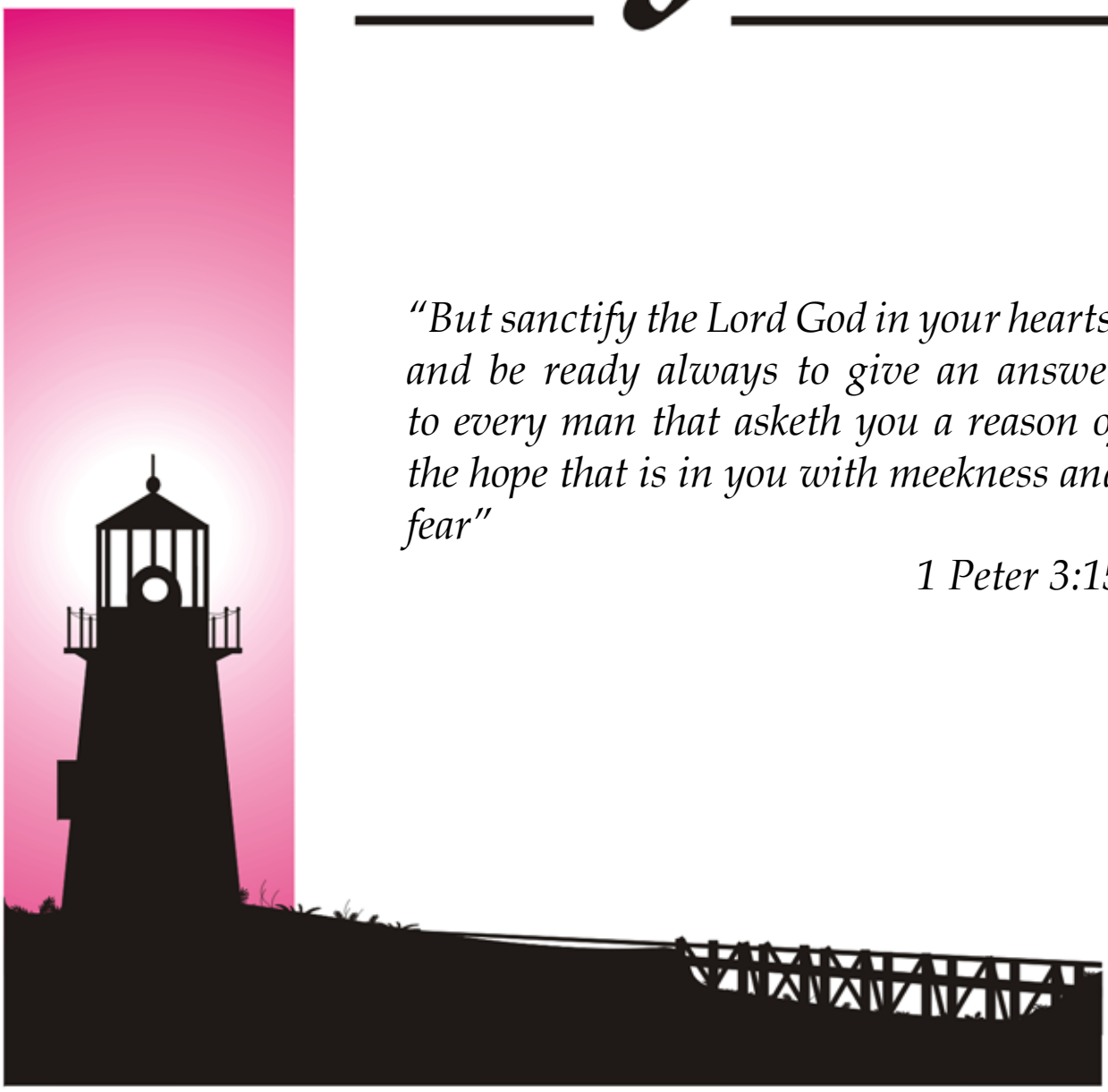
Beacon Lights

January
2009

Volume LXVIII
Number 1



"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"

1 Peter 3:15

Table of Contents

Fruitful Branches
3 **Moving Mountains**

Church Family
4 **Gospel-Induced Evangelism**

Gem of the Month
7 **Daniel 3**

Our Young People's Federation
8 **The Federation Board of the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies**

Book Review
9 **The Five Points of Calvinism**

Devotional
11 **Watching Daily At My Gates— January 17 – February 19**

Where We Stand
16 **The Antithesis and Witnessing (7)**

Church History
18 **I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (4)**

22 Church News

Little Lights
23 **1529**

Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is $10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

