children of the light know that Jesus Christ is their Lord. Christ rules in His people by His Spirit. By the Spirit Christ sets up the throne of His kingdom in their hearts and rules over their lives. Through this rule, Christ's people become willing, joyful, and obedient servants of Christ. When Christ's rule is sovereignly exercised in the hearts of His people the rule of Christ touches every part of their lives. Nothing in life is untouched. Nothing in life remains unchanged. The children of the light live to serve Christ in all of life. They love their Lord and desire to serve Him at all times. Although there is still sin in their lives, they are different because the life of Christ touches everything that they do. To look at it another way, this is your identity: servant of Jesus Christ. This is what you are. How does this affect your life?

The Character of the Antithetical Life

In the Scriptures, God calls you repeatedly to live an antithetical life. This is the demand of Ephesians 5:8, "Walk as children of light." This is the demand of II Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers…" What is the demand of the antithetical life? What does it mean to live antithetically? Because God has separated you from the wicked world by His saving grace, He calls you to live a life of spiritual separation from the world. What does this mean exactly?

II Corinthians 6:14 teaches this life of spiritual separation. Paul was writing to the church in the city of Corinth, which was the immoral Sodom of that day. All kinds of filth and wickedness could be found in that city. Paul says to the church, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers…" The text uses the figure of a yoke in which two oxen would be hitched. The two oxen, when yoked together, would work as one. They were united in a common work and goal. The idea of the text then is that we may not unite with the wicked in the yoke of their wickedness. The yoke signifies union with them in their pursuits. The wicked of this world have as their goal living for self. They live to enjoy themselves and to do whatever they want to do. In the darkness of their sin they possess absolutely no desire to serve God. Therefore, believers must not unite with unbelievers in their walk of sin.

The wicked of this world have as their goal living for self.

In this passage, Paul is not calling the church to physical separation from the world. He is not calling the church to find a small corner of the city to segregate themselves from the rest of the city. The antithetical life is not Christians isolating themselves from the world so that they separate from neighbors and co-workers as much as possible. The antithetical life is not a refusing to purchase cars or cell phones or computers, etc, because things themselves are not evil (I Timothy 4:4, 5).

But this passage calls you to spiritual separation. Don't live like the wicked. Don't live to fulfill your selfish lusts like they do. Your calling in this wicked world is to serve your Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Live antithetically by obeying the Word of God in all of life. Follow the faithful guide of God's Word. Do what is expressed in Psalm 1:1, 2, "Blessed is the man who walketh not

in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This is the life of being holy because God is holy (I Peter 1:16).

God calls you to live a life that is radically different from the lives of men and women in the world. God calls you to use all things in the service of Him. Your Savior and Lord demands that you serve Him with all that you have and with all that you are. Live to serve Him! This is radically different from the world. Remember that the world lives to serve self. Your Lord says, "Live to serve me and me only!"

The Important Implications

The antithesis touches upon every part of your life. Living the antithetical life is not simply about going to church on Sunday. This is part of the antithesis, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. Antithesis is a life. This needs to be emphasized because you and I have the ability to compartmentalize our lives. On the one hand, you can be a living a life of complete ungodliness with friends or with a girlfriend or boyfriend, but on the other hand, you can live a completely different life of piety and godliness in the presence of others. You have the capability of living such an inconsistent life. But such a life brings great misery for the guilt and shame of sin weighs heavy on the soul. I pray that you desire to live a consistently Christian life in all areas of life.

Antithesis is a life.... I pray that you desire to live a consistently Christian life in all areas of life.

The antithesis affects your relationships. Living antithetically means that we fellowship with those who are godly. Notice that I did not limit this to those who are Protestant Reformed or to those who call themselves Christians. It may be that you cannot fellowship for a time with another young person because of the way that person is living. In this way, the separation of the antithesis does become physical. You may not join with others in their sinful activities. This is antithetical living. This truth determines your friendships. This also determines who you will date.

The question you may face also is, "How do I live in relationship to the wicked?" You still live in the world. You might work with those who are wicked and ungodly. You buy from them and sell to them. You might have neighbors that are ungodly. You say hello to them and are friendly to them. The Scriptures do not call you to complete physical separation from the wicked in the world. How then can you carry out your calling to love them? We are to live among them. But we do not join them in their sin. This is why our time and fellowship with them is limited. This is why often you don't hang with those with whom you work – they are walking in sin.

When you live antithetically, certain practices are completely unacceptable. You must abhor the things the world takes pleasure in. This affects all of your life. What music will I listen to? What television programs (and commercials) may I watch? What websites may I visit? May I open a blog on Myspace? What video games may I play? What will we do on our date? Understanding that Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life, I must then live all parts of my life in obedience to God's Word. This is the antithetical life demanded by Scripture. Work at applying your identity to all of life.

