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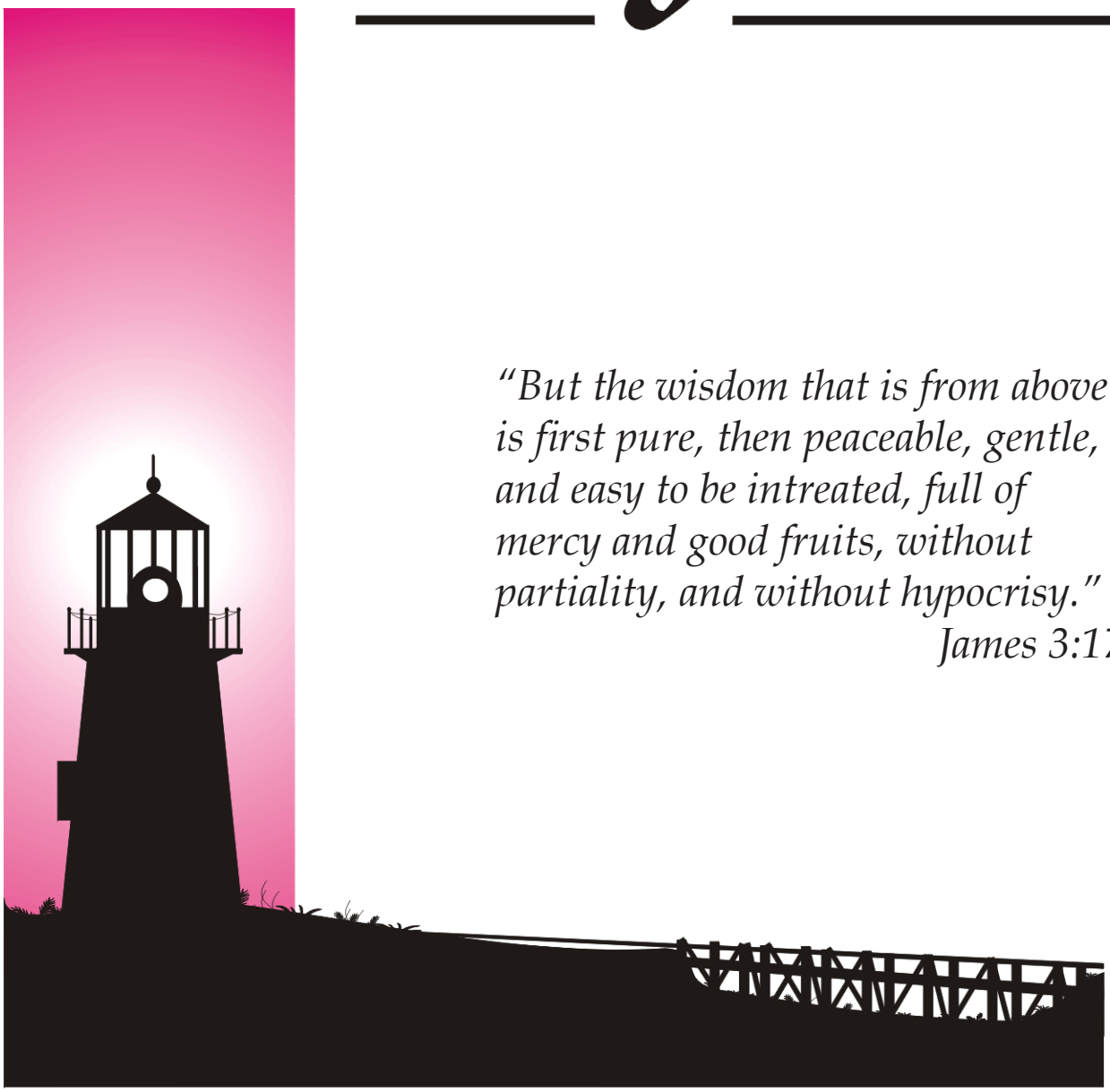

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."
James 3:17

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Are We Blind Also?

by Andy Tanis

John 9:39-41, "And Jesus said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, "Are we blind also?" Jesus said unto them, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

Powerful words recorded here by our Lord! Yet, do we ever stop to think that we need to hear these words as well? Although it was the Pharisees that asked the question, "Are we blind also;" I believe that in our present circumstances, this is the question we must ask ourselves. We must take a moment to ponder this as those who are genuinely and sincerely concerned for the future of the church, and the "peace of Jerusalem."

There is much concern amongst many in our day that we have become a proud people. We seem to have become proud of our traditions, our doctrines, etc. It is our nature to say, "we see, because we are God's special people who are affiliated with this church group or that denomination." The point that must be addressed is this: Did our church fathers establish these traditions in pride? Did they not rather establish them in humble submission to God, and in obedience to his Word?

We too need to see this necessity to be humbled before God, who shows such mercy to preserve his truth amongst a people most undeserving. The blind man in John 9 received not only the ability to see with the physical eye, but also with the eye of faith. Just as the blind man, we must make it a constant prayer of ours that we may receive spiritual sight as well; whether it be as individuals, or as those who are members of the body of Christ. The ones who are given sight are those who sit as beggars, confessing their blindness and pleading that God will open their eyes. On the contrary, the ones who point the finger and lay heavy burdens on others are the ones whose sin will remain on them. These remain in darkness!

The well-known parable of the Pharisee and the publican was directed at certain which "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." The true believer is the one who at the end of the day sees all his wretchedness, his depravity, and the sin which he is still inclined to, and comes before the throne of grace trembling in holy fear. This man will only be justified if he looks outside of himself, his traditions, his social status, etc. for righteousness, and sees the blood of Jesus as his only covering, and his only hope for eternal life. His cross may not be replaced by tradition!

When trust is placed in tradition and the commandments of God are neglected, this is bound to cause division in the church. "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:13-18).

There is definitely a place for traditions in the life of the believer. I also refuse to minimize the countless efforts that our church fathers applied to establish these traditions designed to teach their covenant children in the fear of the Lord. The true focus must remain on God's establishment of the covenant of grace, and God's power to preserve his covenant in the line of continued generations. There is an increas-

ing danger prevailing in our day to act as if man establishes this covenant of grace with God, making demands of the covenant that are contrary to the Scriptures' teaching on the covenant. It's God's covenant, and we are exceeding grateful that he does what he will with his own covenant!

We see that the kingdom of God is near with evidence of generations who are not properly taught in God's fear, but rather are given certain standards to follow and "left to themselves." Amos 8:11 sets forth what we can see happening in churches around us, and also serves as a warning for us. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." I remember a sermon that I heard a while ago on this text by Prof. Decker. One statement he made that sticks in my mind is, "Don't say, DON'T YOU DARE SAY, that this famine cannot happen to the Protestant Reformed Churches!" He went on to explain that we would still hear the gospel with the physical ear, but the famine would be a lack of understanding or discernment of the Word.