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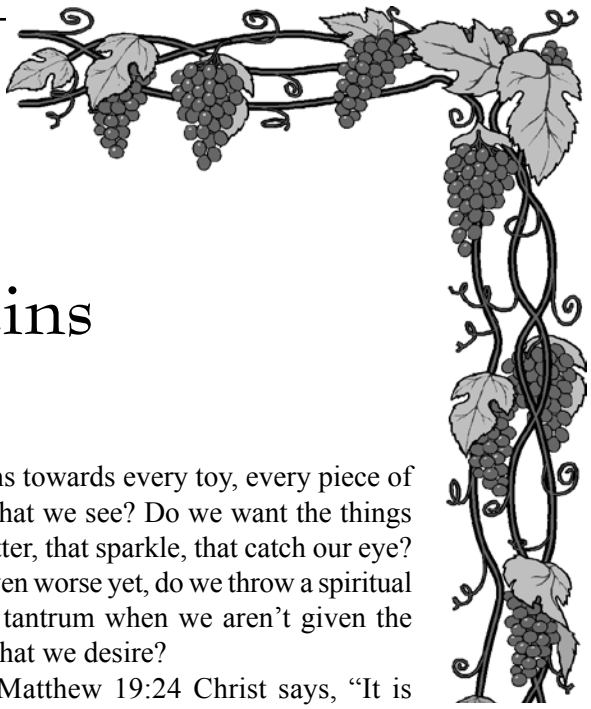


Moving Mountains

by Trisha Haak

Please understand that when I tell you this, I am not boasting but rather speaking a plain truth. I am a wealthy person. No, I do not own a Fortune 500 company or have a really diverse portfolio. What makes me so wealthy is that right now, at this very moment, I have three boxes of cereal in my cupboard. This is the definition of my wealth.

I do not mean to underestimate the times or downplay the economic struggles that our country faces. Times, in a certain sense, are tough. Unemployment and gas prices are up. Wall Street and confidence in Capital Hill is down. For so many decades we have had our seven years of plenty. Now, it seems, our number is up.

I am part of a wealthy society that has been given more widespread abundance than any other civilization.

But for the most part, especially for those of us who live in the United States, we have been given more than we ever thought possible. Three boxes of cereal? That's a lot of food when compared to someone living in a third world country. Comparatively speaking I have been given my weekly bread. I am part of a wealthy society that has been given more widespread abundance than any other civilization. Cell phones, ipods, computers, large mansions, Costco stores, exotic vacations, sports cars. These things used to be either unheard of or very rare. But now in households across the country they are as commonplace as the dust that settles on the family dinner table.

Which begs the question, do we as Christians have too much material possession? Have we become to the proverbial child sitting in the grocery cart stretching out our arms towards every toy, every piece of candy that we see? Do we want the things that glitter, that sparkle, that catch our eye? And, even worse yet, do we throw a spiritual temper tantrum when we aren't given the things that we desire?

In Matthew 19:24 Christ says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." To be honest, I always thought of millionaires and billionaires vacationing on their yachts and owning enough property to house the entire tribe of Benjamin. But I don't think that anymore. The definition of who a rich man is has changed over time. Is it even possible that we, the average American middle class society, catch a glimpse of the rich man looking back at us from the mirror?

Times of famine can be times of spiritual strengthening in the heart of the believer. When times are tough your eyes are focused on heaven and on the treasure of eternal life. What on earth could possibly compare? You don't own many possessions. You're not certain if you'll have any food tomorrow. This is when you are stripped down to the basics. In almost every sense of the word you are naked with only grace to cover you.

But when times are good then it's a different story. Grace doesn't seem as necessary when you have more than enough food in your cupboard for this week and the next. Sure, you'll admit, spiritual things are important. But right now you have to focus on making money because that's where everyone else is at and if you don't keep up then you're out of the game. So like an anteater you snuff out the minuet, the miniscule and the meaningless and you gorge. But soon you can't stop eating and so you become an obese diabetic, craving the sweets of material things and injecting yourself with insulin shots of wealth and possession.

This is how it works. If a heartbeat is the measure

of all things worthy then what is the rhythm of yours? Does it beat like this: money, must have, big house, must have, cars, must have, boats, must have. Poor heartbeat if that. It's really the rhythm of a funeral dirge as the grave diggers shovel the dirt out of your shallow grave. You've actually coded and have gone B-Fib. They're bringing out the paddles to jump start your heart, but there's little hope. It's time for the family to say goodbye.

Or think of it this way. If the blood in your veins flows towards that which gives you purpose then what is the direction of yours? Does it flow towards the finite, towards that which is created to perish? Does it flow towards material possession, wealth and posterity? If so then tread carefully here. These are the symptoms of a hemophiliac. One small cut and you'll bleed out every ounce of blood in your body because one possession is never enough. Your blood will never coagulate. And so you're back on the operating table but it's the same old story. You've already flat-lined. The hearse has arrived and your casket is prepared. It's time to start the funeral dirge once more.

I don't want to be on the operating table. By the grace of God, I don't want to be spiritually dying. I think you would say the same. Sometimes it takes a little self-reflection to realize that you're heading towards the ER. And so I think about me. I can only wonder if these years have been marked by too much having and not enough sacrificing, if these years have been marked by clutter and hoarding. All my possessions, all my desires, all the things that I think I need have become stock piled. Items piled on top of items till the Mt. Kilimanjaro of my possessions has become so great that I can not see through it. Frankly speaking, I can not see God.