Conclusion

Scripture uses many different ways to describe the antithesis. One of the ways it is described is as warfare. You are soldiers of Jesus Christ, Who is the Captain of our salvation. He has given to us spiritual weapons with which we fight. God has placed us in this world to fight. Living in this world is not all about play. Living in this world, as God's children, means warfare. It is a fierce and grueling battle. But we do know the outcome. There is sure and certain victory in Jesus Christ. Therefore, fight for godliness in every part of your lives. Do not be afraid for you shall be victorious. ❖

Rev. Eriks is pastor of Hudsonville Prortestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 33
A Finished Course

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Notes—Since Grandpa did not write about the last ten years of his life, it was necessary that I write a final chapter to bring his memoirs to a fitting conclusion. I have relied heavily on my own memory and the memories of his three surviving children in assembling the material for this chapter. I have also interspersed these paragraphs with quotes from a letter that Cornelius Hanko's son wrote to a friend in the United Kingdom who inquired about Rev. Hanko upon learning of his death. These quotes are clearly indicated by the different format. However, the reader can hear Rev. Hanko's own voice one last time at the very end of the chapter.

Rev. Hanko wrote these memoirs after his retirement, adding to them every few years or so. But as far as we know, he added nothing after 1995. However, he continued to look for ways to be of use to the family and the churches.

He asked his son Herm what he thought of the idea of translating the Dutch manuscript, *Van Zonde en Genade* by Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof. Herm's answer can be found in the editor's introduction to the book *Sin and Grace*. "Because he [Rev. Hanko, kvb] was fluent in Dutch and because he needed work to keep him occupied, I readily agreed that the book should be translated. I was a bit skeptical whether he was able to do it, though. He was, after all, in his eighties, very nearly blind, and weary with the burdens of many years in the ministry. But if it could be done, it would be well worth it. I got out his copy of Van Dale's *Woordenboek*, the authoritative dictionary of the Dutch language; set up a word processor; installed a program that would enlarge the text on the screen of his monitor; and encouraged him to do what he could."[1] The manuscript was published in 2003 by the Reformed Free Publishing Association in the book entitled, Sin and Grace.

Grandpa took every opportunity to tell others of the history of the churches which he had served. For example, Doug Dykstra's young people's class from Grandville PRC came to visit Rev. Hanko once a year for many years so that he could talk with them about 1924 and 1953.[2]

His last great effort on behalf of the churches was to speak to Prof. Hanko's Monday night Bible class and other interested people, a group of about 150, on the Split of 1953. By that time, two years before his death, he could see and hear very little and was confined to a wheelchair. Yet his memory remained keen, as did his love for and interest in the PRC.

He and Allie moved to Walden Woods, an assisted living home in the Spring of 2000. When he first toured the place with his children, he remarked in Dutch, "I am weary of life." And yet the Lord spared him for another five years. While he lived there, his days were filled with the difficult work of growing old. Grandpa had to say with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

Almost to the very end of his life, he loved to go for long drives and out to eat with his children. His afflictions were many—congestive heart failure and increasing stomach problems. And yet, he continued to attend church in the evenings and listened by telephone hook-up to the morning service.

At one point, Grandpa contracted pneumonia and nearly died. He was disappointed and a bit resentful when he rallied. Grandpa said he felt as if he had been in the narthex of heaven and God had pushed him back out the wrong door. At times, he grew impatient that the Lord tarried so long, especially when the Lord took family

1 Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema, *Sin and Grace,* tr. by translated Cornelius Hanko, Grand Rapids, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2003, p. vii.

2 Doug Dykstra attends Grandville PRC and teaches at Hope PRC school.

members much younger than he was.

Those family members closest to him felt the brunt of this impatience at times, but most often, for most visitors he had a ready story, often one about the visitor himself or the visitor's relatives. This story was always told with the same dry wit, Rev. Hanko's own shoulders shaking with silent laughter. As his son fondly recalled,

> He was ardently loved by his grandchildren who never failed to stop in to see him when they were in town. They loved his stories, stories taken from his life and the rich and varied experiences through which the Lord led him. These stories, while captivating and told with zest, were nevertheless all geared to instruct those who listened in the ways of faithfulness.

Rev. Hanko ceased going out to eat with his children, a weekly occurrence for many years, in early winter 2004, for he was very afraid of falling on the ice. He fell in his room in early January 2005, and on the 29th of the same month, was admitted to the hospital for pneumonia and congestive heart failure. Although he returned from the hospital and recovered from the pneumonia and the fall, his strength was sapped and he began the decline that led to his death.