This is the frightful judgment that we can see descending on the church as we approach the end of time. We must take heed that while we are shouting our "Amen's" when denouncing the wicked errors of the Federal Vision, the Baptists, the Roman Catholics, etc. that we don't become hardened when this Word of warning and admonition comes at us. As many as Christ loves, he "rebukes and chastens." All praise be to God for his chastening love!

So we see that we are exhorted to love the commandments of God! What are those commandments? They are summed up by our Lord in this, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and the great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" If these are obeyed, we will see the blessings of it in our generation. "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13). If we ourselves live in obedience, then teaching our children to obey the law of God will be easier because the testimony of our lives will show them how to live. Great peace will be upon Israel, as generations live in faithfulness to God's covenant! Man's additions to God's established covenant only lead to the "confusion and every evil work" that James spoke of in the passage that was previously quoted.

Whatever church you are affiliated with, consider this your "wake-up call." As we preach the gospel and instruct our children, we must always point to Christ and his love for us. After his resurrection, Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep. That is our calling as well in the office of believer. When we speak, whether it be for the purpose of rebuking or edifying the church, God's sheep must hear the voice of their Faithful Shepherd.

Love your God! Love the church of God! Live out your calling to be "ready to give an answer." As believers we must "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2-5). Although Paul gave this advice to Timothy in regards to his work as a pastor, we are admonished in this passage as prophets, priests, and kings to be faithful witnesses of the "things that we have seen and heard." When we heed this call, we will see God's covenant blessings prevail in the church, and God will not be ashamed to be called our God.

Christ will not have his church, his covenant bride, long for other lovers and "reject the commandment of God, that ye (she) may keep your (her) own tradition" (Mark 7:9). He purchased her! He saved her from the wrath of God and from hell itself, and gave to her eternal life! No man, no institution can frustrate God's purpose in salvation!

What a comfort! ❖

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

Straight Thinking

by Homer C. Hoeksema

Out here in the midwest corn belt, there is an insurance company—its name is not important—which has the rather gruesome custom of marking every fatal highway accident with a sign, which, besides bearing an "X" to mark the spot, also carries in large letters the single word "THINK." I suppose the sign has merit in so far as it is an admonition not to be thoughtless, not to dream, while you are driving a couple of tons of potential death down the highway at sixty miles per hour, and in so far as it is a grim reminder, with its "X marks the spot," of the possible consequences of failure to think. But I submit that the admonition is not complete. It ought also to carry some such word as straight or correctly. For if you think, but think wrongly, the consequences will be equally as fatal as when you fail to think at all.

It was not my purpose, however, to write an essay on straight thinking behind the wheel. I'll leave that to the safety officials. I do want to offer a few thoughts on the subject of Straight Thinking by you young people, and that too, in connection with the subject of the day, the schism in our churches.

You can scarcely avoid thinking about that schism. I cannot, and your consistories cannot, and your parents cannot avoid it. But you cannot either. Nor would I advise you to try to avoid thinking about it. I would rather give you this advice: THINK STRAIGHT! Nor is it difficult to point out the fundamental reason why you should think straight. That schism—and in this connection I think mainly about the doctrinal issue, the issue of the truth, which lies at the root of it—that schism concerns the churches in which you either have already made or are going to make confession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That means you give an answer to the question: "Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?"

Briefly, I would define straight thinking as that process of mind (and should I, mindful of the fact that we face basically a spiritual issue here, add the words: "and heart?"), whereby upon the basis of the objective facts in a given case (in this case, the schism), and in the light of abiding principles of truth (Scripture and our Confessions), we draw the obviously correct conclusion.

The above is a rather formal definition. But it applies. And any other kind of thinking in the present situation is fatal. And we should ban it.

However, it is very easy to be led astray in this respect. So easily we allow emotion and sentiment to control our thinking. And sometimes it appears equally easy to allure our thoughts out of the straight course marked out by Scripture and the Confessions by other means, by false philosophy, false doctrine, by false witness, false quotation, in short, by all those means which Scripture classifies as "the sleight of men," and "cunning craftiness."

I cannot here present the objective facts concerning the schism in our churches. They would probably fill more than a single issue of Beacon Lights. But let us briefly take notice of some instances of wrong thinking, and be warned against them.

"I can't imagine that Rev. So-and-so would teach such a heresy. I can't imagine that Rev. Blank is not Protestant Reformed. Why, I had all my catechism instruction from him. He had a reputation for being Protestant Reformed. I never heard him say anything that was not Protestant Reformed when he was my minister." The above are some examples of wrong thinking, when such thoughts are allowed to carry weight in coming to a conclusion about the present schism. And let me add that they are all real examples. But do you not see the error? This whole schism is, in the first place, not a question of what anyone can imagine, not a question of anyone's reputation for being Protestant Reformed, and not a question of the past teachings of anyone. And if we allow ourselves sentimentally to be guided by thoughts like the above, we will surely go astray. For schisms are undoubtedly painful; and the smaller and more intimate the church circles which schisms strike, the more painful they become, I suppose. But how about the question whether heresy has been propounded, whether church political rebellion has taken place, and whether or not a certain officebearer, or member, is knowingly and willfully supporting such heresy and rebellion? Think on that, unbiased by your emotions.

"They don't mean to teach heresy. Rev. De Wolf himself said he never meant to teach that, etc., etc." This is probably one of the most frequent instances of wrong thinking. Let me answer it very briefly, by saying that in the church and in the pulpit, and when it concerns the truth, the old saying does not apply, "Take a Dutchman for what he means, not for what he says." Let me answer further by asking, "If it be true that he, or they, do not, or did not, mean what has been said, would it not be the easiest thing in the world to retract it?" And let me warn further: find out what indeed they did mean, if they did not mean what they said!

Another mode by which some are tempted to leave the path of straight thinking is the frequent claim that the whole issue is not important anyway, that it is a quibbling about terms, that it is theological hair-splitting. To think the above thoughts is also wrong thinking. For, in the first place, history should teach us two things on this subject. The first lesson of history is that it is a favorite method of those who depart from the truth to speak in the above manner. And the second lesson is that the occasion has been rare indeed when a case of genuine hair-splitting arose. And in the second place, it could very easily be demonstrated—and it has not been to date—if this were a case of mere terms or a case of hair-splitting. And finally, I would add that the truth is indeed distinctive, down to its finest details.

The above examples could be multiplied. But I lack the space.

Be warned by them.

And exercise yourselves in straight thinking. Ask yourself: what are the facts? What are the issues? What principles of Scripture and the confessions are at stake here? And guide your decision by the answers to these questions.