…all the things that I think I need have become stock piled. Items piled on top of items till the Mt. Kilimanjaro of my possessions has become so great that I can not see through it.

In Mark 8: 34 Christ says "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." How can I carry another thing? But I know it's time for this juggling act to come to an end. By his grace I can let everything go. By his grace I can take up my cross. With my arms, yet arms that are not mine, I let everything go. I clear out my mountain. I move mountains—mountains of items I'll never need. In one fell swoop, with his everlasting arms, I clear away every material possession down to the very atom till finally I can see.

Do you want to know what's beyond my mountain? Now that would be cheating, wouldn't it? You have to clear away your own mountain. But I will promise you this. What you see beyond the mountain is the perfect eternal 20/20. The beauty of it all can not be translated into the human tongue, what petty words could capture the essence of it all? But it's the kind of beauty that makes you ache; the kind that brings you to your knees. It's the kind of beauty that's worth living for. ❖

Trisha is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan.

Church Family

Gospel-Induced Evangelism

by Stefan Griess

I plan to provoke people, through preaching the gospel and by doing the work of an evangelist, to be evangelistic-minded and -hearted. Therefore, my definition of personal evangelism is this—an overflowing happiness in the mercy of the crucified Christ that spills over into other people's lives.

In order to better define what this definition of personal evangelism means, I first want to talk about what

personal evangelism is not before I talk about what personal evangelism is. Personal evangelism is not an action. This is why in my definition I wrote in terms of a desire or "want." If personal evangelism is simply an action, the result is that personal evangelism becomes a mental reminder that quickly jabs and kicks the will until the person is forced to "evangelize." The result is that the person who is "evangelizing" attempts to prove that he or she is right and tries to find how the other person is wrong. This act of "evangelism"—this act that is devoid of any concept of joy or desire or pleasure or zeal or privilege or love—is totally abhorred by God. He hates that kind of obedience, and he hates that kind of evangelism. How do I know?

Let me give a personal example. I have found previously in my own life that I personally "evangelized" in exactly the way described above. When I met somebody whom I perceived to be non-Christian, the reminder to evangelize came to mind. The reminder to evangelize then quickly jabbed and kicked my will until I forced myself to ignore my desire not to evangelize. I then proceeded to find out where the person "needing evangelism" was wrong and told them how they were doctrinally wrong. My act of "evangelizing" was simply based upon a got to, have to mentally. I was not taking pleasure in evangelizing in order to please my Savior, and I was not giving them Jesus' hope of forgiveness. I wanted me to be right and them to be wrong, even if that meant imposing what I wanted Scripture to say in order to justify my own ideas. God hated this kind of evangelism because my act was not based on love for him and love for my neighbor. God could say of this evangelistic act that, "This Stefan draws near to Me with his mouth, and honors Me with his lips; but his heart is far from Me. In vain does he worship me and in vain he speaks!"' (Matt. 15:8-9) Why? Because Stefan's heart was far from him! I was far from having the heart of Jesus for people! "Evangelism" that is done without feelings of love and joy and happiness because of Christ, and without a notion of privileged opportunity, is not pleasing to him! This is why Biblical personal evangelism is not an act—it is not an act that is produced by a reminder that kicks and prods the will in order to force the will to "evangelize." If the Lord wants me become a pastor some day, I will do everything I can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to make this a clear reality to myself and to God's people.

At the beginning of the paper, I said that the preaching of the gospel would move and induce people to personally evangelize. Am I just mixing the gospel in at this point because I have to and because saying "gospel" sounds nice to Reformed believers and to people who may read this paper? No. Then why do I think the preaching of the gospel is so necessary? I believe that the gospel is necessary because I believe in its power to change peoples' lives through the Spirit of Christ, and I believe that the gospel is the well-spring from which all evangelistic desires flow. How does the gospel do this? The gospel provokes strong, passionate, can't-get-over-it evangelistic desires within believers because of Christ's merciful rescue (O precious mercy!) of them. He absorbed all the wrath of God for me, so that I can be free to enjoy God as my treasure forever! He crushed the sin that enslaved me and told me what to do! This gospel frees people from their fear of the earth-shaking wrath of God! (Ps. 18:7-8). This gospel sweeps away the cruel accusations of the devil upon their conscience! This gospel takes smelly, festering little sinners and gives them absolutely every treasure and pleasure that Christ has on his throne in heaven! (Ps. 16:11). This gospel gives every reason for joy and happiness in God when before there was no reason for joy and happiness in God! Christ Jesus sets free helpless and hopeless little birds from the fowler's net of entrapping sin! (Ps. 124:7).

When people truly believe in this gospel and really feel Christ's blood-bought mercy for themselves, I say, upon the basis of the Bible, that no sinner-Christian can help but display their feeling of joy in response to God's mercy. (Ps. 30:11-12) When a Christian displays that feeling of joy, others will desire the sweet joy of knowing the Lord Jesus! The gospel is the source of an overflowing happiness in the mercy of Christ crucified that spills over into other peoples' lives. There's something wrong if there is no feeling of joy and happiness in God for that merciful rescue from eternal death in response to the gospel, and there is something profoundly wrong if that joy and happiness is not communicated in the gospel. Let there be joy in every Christian heart so that this rescuing gospel spreads for the joy of all peoples!