Rev Hanko's life spanned nearly a century. He had lived through two world wars, the Great Depression, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He had seen the rise and fall of communism, the advent of the space age, the rise of terrorism and lived during the terms of 18 US presidents, from Theodore Roosevelt to George W. Bush.

It is just as well that God does not reveal to us the length or the sorrow of our days. A similar thought can be found in his son's letter.

> When Dad left Oak Lawn, Illinois in 1945 to take up his ministry in Manhattan, Montana, he preached his farewell on Paul's stirring words in II Timothy 4, "I have fought a good fight…," but little did he then know that he had 60 years of spiritual warfare ahead of him and that the worst battles were still to come.

In all his life, Rev. Hanko lived first for the church. And that had not always been easy. He pastored six PR churches from the Midwest to the far West. He lived through two heart-wrenching church splits and never wavered in his commitment to sovereign grace. His children can confirm this, especially when they think back on a Thanksgiving morning long ago.

> The Split of 1953 nearly killed him. On a Thanksgiving morning when my mother was in the hospital for a heart attack, he called me into his bedroom early in the morning in a feeble voice. He was scheduled to preach, but his ulcer had begun to bleed…By the time I had called an ambulance and it had arrived, he was unconscious from loss of blood…He literally spent himself in the cause of the church.
>
> Truly, he had kept the faith.

Grandpa had one last enemy to face and that was death. He was confined to bed for a number of days prior to his death. While he began to lose interest in life, he still received great comfort from singing and reading the old Dutch Psalms with his visitors.

He responded less and less to those around him as the days progressed. He slipped into a coma, from which he never awakened, during the second week of March. And on March 14, 2005, the Lord granted him victory over the last great enemy. He had finished the course. His son writes:

> We did not really have the sorrow that is usual when a loved one is taken to glory, for we saw him in these last few years as a weary and worn-out warrior in the battles of faith, we witnessed his almost pathetic eagerness to be with the Lord, and we watched the slow decline of his eyesight, hearing, and physical well-being. He had been for many years a faithful, covenant father who encouraged us in the ways of the Lord, instructed us in what they were, and chided us when we did not show proper zeal.

Because he outlived by so many years, those of his own generation and even many of the succeeding generation, Rev. Hanko would from time to time express apprehension that there would be no one at his funeral. He need not have worried. His four children, most of his nineteen grandchildren, most of his seventy-one great grandchildren, as well as two great great grandchildren were in attendance. Many of his fellow saints and former parishioners also appeared to hear Rev. Gise Van Baren, a friend of the family, and Rev. Hanko's long time pastor, speak on Revelation 3:11-12, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." The letter states:

> And so, as we stood together at the side of his coffin, it seemed totally inappropriate to wring our hands and weep…it was a time for thanksgiving

and rejoicing. And this we did with hundreds of God's people who came to offer their condolences through visitation, their presence at the funeral service, and cards and letters…He has exchanged his spiritual sword for a palm branch, his helmet for a crown of life, and his armor for the white robes of the righteousness of Christ. He is a little ahead of us, for we too shall soon go to join the company of just men made perfect.

His lasting legacy was his total devotion to the church; that has made its indelible mark on us all. But people in the churches remember him chiefly for his quietness, his meekness, his humility, his unwillingness to be in the limelight, his understanding of people and sympathy for them. This latter was due to the fact that he knew himself to be a very great sinner, saved by grace. That enabled him to empathize with others in their struggles with temptations and their weary walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

All his life, but particularly toward the end, Allie's care weighed heavily on Grandpa. He wondered how she would carry on when he died. He need not have worried. Some six months after the Lord took Grandpa, Allie contracted pneumonia and died. Their lives were closely intertwined and once Grandpa died, she felt she had little reason to live. They had cared for each other for many years, and because of her, Grandpa never needed to be confined to a rest home. She too had fought a good fight and has now obtained her crown.

Grandpa spent a great deal of time in his retirement writing these memoirs. Ninety-nine percent of these chapters were verbatim from his writings. And so, it is only fitting that I end these chapters with Grandpa's own words.

Looking back, there were a number of firsts in my life. My family was the first in the neighborhood to have electricity and an automobile. I was among the first students in Christian High when they opened their doors for the first time. I experienced the opening of our seminary and was with the first class that graduated. Later, I was delegate to our first synod meeting. And in Oak Lawn, we held our first young people's convention. Striking, isn't it?