That requires study. It requires searching of the Scriptures. It requires that you be founded in the full truth.

And let *Beacon Lights* aid in this. It is well that *Beacon Lights* should be an "all around" magazine for our Protestant Reformed young people. But let it never lose its fundamental aim of shedding the beacon light of our Protestant Reformed truth, the true and complete doctrine of salvation, upon the path of life. For if that aim should be forgotten, it would become a beacon without any light. ❖

Church Family

I Heard It Through the Grapevine

by David Warner

How many times have you told someone a secret about somebody else, or even yourself, but only if they promised not to tell another person? Sooner or later the word gets around, whether it's a true story or not. Why is it that gossip seems to spread like wildfire, whether intentionally or not, yet good news and compliments about others are hard to come by (or at least take a long time to get around)?

Although it is usually hard to carry out, most of us know how we can stop the spread of gossip, slander, and backbiting; which is by bridling the tongue, as James 3 explains. But it is even more difficult to "promote the advantage of [our] neighbor in every instance [we] can or may," as we read in question and answer 111 of Lord's Day 42 in the Heidelberg Catechism. It is further explained in question and answer 112 that God commands us in the eighth and ninth commandments that we must not only stop ourselves from negatively hurting our neighbor, but also that we positively defend and promote them in our speech, thoughts, and lives of confession and witnessing. This is part of the fruit that we must bear, so the question is, "Has your fruit been flourishing, sweet and beautiful? Or is your fruit quickly withered and rotted away, bitter and repulsive?"

Matthew 7:16-20 and Luke 6:43-44 tell us that a man is made known by his fruits, and those fruits will fall into only one of two categories: good and corrupt. A good tree can bring forth only good fruit, and a corrupt tree only corrupt fruit. One cannot gather figs from thorns or grapes from the bramble. Let's take a look at these two kinds of fruits from two different vines.

In Deuteronomy 32:32-33 we read that the wicked are vines from Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grape clusters are bitter like gall, and their wine

tastes like the poison of venomous snakes. Every man in his sinful human nature grows here among the degenerate and strange vines (Jeremiah 2:21). This is due to the fall into sin by our first parents, Adam and Eve. These plants, representing us without Christ and the Holy Spirit, will be consumed by the Lord. Jeremiah 8:13 tells us there are "no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade." Joel 1:12 further explains that "the vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

I could not agree more! The reason there are so many murders, violence, depressions, thefts, gossiping, and backbiting today is because there seems to be no Joy in the world. Men do not want the Joy of the gospel and the Joy found in salvation through Christ. Because they cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22ff and Ephesians 5:9, they try to find joy in themselves. They do this by spreading lies that hurt their neighbors and spreading rumors about themselves in order to look better in the eyes of men. They cannot bear fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance because they are so busy growing the tempting fruits of self-worship, pride, covetousness, and the like. These fruits are not pleasing to the Lord. As Christians, do you have the joy that comes from money, love, games, food, clothes, music and bands, sports, and looking good in the eyes of others at the expense of your neighbor's reputation? Or do you have the joy in your hearts that comes from reading the truths of Scripture and seeing the covenant carried out among your fellow saints?

If the latter is true, then you are no longer looking at the vines of Sodom and Gomorrah. Rather, you are finding the vines that have been cast out of Egypt and the heathen place and which have been healed and replanted near the River of Life. Psalm 80:8-11 show us that these vines will take deep root and shadow the earth like giant cedars. These vines have a tender grape and give a good smell (Song of Solomon 2:13), yielding fruits of strength (Joel 2:22) and peace in the summer (Hebrews 12:11). In Malachi 3:10-12, the Lord promises that the devil won't destroy these fruits, and that these vines won't produce their fruit before the appointed time. These vines will be blessed because they are growing in a delightsome land.

However, these vines don't grow and bear good fruits by their own will. The first six verses of John 15 clearly state that Christ is the true vine, and God the Father is the husbandman, or gardener. We are the branches that have been engrafted into this true vine so that we may be filled with fruits of righteousness (Philippians 1:11). Without this true vine, we wither and die and are cast into the fire. Therefore, we must see that we are kind to our neighbors by preventing ourselves and others from speaking evil of them and by loving them through word, thought, and deed. When we do this, we will see that others will do the same for us. These fruits of our lips ultimately grow from our heart, which should be firmly rooted in Christ, and they are a means of thanks to him that we must offer up continually (Hebrews 13:15). When he returns to the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, will he find a flourishing vine, budded pomegranates and tender grapes on the branches of the True Vine, as we read of in Song of Solomon 6:11 and 7:12? Or will he find withered and rotten fruits among a network of brittle grapevines fit for the furnace? Let us make sure that the poisoning words of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh are not flowing through the grapevines. Rather, let the Water of Life nourish us and help us to encourage others to grow in the mountain of the Lord's inheritance (Exodus 15:17). ❖

David is a member of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

The "Snapshots" of Our Lives

by Shaun Karsemeyer

As a photographer, I am constantly being teased by family and friends about "seeing the world through a lens." But it's true. I carry my camera with me quite often. I am always looking for photo opportunities. Ever since I started this hobby, I have come to have a new appreciation for light and scenery. One of

my favorite subjects to photograph, however, is people. People make for fascinating subjects. They are complex, moody, and the most wonderful part of God's creation. There is one very interesting aspect about people I have observed as I have learned how to photograph them, and that is this: most people change when a camera is pointed at them. They can be laughing and having a good time, or frowning and unhappy, but when they see they are about to be photographed, their attitude changes. Goofiness turns to seriousness. A frown turns into a smile. A person eating quickly puts down the fork and swallows the food. In short, most people "put on their best face" for the camera. Why is this? Well, no one wants someone else to see them at their worst. We always want people to see the best side of us.

But is it people (especially those pesky photographers) who we should really be concerned about seeing us? What would we see if a hidden camera followed us around 24/7? How do we act when we are not "on our best behavior?" What would that hidden camera capture us doing or saying? That is the real question. Even the wicked people of this world know enough how to act decently when all eyes are upon them. They know how to pretend to be honest and sincere and compassionate. But when the cameras are turned off, the charade ends. And so I'd like to ask you, fellow Christians, is your attitude in front of the "camera" of other people an act? Or is it the real you?