People whom I might get to serve as a pastor may ask, "So is this type of mercy-led evangelism found in the Bible?" I believe it is found in the confession of Paul in Romans 1:14. Paul expressed that he was "debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." The important word there is "debtor." Paul owed something to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the wise and the unwise. He owed it to every kind of person—to fools on the street, to his neurosurgeon neighbor, to the homeless, to people who cursed and swore at

the bowling alley. He owed it to people who shamed him and scoffed at his "foolish" lifestyle. What did he feel he owed them? No, it was not a profound "Yuck!" at their sin. Instead, he felt he owed those people God-centered, Christ-exalting love in speaking the gospel! "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel…." Why? "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto *salvation to every one that believes*" (Rom. 1:15-16). [emphasis mine] Paul did not feel in his heart, "Ugh, those people and their sin is so sick—I can't even talk to them." Rather, he thought, "O these poor sin-ridden people—they're hopeless, just like I was. I owe them the gospel that changed my life!"

Paul is not confessing here only as an apostle, as if he believed that only apostles and pastors are debtors to speak the gospel to everybody. He is confessing as a Christian! How do we know that he is confessing that as a Christian? How do we know that Christians really want to tell others about what Jesus has done for them? Let's look at I Thessalonians 1, one of the most amazing passages describing the evangelistic desires of God's people. In verse 6, Paul wrote how the Thessalonian people received the gospel, "the word." But what is so amazing is that these Thessalonians received the gospel "*in much affliction*, with *joy* of the Holy Ghost." [emphasis mine] How did these Christians respond? They spread that Word of the gospel! (vs. 8) That verb "sounded" in the English in verse 8 means "to sound forth" or "ring out." The Thessalonians let the gospel ring out to everybody so that the gospel tones resounded all over the country!

I intend to teach others to implement this practice in their daily lives by preaching a Christ-exalting, mercy-magnifying, joy-provoking gospel. Yet people may ask, "But how do I evangelize? You need to show me how—I feel inadequate." I would probably reply, "Good! The more inadequate we feel, the more we will rely on God for wisdom and boldness." I do believe that examples and how-to's can be helpful. I would really like to show by example, Lord-willing as a pastor, how to let desirous evangelism flow freely to people in the neighborhood lead or attend Bible studies and seminars and prayer groups that focus on evangelism. I am very excited to establish my own home so that I can, everywhere I go, be hospitable and love people who need Jesus. But I do not believe that the Church needs examples and how-to's to evangelize in their daily lives nearly as much as they need the pure gospel so that they can have boldness and mercy to evangelize in their daily lives. Every single example and how-to will achieve nothing if there is no mercy-produced desire to evangelize in response to the gospel. Once the Christian understands the meaning of the gospel within his or her heart they will not only be able to but also want to spread the gospel. It will almost come naturally! They have found such joy in Jesus! Humility and compassion will come from the lips! God's answer of sweet mercy will flow to needy people from Christian hearts spilling with living water! (John 7:38).

There is one last thing that I believe will provide even more zeal for evangelism. I will try to make plain to people whom I might someday get to serve that "there be many that say, Who will show us any good?" (Ps. 4:6a). There be many who live on this planet earth who truly doubt that there is any good or any good God. I have talked to many people who, as it were, voiced this question to me: "I am experiencing a living hell—Why?" In other words, from a Christian's perspective, these people whom we see every day are doubting whether there is anything better for them than having a guilty conscience, knowing that the judgment of God is coming, and being tyrannized by Satan. The Psalmist's prayer rings out to us, telling us that we (yes, we Christians!) hold the linking answer to these people's question. The answer is a prayer—"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!"' (vs. 6b). That is, after hearing these people, we pray: "Lord, rain showers of manifold grace upon us so that we can show people Thy countenance that holds ten thousand oceans of mercy and love for them!" We Christians are the link between God and non-Christians—how else will they know who God is?

If I were to sum up what evangelism is without using my definition, I would say that evangelism is love in action. Let God's people have joy-filled, mercy-led evangelistic desires, founded upon Christ's merciful rescue from imminent death, that result in bold and active love. I pray that God gives to me, not only now but also Lord-willing as a pastor, a vision and zeal for doing the work of an evangelist through the power of the gospel so that others are led by the Spirit of Christ to have bold, self-sacrificing, evangelistic desires. ❖

Stefan is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

Daniel 3

by David Warner

Hope to be a Hananiah. Mimic the mind of Mishael.
Aspire to be an Azariah. Dare to be a Daniel.