Mom was delivered from her suffering and taken to glory many years ago. She suffered much, most of her life, yet she never complained. Since that time, my sons, my daughters, my son-in-law and daughters-in-law, my grandchildren and great grandchildren mean more to me than ever. I can never be thankful enough for the family God gave us and for the blessing my children and grandchildren are to me.

As I look back upon the past I must say that I have had a rich and full life. Even in the years of my retirement I could keep active. I know that the real life is still to come and this life is but a preparation, but the Lord has been good. I can well say, as the patriarchs of old, that I am full of days, for I have seen all God's promises realized in my children's children to the second and third generation. Let me quote one of my favorite Psalter numbers. "When I in righteousness at last, thy glorious face shall see, when all the weary night is past, and I awake with thee, to view the glories that abide then, then I shall be satisfied."[3]

I think also of the Dutch Psalm that was a tremendous support to me through the years, a versification of Psalm 27:13-14:

My heart had failed in fear in woe
Unless in God I had believed,
Assured that he would mercy show
And that my life his grace should know,
Nor was my hope deceived.

Fear not, though succor be delayed,
Still wait for God and he will hear;
Be strong nor be thy heart dismayed,
Wait, and the Lord shall bring thee aid,
Yea, trust and never fear.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

3 Psalter Number 32 was one of the numbers sung at Rev. Hanko's funeral.

Editor's Note—Chapter 33 brings Rev. Hanko's memoirs to a conclusion. For those who are interested, his family is planning to publish the memoirs in book form. While we cannot give any particulars at this time, we will keep the Beacon Lights readers informed. ❖

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

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:

Jacob Aaron, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Kaiser—Byron Center, MI

Kaden Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Mingerink—Byron Center, MI

Collin Joel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Mantel—Doon, IA

Jacob Christien, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Scholten—Faith, MI

Aiden Ty, son of Mr. & Mrs. Frank VanBaren—Georgetown, MI

Sidney Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad VanderVeen—Grace, MI

Abigail Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Kuiper—Grace, MI

Ava Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Langerak—Hope, MI

Jeremy Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Rutgers—Hope, MI

Olivia Rose, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Martin Vander Wal—Redlands, CA

Ethan William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Looyenga—Southwest, MI

Chase Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Lanning—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

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

Lisa Kraker—Hudsonville, MI

Liz Nagelkerke—Hudsonville, MI

Jori Peterson—Hudsonville, MI

Alyssa Rowe—Hudsonville, MI

Brennan Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI

Bill Rutgers—Hudsonville, MI

Shane Kamminga—Hudsonville, MI

Todd Schut—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. Brian VanTil and Miss Julie Kuhtic—Faith, MI

Mr. Pete Cnossen and Miss Megan Bruinsma—Southwest, MI/Pittsburgh, PA

Two Times (Part 2)

"So much is happening, it almost makes me afraid. The days are truly evil."

The young boy perked up his ears when he overheard his grandfather say such a thing. Grandpa was not one to be afraid.

"Yes," answered the boy's father, "it is a fearful time to live. It seems as if we hear about another earthquake every week, and nations around the world are cooperating and working together more and more all the time. The day of a one-world government may not be so far off."

The boy knew they were talking about the signs of the times. He tugged his grandfather's sleeve for attention. "Wasn't it like this when you were little, Grandpa?"

The older man considered the question. "There were earthquakes and wars and other signs, yes, but the nations were not uniting like they are now. This is new."

"Many churches and religions are uniting, too," added his father. "They say they are all worshipping the same god anyway. Even many Protestants regret the Reformation and want to go back to Rome. This is hard to believe, but it's really happening."

Being so much younger, it was hard for the boy to imagine that the world was rapidly changing.

His grandfather stroked his chin as he thought, then he said, "You know, there was only one other time in history when the whole earth was united in one goal and one language. That was about 4,000 years ago in the plain of Shinar. They built the tower of Babel—though they didn't call it Babel as they built it. God brought confusion upon them. God made it to be Babel and stopped it."

The boy's father added, "With technology and many countries learning English, the rift of language is being healed, too."

"Yes, healed," said his grandfather. "That old serpent's deadly wound is fast being healed before our eyes. But he will be crushed again, and this time forever."

The boy's eyes grew wide. He hadn't thought of it quite that way before.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

His grandfather looked down at him. "These are fearful times we live in, but we need not be afraid. God plainly told us these things would happen—and must happen. Judgment must come for salvation to come. It's always been so." The older man smiled. "God—our heavenly Father who loves us—is in control of it all."

c. A. D. 2008

Find the following underlined words from Revelation 13 in the puzzle below:

And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?—verses 3 & 4

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.—verses 11 & 12

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

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

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