What does the Bible have to say about this? We already know that God is present everywhere. Even the younger school children are taught the word for this - omnipresent. But have you ever stopped to really consider exactly what this implies? Perhaps God's own Word will shed some light on this great truth. Zechariah 4:10b tells us, "…they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth." For God to be omnipresent means that he knows every little detail that happens every moment of every day in lives of every person on this planet, from all time. God knows everything! Which brings us back to the camera analogy. Someone is following you unawares every moment. He is not only following you, but he is recording all that you do in his book. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

We are warned about the dangers of our secret sins. It turns out they are not as secret as we would like them to be! "But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). I know you have heard this before, but it bears repeating. Much of the wicked and violent crimes committed in this world, the acts that even the world acknowledges are wrong, are committed at night. Why? Because those who commit such sins like to think that the darkness will hide them. But we whose eyes have been enlightened know better than this. We know that dark or light do not matter to God, who can see no matter what. Are we no better than they, then, when we simply wait to commit our sins for when we think no one is around? Think about this the next time your conversation dies out as the parent walks into the room. A conversation which you know you shouldn't have been having in the first place! Think about this the next time you guiltily jump back from whatever it was you were doing when someone unexpectedly comes upon you. Think of this the next time you wait until the teacher has walked around the corner of school before you call your classmate a name. You are never really alone! God is watching, listening, and writing the entire time!

When we pretend to be on our best behavior for the benefit of those we think matter, we are being hypocritical. And we all know of whom the word hypocrite reminds us! The Pharisees! Read Jesus' words to this group of New Testament Israelites about hypocrisy. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:27, 28). I hope this does not describe you, child of God! The Pharisees made the mistake of thinking that they needed to impress the people around them. They forgot that it is God who matters! It is God Who is in charge of your soul. You are accountable to him, not just your parents and teachers.

There is a positive to all of this. Instead of being worried that we will be "caught" doing what we are not supposed to be doing, we can find comfort and assurance knowing that God is always with us. He will never leave or forsake us. But we can also turn to him in the way of obedience and ask him to search our hearts and souls to know that we are truly living as his elect. Psalm 139 is a beautiful passage that speaks to this in its entirety. Go home and read it today. Let me give you the beginning and ending here. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted

with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether…. 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" (Psalm 139:1-4, 23, 24). This is the beauty of God's omnipresence! Instead of being afraid, we rejoice that he knows us as only our Father can know us. He knows us as his people, despite our sin. He knows, for he made us. And with the knowledge of his nearness unto us, we seek to follow his commandments and live unto him.

What a comfort! What a blessing! To know that we are not alone! And so, child of God, walk in his ways. Have nothing to hide! Make sure that you are not ashamed of the works that are written in his book of life! And that "best face" you put on when others are around? Make sure that is your attitude and those are your actions even when you think you are alone. ❖

Shaun is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.

From the Pastor's Study

Scripture's Teaching Regarding Alcohol (3) The Proper Limit on its Use

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.
I Timothy 5:23

In our last article we examined Scripture's teaching regarding when alcohol may be used, and when it may not be used.

This we did to begin answering the question: what is the proper use of alcohol?

But the proper use of alcohol involves more than that it be used at a proper occasion; it also requires us to use it within proper limit.

What is this proper limit? What amount of alcohol is proper for us to consume?

* * * * *

The proper limit, Paul tells Timothy, is little: "Use a little wine."

This limit as stated in I Timothy 5:23 is in keeping with what other Scriptures say about our consumption of alcohol. Bishops (elders and pastors) are not to be "given to wine" (I Timothy 3:3); deacons may not be "given to much wine" (I Timothy 3:8); nor may aged women who are to teach the younger women in the church (Titus 2:3). In all these passages, the apostle is not prohibiting the use of wine entirely, but is saying that we may not be those who drink too much, or too often. We may drink a little. Timothy, after all, was a bishop (specifically, he was a pastor); when Paul says that bishops may not be "given to wine," yet says that Timothy should use "a little wine," the inspired apostle indicates that wine is permissible - but in the right amount. A little.

To use a little wine will mean that wine will not be one's primary source of liquid refreshment. Our King James Version might leave the impression that Paul is telling Timothy to stop drinking water altogether, and to drink wine instead. In fact, Timothy was a "water drinker," that is, he drank water exclusively. Paul is telling him to stop drinking water exclusively and to supplement his water diet with a little wine. But still, Timothy will drink more water than wine.

He should drink a little wine for two reasons. First, because a little will be enough to help his stomach problems. We all know that when we need medicine, we must use a little. A little helps us heal; too much is dangerous. So with alcohol; a little is good, a lot is bad.

Second, because Timothy as pastor must not become under the influence of alcohol; he must set the example for the church. Let him drink little.

* * * * *

How much is a little?

Notice that Scripture does not specify the proper limit in terms of gallons or liters. This is understandable—we all know that drinking gallons or liters of alcoholic beverages would result in drunkenness.

But Scripture does not specify the proper limit in terms of ounces or milliliters either - or in any earthly unit of measurement. Why? Wouldn't it be easier for us to know God's will if he told us exactly what the "limit" is? But God simply says "little" for two reasons. First, because every person is created different, each can tolerate a different amount of alcohol before being negatively affected by it. So God's limit, if measured in terms of units of measurement, would not be the same for one as for another. Second, God would have us exercise wisdom in our use of alcohol. He desires us to take to heart the one clear rule he gives—"little"—and know prayerfully how to stay within those bound for ourselves.

Not only do the Scriptures not tell us specifically what "little" is, but "little" is also not determined by the state's standard. Many states set the standard for legal intoxication at .08 % blood alcohol content (BAC). States need such a standard in order to apply their laws regarding drinking without being arbitrary and without discriminating. The people of the world need such a guideline to tell them when they have had enough. As citizens of our states or provinces, this law binds us too.

But we ought not suppose that God's definition of "little" is .08% BAC. Nor should we fool ourselves into thinking that perhaps God's definition of "little" is more lax than the states' rule—that it is a BAC in excess of .08%.

Almost certainly, if we abided by God's definition of "little" our blood alcohol content would never reach .08%.

If a policeman stops us, and gives us a Breathalyzer test which indicates that our BAC is .07 %, we are "off the hook" in the eyes of the state, but that does not necessarily mean God is pleased.

Little is a small amount.

Little is just enough to accomplish one's godly purpose for drinking (cheer the heart, improve health, relieve pain) but not enough that one begins to lose control of his thoughts, words, actions, and judgments.

* * * * *

Child of God, are you determined to drink only little? Young people, when you are of age to drink legally, are you determined to drink only little?

He does not drink little, who tarries at his drink. To drink a little, one takes a little, drinks it, and then does not drink more. The winebibber (Proverbs 23:20) tarries long at his wine.

He does not drink little, who sets a goal with his buddy to finish off a 12 pack of beer in an evening over a game of cards.

He does not drink little, who finds that the first tastes so good that he will have a second, only to find that the second tasted better yet, so he reaches for a third.

The world tells us to have a designated driver at our social gatherings at which alcohol is served. He does not drink little, who has to plan on needing a designated driver.