The first three, the friends of Daniel, were
High in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar;
But when they refused to bow down to his idol,
He threatened to take away from each his title.
But when he gave them another chance,
The three refused to bow and dance.
When the music played and all others bowed,
Only those three stood among the crowd.
And since they did not go along with the world,
Into the hot furnace they were hurled.
'Twas seven times hotter at the king's decree—
It burned up the men that cast in the young three.
Astonished, the king of his men did inquire
"Did not we cast three men bound into this fire?"
For he had seen men walking loose in the flame
And no sign of hurt to their bodies came.
But it wasn't three men that he saw—it was four!
So Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door;
The fourth walking man was not of the norm
But had the glorious Son of God's form.
And all of the men of the king's grand palace
Saw that the fire lacked power and malice.
The heads of the young men had not one singed hair,
Fire didn't change the coats they did wear,
The smell of fire and smell of smoke
Had not passed into the threads of the cloak.
So Nebuchadnezzar blessed the God of Shadrach,
Of Abednego, and of Meshach,
Who sent His angel to save each servant
That trusted in Him, and prayed in fervent,
Who the king's words disobeyed,
Yielded their bodies, a decision made,
Not to worship or serve or give laud
To anyone but their own God.
And if something against this God is said,
He'll kill that ill-speaker and cut off his head,
He'll make their nice house into a dunghill,
For no other God delivers by His will.
And so, this must needs be well-noted,
That the king of Babylon promoted
The three friends named Shadrach,
Abednego, and Meshach.

The Federation Board of the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies

The Federation Board, or more commonly known as "The Fed Board", is an organization that has been set up by the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies to help govern and coordinate the events of the societies.

The Fed Board has many different purposes, three of which are main. The first is to enable the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies to work in close unity with one another. Having a governing board that seeks the unity of the societies benefits each society so that they are able to function with each other as "one". The second purpose is to guide the societies so that they can develop in faith and doctrine; in particular, by way of a Federation paper. The Fed Board has oversight of the

Front Row: Ben Rau, Emily Kuiper, Emily Dykstra, Lauren Kraker, Ryan Barnhill.
Back Row: Rev. Daniel Kleyn, Joel Bodbyl, Rev. William Langerak, Joel Langerak, John Pastoor.

Beacon Lights, a paper published by the Beacon Lights staff and overseen by the Fed Board. The final purpose of the Fed Board is to give unified expression to our specific Protestant Reformed character. The members of the Board are selected from the Protestant Reformed Churches to create union of thought amongst the societies and also to give harmonious accord with the Beacon Lights.

The Federation Board is made up of ten members; president, vice president, secretary, vice secretary, librarian, treasurer, vice treasurer, youth coordinator, and a pair of spiritual advisors. Each member is nominated by the previous board and then elected to office at the upcoming Protestant Reformed Convention by the delegates of each Young People's Society.

The president of the 2008-2009 Federation Board is Joel Bodbyl, a member of Grandville PRC. The vice president is Ryan Barnhill, a member of Hudsonville PRC. The secretary is Emily Dykstra, a member of Hope PRC of Grand Rapids. The vice secretary is Emily Kuiper, a member of Southeast PRC. The librarian is Lauren Kraker, a member of Hudsonville PRC. The treasurer is John Pastoor, a member of First PRC of Grand Rapids. The vice treasurer is Ben Rau, a member of Hope PRC of Grand Rapids. The youth coordinator is Joel Langerak, a member of Faith PRC. The two spiritual advisors are Rev. Daniel Kleyn, pastor of Holland Protestant Reformed Church, and Rev. William Langerak, pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church.

The Fed Board also plans the mass meetings and Easter and Thanksgiving singspirations, along with the pre-convention singspiration. The Fed Board plays an important role in conventions as well. Host churches are nominated and guidance is provided to the host church and, until as of late, funds were collected from the various societies. However, the new funding policy, which was adopted by the Board, has changed (see November 2008 issue). With the guidance of our spiritual advisors and the advice of our youth coordinator, the Fed Board continues to strive for the spiritual well being of our young people.

The Fed Board is a gift from the Lord and he is the focus of what we do. He has entrusted to the Board certain aspects of the young people's lives and we regard our offices with respect and thankfulness. May the Lord continue to bless the Fed Board and the societies of which they are a part.

In Christ,
Joel Bodbyl
President ❖

Book Review

The Five Points of Calvinism

reviewed by John Huizenga

The Five Points of Calvinism by Herman Hanko and David J. Englesma. Published by the British Reformed Fellowship, 2008. www.britishreformedfellowship.org.uk.

TULIP is once again in full bloom, thanks to the British Reformed Fellowship publication of The Five Points of Calvinism by Herman Hanko and David J. Englesma. Some may only see a dry, ugly tulip bulb buried beneath the soil when they see the five points of Calvinism, but those who love the triune God as revealed in the Bible know the beauty of the truth stored in that bulb when it is brought into full bloom. This is not a book that chronicles a detailed dissection of Calvinism, but serves rather as a guide to enjoying the simple, hearty beauty of the truths of God's sovereign and particular grace.

The book begins by standing back, so to speak, and taking a look at the truths of God's sovereign and particular grace as they have been carried by the church throughout history and expressed their beauty from time to time. Inasmuch as the truth in itself is glorious and beautiful, the cultivation of this precious truth brings on the wholesale assault of enemies of the truth. These

doctrines are at the heart of biblical truth and therefore are always found at the hottest part of the church's battle. To follow this history is to trace the amazing faithfulness of our God and the miraculous preservation of His church. Professor Hanko calls the readers to sally forth where the battle continues to rage in all its fury, join the battle, and experience the victory.

Following the introductory chapter, each of the five points of Calvinism is then treated in individual chapters. The authors demonstrate how each point is central to the gospel and important for the life and comfort of the child of God as he or she learns in this life to love God. The book is packed with Scripture, history, the glory of God, and comfort for the children of God. A wonderful illustration of how the Christian life is not simply an emotional high worked up with a professional praise team, but rather the fruit of knowing the doctrine of Scripture.

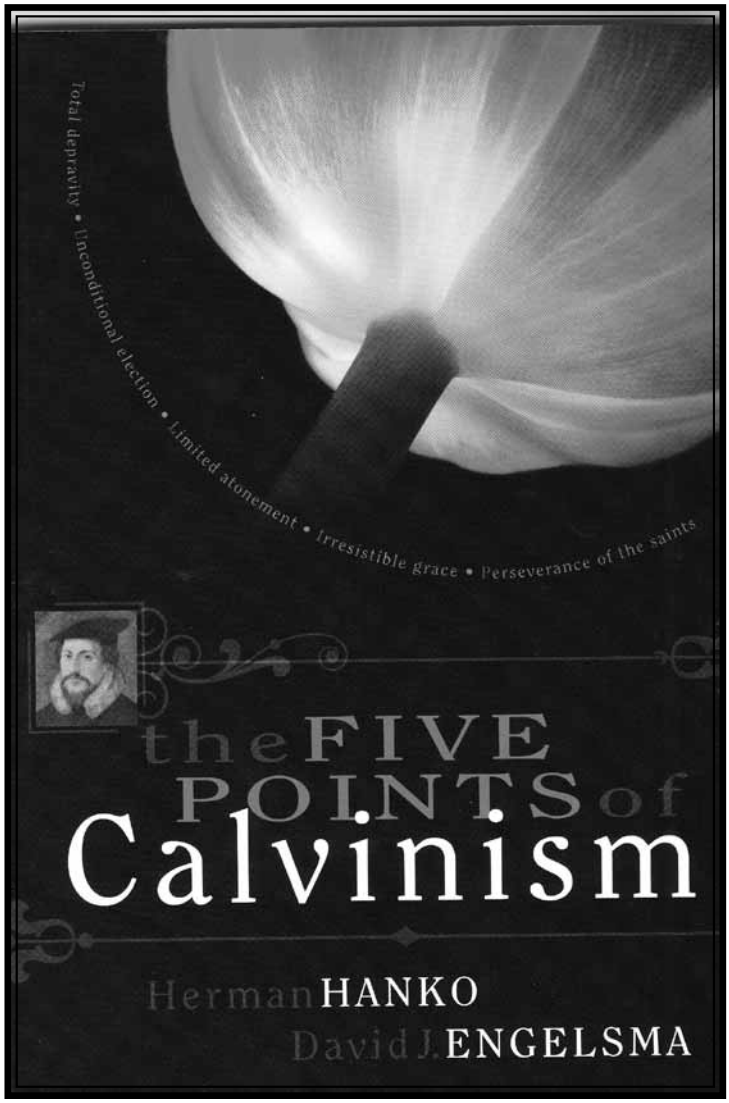
The following quotes, one from each of the five points of Calvinism, are but a small sampling of what you will find in this gem of a book.

T – Total Depravity "Our abiding in Him and fruit-bearing were Jesus' purpose with His instruction in John 15:5. He taught us that we can do nothing apart from Him in order to motivate us to heed His exhortation in verse 4 to "abide in me," so that we bring forth fruit in a life of good works. … Disciples of Christ need to know the truth of total depravity" (p. 82).

U – Unconditional Election "The call declares that Christ will receive, and in no wise cast out, every one who comes. And the call will assure all those who do come to Christ that they come because God gave them to Christ in eternity" (p. 37).

L – Limited atonement "If one denies the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ in any respect, including the particularity of the atonement, one destroys the gospel of Jesus Christ…. One destroys what every believer needs to know and wants to know" (p. 41).

I – Irresistible Grace "We may stagger into church on Sunday morning weary with the struggle against sin, aware of all our failures and shortcomings, and afraid to appear before God, because of the grief of our souls. But then come the words of Christ: "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28), and the Spirit applies that Word irresistibly to our hearts, overcoming our grief and fear and drawing us to Christ by the power of the Word preached" (p. 99).