Perhaps little is less than you have taken or been served. Then do not suddenly proclaim that the Christian may not waste, and that you must drink your drink because it is in your glass. (Funny, the reasons people will use to justify draining a whole can of beer, when they think nothing of throwing away half of their supper). If you have had your little before the cup or can is empty, dump the rest down the drain! Better to throw away wine or beer, than become drunk by it.

* * * * *

How are you to find out what little is for you?

Not by trial and error. That is, not by drinking until you have become drunk. To be drunk God forbids.

You will know what little is, when you resolve to drink for the right reasons, when you are aware of the real danger of drunkenness, and when you pray before you drink: "Lord, bless this drink unto me; and cause me to glorify Thee in drinking it. Give me wisdom to know how much is a little."

Such a prayer would mark a Christian who uses alcohol responsibly, to God's glory. And "God's glory" is part of the limit. As soon as I drink one drop to try to enjoy my own life apart from God, or without thinking of God, I have already passed my limit! The limit is "little," when that little is drunk to God's glory.

Young people, when you are of legal age to use alcohol, if you choose to use it, may God give you wisdom to drink little! ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

Meditations on the Names of God

by John Huizenga

The author of these meditations borrowed the pattern and many ideas for these meditations from a devotional book entitled Praying the Names of God *by Ann Spangler. Zondervan, 2004.*

God – Elohim [e-lo-HEEM]

May 4

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Scientists today are building a gigantic particle accelerator in Europe in an attempt to smash atoms together with such force that they will be able to detect the elusive particle within an atom which they call the "god" particle. They believe that a knowledge of this particle will help them answer all the questions that can't be answered apart from a sovereign, creative God. The word for God used here to reveal his creative power is the name "Elohim." This name for God also contains the idea of his authority and sovereignty. Being a name that is plural in form, it hints at the truth that God is triune. Elohim has everything he needs within himself to be supremely blessed, yet it is his sovereign will to create a people, on a world, within an immense universe, and to live with them in covenant fellowship. Give thanks to God for creating us in his own image. Meditate upon Genesis 1 and sing a Psalter number from Psalm 102.

May 5

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). As the sovereign, creative God speaks, the creation comes into existence exactly as he wills. With the creation of light, Elohim gave to his creation a source of energy to sustain life and direct the living creatures to their Creator. God uses this name, "Elohim," in the Old Testament more than 2500 times so that we never forget that he alone is God. Light serves the creature in this life, but Elohim creates a light that sustains the spiritual life of his children as well. "For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness" (Psa. 18:28). Ask God to enlighten your soul and renew your sense of wonder and gratitude for the things he has made. Meditate upon Psalm 18 and sing a Psalter number from Psalm 18.

May 6

Are you weary? Are you faint? "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. (Isa. 40:28-29) Elohim, the mighty and sovereign creator gives this wonderful promise to his covenant people. Let us confess any tendency to reduce God to our level, and pray for grace to seek this strength from our God. Meditate upon Isaiah 40 and sing from Psalter 275 or 276.

May 7

Elohim created all things, and he has the power to create for us a life with all of its blessings, sufficient for our place of service to him. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on" (Gen. 28:20). God gave this to Jacob, and much more. After receiving a family and flocks and herds, "God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (Gen. 35:1). Read the rest of Genesis 28. Ask God for what you need, knowing he is able to provide. Sing Psalter 169 or any other psalm of thanksgiving.

May 8

We live in a world of constant change. Sometimes we enjoy the changes, and other changes, such as the loss of a loved one can be devastating. Our comfort lies in the fact that all this change is working to purify us and prepare us for eternal life with God. As things constantly change around us, we are able to stand firm on One who never changes: Elohim. Of him we read "Of

old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Psa. 102:25-26). Praise God for his unchanging nature–no matter what may happen in the world around us, God stays the same. Meditate upon Psalm 102 and sing Psalter number 274.

God Almighty – El Shaddai [EL shad-DAI]

May 9

When God was about to establish the covenant with Abraham, he did so under the name "Almighty God." God created all things with a view to a covenant relation with his people in Christ, and now he makes it absolutely clear that nothing will get in the way of this work of salvation; not even things that appear to us to be insurmountable roadblocks, such as having a child at ninety years old. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Ask God to give you wisdom to walk before him, and the peace of heart that knows and believes that he will work all things for our salvation. Read the rest of Genesis 17 and sing Psalter number 249.

May 10

Abraham had a hard time believing that God, God Almighty, could fulfill his covenant promise of a child. It seemed to be impossible. Do you believe God's promises? He gives us many. One of which is as follows: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Do you believe this? Let us pray for grace from God Almighty to believe that he will reveal his strength in us when we are at our weakest. Read the rest of I Corinthians 10 and sing Psalter number 248.

May 11

Often it is not until some time after a serious illness, a broken relationship, or emotional turmoil that we are able to look back and see the overshadowing protection of God Almighty. As covenant people, we can see ourselves as one described in Psalm 91:1 where we read "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Let us thank God for his powerful protection, ask him for grace to rest in his shadows, and seek comfort and future protection. Read Psalm 91 and sing the related Psalter numbers.

May 12

Jacob singles Joseph out among his brothers as one who after much confusion, pain, struggle, and difficulty was in the end blessed by God Almighty, El Shaddai. "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)" (Gen. 49:23-24). We too may need to endure much confusion, pain, and struggling in our life, but let us remember that nothing can prevent Al Shaddai, our Mighty God, from working salvation and blessing for his people. Read the rest of Genesis 49 and sing Psalter number 228.

May 13

The god who provides the way for salvation, offers salvation to all man, desires all to accept the salvation, pleads and begs man to listen and make the critical choice is not El Shaddai, God Almighty. Abraham was surrounded by people who believed in such gods, and so are we. God had worked believing faith in the heart of Abraham. He believed that God had the power to fulfill all the promises revealed: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3). Do we have this faith? "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Let us pray for grace to live by faith as we raise covenant children, establish schools for them, and provide for the kingdom of God.

The Everlasting God - El Olam [El o-LAM]

May 14

As Abraham sojourned in the land of Canaan, Abimelech noticed something unusual about his life. He was not a typical sojourner who might come, stay awhile, and go again. Abraham, and all he stood for, was here to stay with life and death consequences. The God of Abraham had plans that would stand firm forever. He said to Abraham "God is with thee in all that thou doest:" After establishing a covenant with Abimelech, "Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God" (Gen. 21:33). Do you live like Abraham, giving testimony to the fact that your God is El Olam, or are your life principles blown to and

fro by every change in the world? Let us pray for grace to live with God as citizens of the everlasting kingdom. Read Genesis 21 and sing Psalter 247.