P – Perseverance of the Saints "Dreadful – dreadful beyond all telling – is the terror of the possibility of the falling away of the saints. … All Roman Catholics live and die in this terror. Most evangelicals, fundamentalists, and charismatics, committed as they are to the Arminian theology of salvation dependent upon the free will of the sinner, live and die in this same terror. Today in North America, this same terror is being spread in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the United Reformed Churches by the heresy of the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision." (p. 116). ❖

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

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 17 Read James 1:1-8

Asking in faith. This is a hard task for the child of God. When we ask a man for something, we usually ask in some confidence that we have a possibility of receiving that which we ask. We must have more confidence than that when we ask God. Why? God is our creator and heavenly Father. All blessings flow from him. He has given to us faith. He has given us perfect faith. We must realize that what we receive from God is good. It may not be the answer that we want, it may not be the time that we want, or it might very well be the opposite of what we want. But it will be good. Of that there is no doubt. Ask in faith and be blessed by our God. Sing Psalter 150.

January 18 Read James 1:9-16

In verse 12 we see our goal while we live on this earth. We flee temptation, but yet we know that in the way of trials we receive that crown which does not fade away. As we know, temptations do not come from God. Temptations are Satan's way of trying to snatch our crown from us. But yet even these temptations may be a trial. God will lead us through trials as he leads us through all the storms of life. Walk with your eyes fixed on the heavenly crown. It is incomparable to even the richest crown on this earth. Walk in faith and you will receive the reward. Sing Psalter 202.

January 19 Read James 1:16-21

Notice verse 17. What a comfort to know that our God only gives to us good gifts. We cannot decide what good is by our standards. The standard must be our God and the Father of us all. He gives to us good gifts. He also does not change. If he did, we would have no hope in this life. As we go through this life, we can be assured that he will care for us. By that care we can be comforted that all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose. Let this guide us through every situation that comes our way. Sing Psalter 359.

January 20 Read James 1:22-27

There are two verses here that are good to look at. The first is the summary verse that is verse 22. It is not enough for us just to hear the word. We must put it into action in our lives. Now, of course, this is not unto salvation but because of salvation. We do the word out of thankfulness. The second verse is 27. This shows us what we must do. It does not talk about service projects. It talks of little actions that we must do in this life. First of all we help those around us who need our help. James was not telling the Christians to whom he was writing to go around the world to visit orphans and widows. Those were evident around them. The second was to keep from worldliness. This doing is not part of service projects either. This doing is necessary in order to show a true Christian character in our lives. Sing Psalter 407.

January 21 Read James 2:1-7

James continues with a weakness of the church of all ages. We are prejudiced. It may be race, it may be intellect, or as in this case it may be financial concerns. God's people are one. In heaven there will be no differences. And, so, in this life we must not act prejudiced toward others. Our kingdom is not of this earth. The kingdom to which we look is heavenly. As the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the fourth commandment states, we look to begin living lives as we will do in heaven. Verse four talks about being judges of evil thoughts. We must remember that only God can look upon the heart. As we carry out pure religion, let us live with all men peaceably. Sing Psalter 70.

January 22 Read James 2:8-17

We come to one of the most debated issues in the Reformed church world-faith and works. Martin Luther was afraid of the book of James. He felt that it would lead us back into the way of Rome. But that does not have to be. A correct view of James is easy. James is talking about the way of faith-not justification through works. The way of faith is to live a live of gratitude. This life of gratitude is lived by doing the good works that we have been ordained to by God. As verse 17 states we must do good works if we have faith. The two are inseparable. This is a most comforting truth. It allows us to give all credit to God, but it provides us a way of saying "Thank you." Let us walk in the good works that God has ordained for us, and let us do them with thanksgiving. Sing Psalter 128.

January 23 Read James 2:18-26

In reading this passage through again I noticed something that I had never noticed before. That 26th verse. Read it again. Works are what shows that faith is living. The

faith obviously comes first. But if we do not go through this life, living out of that faith doing the works of faith, we are like a living dead person, a zombie. Let us live out of our faith, doing those works of thankfulness. This also shows what real, good works are. They are those done out of faith according to the law of God as is explained in our catechism. Walk by faith, and in that walk do the works of faith. Sing Psalter 187.

January 24 Read James 3:1-6

James turns to a problem that must have been evident in the church of his day and is evident in the church of our day. This problem is foolish use of the tongue. Even though a person may not be mighty physically or intellectually, he says that he is mighty by the use of the tongue. In doing so, he quite often fails to love his neighbor as he should. Just a small remark in building himself up or cutting down someone can cause a world of hurt, or as James says a forest fire. We must pray with David that God will guard our tongues and keep us from this sin. Words do hurt contrary to the old rhyme "sticks and stones..." Therefore let us watch our tongues and work on making this an important part of our lives. Sing Psalter 203.

January 25 Read James 3:7-12

James shows an incongruity that is accomplished by the human tongue. It seems to say both bad and good at the same time. He points out that there is nothing in nature that does that. But yet we accomplish it daily. We sing God's praises, read his Word, and pray; and then we turn around and show hatred for our neighbor and God. There are many people who we might point the finger at in this matter. But as James said in the first part of the book, we need to look in the mirror of God's law squarely at ourselves. Then we must ask God for the forgiveness of such sins. As Psalter 386 says, "Guard our tongues..." Sing Psalter 386.