May 15

In contrast to the Everlasting God, we are reminded every day that our earthly life is characterized by beginnings and endings. When we take the time to meditate upon our life, how fast the days go by, what all our business really accomplishes, we can only conclude that it is all vanity. Our only comfort is that we are not our own, but belong to the Everlasting God. Psalm 90 binds our weak, transient lives to El Olam. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psa. 90:2). How then must we live in this knowledge? Let us pray with the psalmist, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa. 90:12). We can begin by asking God to make us grateful for every day that passes. Read the rest of Psalm 90 and sing another Psalter number from Psalm 90.

May 16

No matter what our age, any activity over a length of time eventually makes us weary. As we get older, we may find ourselves to be weary of life itself. We may wish that we had the energy of youth, but when we meditate upon the fact of our weariness in the light of the Everlasting God, we come to recognize our limitations and come to God. God has the power to give us what earthly strength we need to carry on the work he gives to us. And insomuch as our earthly strength fails, he is also able to give us spiritual strength that enables us to leap and run spiritually in joy and praise before our God. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:28-29).Let us confess our tendency to complain of our aches and pains, and pray that God will increase our strength. Read the rest of Isaiah 40 and sing Psalter 248.

May 17

Our life on this earth has a beginning and an end; our God has no beginning or ending. In fact, he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. He is El Olam, the Everlasting God. The youth may see much life ahead of them, while those who are older begin to realize that life is really quite short. Either way, what comfort we have knowing that our covenant God has determined in his counsel to take his children into that everlasting life he has enjoyed through all eternity. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (Joh. 17:3). Do you believe this and long for that life? Whether old or young, we are called to live that life even now. Does your life express heaven as your deepest longing and true home? Let us confess our tendency to live as though this world is all there is. Read the rest of Christ's high-priestly prayer in John 17 and sing a Psalm from Psalm 100.

May 18

We build in stone and steel in an effort to make our works stand for a long, long time. We make plans and say they are "set in concrete." Yet we know that nothing of our plans last forever. In stark contrast to our plans, the plans of El Olam are eternal. "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Psa. 33:11). And what is that counsel? "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (Joh. 6:39). Let us give thanks to God for his everlasting love. May we live today in harmony with the eternal counsel of God. Read the rest of Psalm 33 and sing from the same.

Jehovahjireh – Jehovah Will Provide

May 19

God revealed this name to Abraham after he sacrificed the ram as a burnt offering instead of his son. "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen" (Gen. 22:14). At the root of this name is the truth that God not only sees everything right now, he also sees what will happen tomorrow, and the next day all through the history of time. He sees because he has determined it in his counsel. As we move through time, we are often placed in a moment where a need becomes apparent. Abraham went to offer a sacrifice. And if he was going to offer a sacrifice, the time will come when something or someone will need to shed its blood. Abraham knew that, and he had many questions, for which is only answer was "God will provide." Read Hebrews 11:17-19 and sing Psalter 94.

May 20

What a miserable situation man finds himself in! He is dead in sin. He is even unable to accept an offer of help. There is no hope of salvation anywhere apart from the God Who sees, Who plans, Who provides. He provides

the one and only way for man to see the depth of the love of God. He created the need, he provides the way, he planned from all eternity to send his only begotten Son. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Joh. 1:29). God has provided for our eternal welfare, and he also provides for our daily needs. Let us give thanks to God for providing our spiritual, material, and emotional needs. Pray for strength today to live in the confidence that God will provide for the needs in ways we do not at this time understand. Read John 1 and sing Psalter 147

May 21

Read Genesis 22:1-14. Are you ready to walk by faith as Abraham walked up Mount Moriah? God gives us many opportunities throughout our life to face whether we really know God as Jehovahjireh. Are we going to rely on our own logic and assume that our particular circumstances or gifts allow for exceptions to obedience? Moses had been given gifts and experience that would enable him to rule as Pharaoh, but he chose to lead grumbling slaves through the waste howling wilderness. Abraham could have given many arguments and reasons to think that he did not need to obey God. Are you willing to sacrifice a relationship, job opportunity, or a gift so that you might know Jehovahjireh? Confess any tendency to live as though God's grace is cheap and ask God to help you obey him without hesitation or compromise. Sing Psalter 257.

May 22

Read Genesis 22:15-18. We will experience great blessing when we come to know God as Jehovahjireh. Through his trial and obedience, Abraham received the blessed knowledge that God would make him the father of all them that believe. He enjoyed already in his life the joy and peace of eternal life with his God. We too are called to obey our God without hesitation. If we live in doubt and seek to test the faithfulness of our God, we will not know Jehovahjireh and will live a life of crushed hopes and frustration as God leads us back to his word. Ask God to help you see the connection between obedience and blessing. Sing Psalter 321

May 23

Jehovahjireh—Jehovah Will Provide. He sees what we need, he leads us to see what we need, he makes it clear that we depend solely upon him to fulfill that need, and then he graciously provides for that need. Read and reflect on the ways that God provides for us in Matthew 6:28-30. Even when we face temptation and sin, we need to remember and believe that God is Jehovahjireh: "but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:12-13). Ask God for grace to reflect in your life that providing grace of God by providing for fellow saints as well. Read I Timothy 6:17-18. Sing Psalter 268.

LORD - Jehovah

May 24

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex. 3:14-15), God revealed his sacred, personal name to his people in connection with the great picture of salvation: deliverance from Egypt's bondage. The one and only God, who exists in perfect harmony with himself, is pleased to create and reveal his covenant life with man in the way of salvation from sin. What a profound mystery! Let us praise the God of our salvation as Israel did at the Red Sea. Read Exodus 15 and sing Psalter 211.

May 25

Afraid of profaning God's covenant name, for a time only the priests said the name out loud. Eventually the name "Adonai" was substituted for "Jehovah," and when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, how to pronounce the name was lost because the written Hebrew did not include vowels. Jewish scholars began to supply the vowels in the tenth century and simply used the vowels for "Adonai" in the name Jehovah. The KJV reflects this practice by using "LORD" instead of "Jehovah." Thus, the name has been pronounced as "Jehovah" since the middle ages, without knowing for certain if that was correct. Scholars now have reason to believe that the correct pronunciation is "Ya-WEH." If the pronunciation was essential for our faith and knowledge of God, we can be sure that this would have been preserved without question. Let us rejoice that the covenant significance of this name continues "unto all generations," even in our generation. Sing Psalter 332.

May 26

Jehovah, the I AM who exists eternally in perfect blessedness within himself, and who has created man

in his own image to see, know, and rejoice in covenant fellowship with God, makes clear to us how we will enjoy this joy and fellowship. Having any other in whom we find the source of our being and happiness will sever us from Jehovah. Setting ourselves up for our own glory destroys life with God as well. It is with his name "Jehovah," "which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Ex. 20.) In summary, we are to love God, we are to devote ourselves to him even as he is devoted as the triune God within himself. Let us give thanks to Jehovah who has been pleased to reveal the depth of his love in giving his only begotten Son for our salvation. Read Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 6. Sing Psalter 284.

May 27

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:" (Psalms 103:2) Here again, like diamonds set in gold, the name "Jehovah" sparkles within a veritable flood of good gifts for his people. He heals, he forgives, he redeems, he has compassion, he delights to bless, he helps the oppressed, he is slow to anger, gracious, and loving. As a child may not always perceive these motives in godly parents, so we don't always see it in Jehovah. Do you believe that God loves you? Let us pray that God will correct any false images we may harbor of God in our heart. Read Psalm 103 and sing one of the Psalter numbers from the Psalm.

May 28

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58) "I am." So simple, yet so profound. The covenant name of God, now revealed in a baby born from a woman. His name is Jesus, Jehovah Saves. The angel said "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1). The covenant name of God was now bound within the incarnate Son of God. Let us rejoice and give thanks that he makes us members of his very body. Ask God for wisdom and understanding into this great mystery of love. Read Matthew 1 and sing Psalter 83.

May 29

God gives to us a bounty of promises in connection with his name, Jehovah. "For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken" (Prov. 3:26). "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). He surrounds us with his unfailing love (Psa. 32:10), delivers us from fear (34:4), and is close to the broken-hearted. May we pray for the grace to wait for Jehovah in all our needs. Read Psalm 37 and sing one of the Psalter numbers from the Psalm.

Lord – Adonai [a-do-NAI]

May 30

The name "Adonai" means "Master" and implies a relationship in which we are servant. As Creator, and sovereign God, he gives instruction to his creature, and we are called to submit and obey. He rules according to his eternal counsel and plan knowing exactly what must be done, while we foolishly see and act according to what we think is good for us. Moses addressed God as Adonai, but at the same time expressed reluctance to obey. Have you ever done this? Why? Let us pray for grace to submit humbly to the will of God and willingly obey even when it is uncomfortable or frightening. Read Exodus 4:1-20. Sing Psalter 27.

May 31

God is Lord. We are servants. The concept of servant is not very popular in American culture. Often those found in positions of service in a hotel or other places of entertainment are foreigners. Our attitude toward those who serve can make it hard for us to understand what it means for us to be willing and cheerful servants to our Lord. Perhaps we even come to God with the attitude that we deserve to be served by him! Let us bow before our Lord, asking for grace to serve even as Jesus did and give all the glory to God. Read Luke 17:7-8.

June 1

To be unhappy with one's position as servant when things don't go the way we would like is the greatest foolishness. The psalmist thought, for a time, that he knew better than his Lord, but said "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." (Psalms 73:22) When our relationship as Lord and servant is rightly understood, we confess with the psalmist, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." (Psalms 73:1) Instead of striving to do what we want, when we want, let us ask for grace to see the beauty and peace of doing what God wants, when he wants. Read Psalm 73 and sing the Psalter from that psalm.

June 2

As servants, we are called to do battle every day against the forces intent on destroying us. The enemy constantly seeks to eat away at our faith, corrode our relationships, and destroy our families and church life. The battle often becomes very discouraging, but we find

the courage and strength to continue again when we remember whose servants we are. Nehemiah came to the Jews who were constantly harassed by neighboring enemies while they tried to rebuild Jerusalem and said, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (Neh. 4:14b). God's kingdom will come no matter how dismal our situation may be. Pray, remembering whose servant you are, and fight in his strength for your family, school, church, and children. Sing Psalter 148.

June 3

It is not always easy to live the life of a servant. Often earthly masters have no idea what it is like to be a servant and treat servants cruelly. Our sovereign Lord understands well what it is to be a servant. In fact, while living on earth, he demonstrated as no man could what it means to be a servant. He humbled himself perfectly before the will of God and willingly gave his own life. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). Read the rest of Philippians 2 and sing a Psalter number from Psalm 136.

Consider the Creation

Spring

by Stephanie Van Engen

As time marches on I've found that I have a growing affection for the Spring season. When I was growing up I always thought that Fall was the best time of year, but that was most likely due to my birthday being in October. As a kid, just growing another year older (and getting a birthday present) was enough of a reason to make Autumn my favorite season. I still love the crisp autumn weather that is so refreshing after a hot summer and much can still be said about the beauty and wonder of Fall, but there is something about Spring that has me waffling on which season is actually my favorite.

Spring brings in Summer and puts an end to Winter, and after living in the Midwest for many years now I wholeheartedly look forward to Spring, as it melts away the many months of icy cold weather. Oh, there is definitely a beauty in Winter in the snowstorms and ice on the trees, and there is much that can also be said about the mighty cold and the creative work of God in each little snowflake that is unique throughout all of time. Spring, though, is more gentle and holds a certain promise of life.

Each season is actually very special and given to us as a promise of God's care for us. After the flood, God says in Genesis: 8:22 "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." All of the seasons have their purpose in God's creation and serve to bring him glory.

Beautiful Spring, though, brings relief from the harshness of Winter. It is a taste of heaven as we come out of this sinful world and enter into a heavenly place where there is no sin. As we leave the biting cold winds and the ice that causes us to slip and fall, we enter into a beautiful world of new life with leaves budding on the trees and baby animals being born. All around us we see an awakening of things in nature. Life is restored.

With the Spring season we also have Easter, which celebrates Christ's resurrection from the dead! "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said" (Matt. 28:6a). Death could not keep him! I Corinthians 15:54b-55 says "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" He is risen, and if Christ is risen we who have been forgiven of our sins and are

given to believe are also risen with him!! Lord's Day 22 Q& A 57 comforts us with these words: "What comfort doth the resurrection of the body afford thee? That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its head; but also, that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ."

Spring is a celebration of new life! It is a time of great joy, as we are given such a beautiful picture of our heavenly eternal life. We can see the new life as we watch the green grass poking through the snow and the early Spring flowers push forth with their beautiful colors. We can feel the sun warm us and beckon us to come outside and see the beautiful new earth. We can hear the birds singing as they were so carefully created to do. All nature praises God! May we also break forth in praises to our God as we celebrate this beautiful season of Spring. ❖

Stephanie is a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Gem of the Month

Spring

The scent of springtime fills the air
And fragrance greets us everywhere;
The grass is green, no longer brown,
The snow submerged into the ground.

Where just a few short weeks ago
Naught but bare limbs a tree would show,
New buds of green spring forth—and they
Enlarge—become a green array.

Where flow'rs were planted, soil erupts
To make room for the buttercups,
Hyacinths, violets, daffodils;
The ground with flow'rs our Father fills.

The skies have shed their wint'ry gray
And azure blue is here today,
Softened too with clouds of white;
The sunshine just a bit more bright.

The birds return from southern clime—
God sends them in the proper time.
To build their nests they'll now begin
And soon their eggs they'll lay within.

A quickened world we're giv'n to see—
A parable for you and me:
God takes our souls which once were dead
And gives us his new life instead.

His justice must be satisfied:
He sent his Son—accursed he died.
Our sins were nailed upon the tree; Christ
then arose triumphantly.

We live because he lives within;
He's purged away our every sin.
May we reflect his love and grace
Until we meet him face to face.

Thelma Westra

Church News

"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:

Ronin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Grant DeJong—Calvary, IA

Adison Sharmain, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Russ Tolsma—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Blake Austin, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Pipe—Faith (daughter), MI

Levi Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brain Baldwin—First, MI

Nicole Loraine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Doezema—First, MI

David Brian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian VanFarowe—First, MI

Tressa Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John DeVries—Grandville, MI

Carmen Leanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Dykstra—Grandville, MI

Caleb James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dale Vink—Grandville, MI

James Aden, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Postma—Hull, IA

Martin, son of Dr. & Mrs. Hilgard Goosen—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN

Clay James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kent Hoksbergen—Randolph, WI

Ethan Harry, son of Rev. & Mrs. Nathan Langerak—South Holland, IL

Marisa Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad VanOverloop—Trinity, MI

Adult baptism was administered to Derek Grimm—Hull, IA

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:

Eric Faber—First, MI

Jon Monsma—First, MI

Jon Pastoor—First, MI

Alex Thompson—First, MI

Debbi Young—First, MI

Megan Griess—Loveland, CO

Scott Brands—Loveland, CO

Darren Solanyk—Loveland, CO

Adam Santistevan—Loveland,CO

MARRIAGES

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

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Brian Helms and Miss Kelly Zandstra—Georgetown, MI

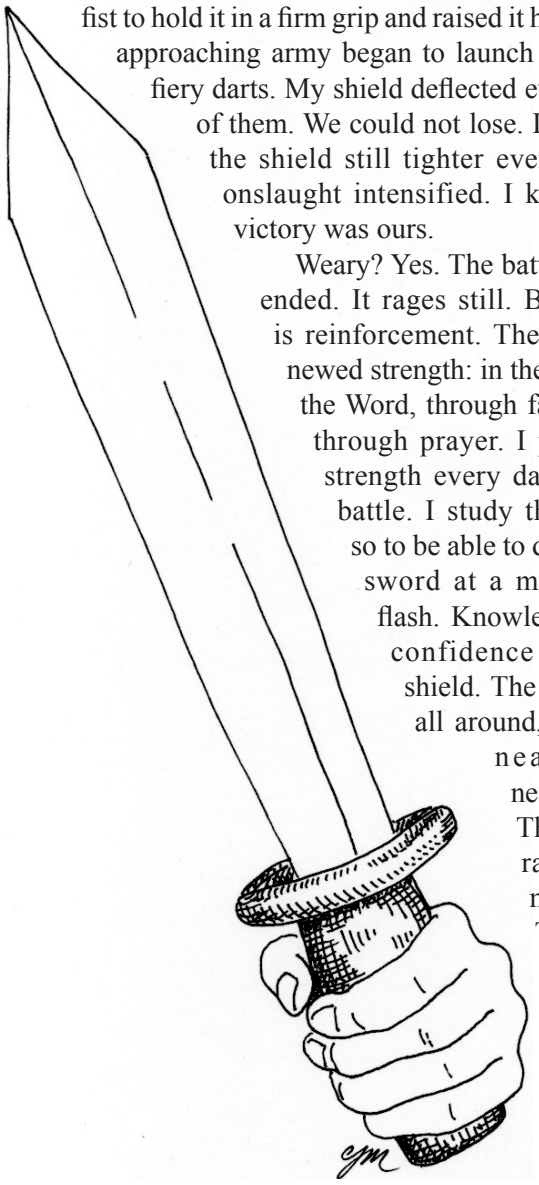
Mr. Marc Velthouse and Miss Andrea Engelsma—Hope, MI

Mr. Mike Hanko and Miss Tammy Tolsma—Grandville, MI

The Battle

Crash. Boom. "Fire!"

The assault was fierce. I had never before seen such an enemy come upon us. They climbed over our carefully fortified walls like frenzied ants on a trail of honey. There was no place to run. But we didn't want to. We would fight—fight to the end. The clash of swords was constant. We were able to hold them at bay, but we needed reinforcements. My arms grew tired. I lowered my sword for just a moment, and it was then that I sensed a shadow closing in. I looked up. A company of the strongest and most vicious of enemy hordes was about to attack us on another front. I checked my armor. My helmet needed adjusting. And my belt—my belt was loose! I pulled the girdle tight. Finally, my shield. I clenched my fist to hold it in a firm grip and raised it high. The approaching army began to launch a sea of fiery darts. My shield deflected every one of them. We could not lose. I gripped the shield still tighter even as the onslaught intensified. I knew the victory was ours.



Weary? Yes. The battle never ended. It rages still. But there is reinforcement. There is renewed strength: in the truth of the Word, through faith, and through prayer. I pray for strength every day in the battle. I study the Word so to be able to draw this sword at a moment's flash. Knowledge and confidence are my shield. The battle is all around, far and near, and nearer still. The battle rages—in my soul. The war is spiritual.

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Yet, let us never fear. Armies of this world may boast in their strength, but do they really know who will win the war? We do. We know who the victor in this battle will be. He decided it already. Our three-fold enemy, Satan and his hosts, the world of wickedness, and our own sinful flesh, is defeated. We battle not in our own strength. Let us stand, therefore, and fight in the victory our Lord Jesus has already won.

Find the underlined words from Ephesians 6:12, 13 in the puzzle below. Then look for 6 more key words from verses 14-17 that describe our spiritual armor.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

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

[6 key words: truth; righteousness; peace; faith; salvation; word]

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

BEACON LIGHTS

P.O. BOX 144
Randolph, WI 53956

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

Who cares?
Who cares?
Who cares?

What's in it for me?
What's in it for me?

What difference does it make?

Whatever...
Whatever...

What motivates you?

Be ready to discuss these questions around God's Word:

Being honest, what or who motivates you to do your school work as well or as poorly as you do? Now imagine that influence disappearing from your life. Would you continue to perform at the same level? Why or why not?

What would be your reaction if your parents decided to free you from all rules and requirements when you reached the age of 16?
What changes would you make in your life? Why?
What would stay the same? Why?

Registration deadline is May 1, 2008.
www.prcconvention.com

Proverbs 29:25