January 26 Read James 3:13-18

Here we see a discussion of wisdom not unlike that found in Proverbs. We must be careful to which wisdom we attach ourselves. It must be the wisdom that is from above. Reread verse 17. There we see the characteristics of true wisdom. There we see the characteristics of the wisdom we must emulate. When we cleave to true heavenly wisdom, then we will have the fruits of verse 18. A word of caution is in order here. This is not the peace that the world seeks. The world seeks a peace in many areas. Just in the last year we saw the world seeking a peace in the financial world. This is not the peace the child of God must seek. We must seek spiritual peace. We must first of all seek it within ourselves when we obey God and his law. Secondly we must seek that with our neighbors when we show them how God's law applies in our lives. When we seek this peace we will have peace in this world and in the world to come. Sing Psalter 322.

January 27 Read James 4:1-6

One of the hardest things to accomplish for the child of God is to be humble. We are quick to want things others have, to do things others do, or to be like others. When we are not content and fall into the evil of covetousness, we fall into many problems. On the other hand when we pray for and receive the contentment that God will give us when we are content with the way that he leads, we find true contentment. This is possible because he is gracious and gives grace to his humble people. We need to cultivate the grace of humility in our lives knowing that then we will be blessed by our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 389.

January 28 Read James 4:7-12

There are several commands in these verses. They are all related. First of all we must submit to God. All things are in his hands and he carries out all things for our good because he loves us. By submitting to God we resist Satan and all of his wiles. God's commandments are that; they are commandments not guidelines or suggestions. We must obey them, If we do not, we do not resist Satan. By doing these two things we will draw near to God. By drawing near to him we will have the assurance that he loves us and will care for us. None of these things can be done with dirty hands and hearts. Think of Psalter 24, and then read verse 8 again. I will finish this portion tomorrow. Sing Psalter 109.

January 29 Read James 4:7-12

Verses 9-12 give another set of commands to God's people. By nature these are hard to follow. Who wants to mourn and weep? We would rather have "fun". Who wants to be humble? By nature we are proud. But yet in order to have peace with God, we must acknowledge our sins. We must humble ourselves before his person. To do this we must watch our attitudes to those around us. Again by nature this is hard for us. We like to say evil things about our neighbors. We like to judge their actions and show how we are better than they are. This we must not do because God is the righteous judge. Because he is the righteous judge, he will judge us. Except for Christ we would be found eternally wanting. Let us humble ourselves before him, and ask for forgiveness for our sins. Sing Psalter 140.

January 30 Read James 4:13-17

Here we have two thoughts that many in today's world would like to ignore. First of all the idea "if God wills" or as it is in the Latin Deo Volentie or D.V. We like to make plans, and we expect to carry out those plans. But

we need to say if the Lord wills we will carry those plans out. We should be happy about this idea because God's ways are always much better than our ways. Secondly the last verse. God has give to us the ability to know good and evil. Our first earthly father abused this privilege and fell and took us with him. We, too, know what is right, but often rationalize the right away unto what is convenient for us. We have been given a precious gift. Let us use it to honor and glorify God above. Sing Psalter 169.

January 31 Read James 5:1-8

There is a difference of opinion about who these rich are. Are they rich in the church or rich in the world outside of the church? Without going into details, I believe it is the latter. They are talked about here because of verse 7-8. God's people who are oppressed are called to be patient. We have to wait upon his way for us. We wait because he is coming to receive us unto himself. It is not easy; but it is the way of faith, and it has a glorious end in Christ. We might not be killed by the world around us, but we must still must learn in patience the way that Christ leads us. Sing Psalter 95.

February 1 Read James 5:9-12

James finishes up with a variety of instructions to his readers. First of all we are all called to live in love toward our neighbor. Even though this world preaches love, love, love; this is not a popular idea in this me-first world. Every one wants to look out for number 1 and that is neither the neighbor nor God. In all of this we must cultivate the virtue of patience. When we are patient with the way that God leads us, then we can more easily show love to the brother. God is patient with us; we must be patient with our circumstances. One of the ways we do this is with our speech. Truthfulness is part of patience. When we are not patient toward the neighbor or God, we will say things that are not truthful. We might even take God's name in vain. Let us pray for patience and in doing so we will show love toward man and God. Sing Psalter 94.

February 2 Read James 5:13-20

This final section in James speaks of a very important subject. Every child of God falls into sin. If that sin is not confessed, a spiritual sickness envelops him. Sometimes he can pray himself and sometimes he cannot. But it is necessary to pray. We must constantly go to our God in prayer. When we do this we will find healing mercies. We also see the truth of caring for our brother spiritually. When we see him walking in sin, we must walk the way of Matthew 18 with him; in order that he is saved from his sin. This is not easy but it is what we must do if we love our brother. Sing Psalter 83.

February 3 Read I Peter 1:1-9

The books of First and Second Peter have much instruction for the child of God. Peter starts out by identifying his audience as elect strangers. Can there be any more beautiful identification? To be elect and to be a stranger in this world should be our goal. To be elect is not our choice of course, but we must live as if we are strangers. Then he goes on and reminds us of the reward of being an elect stranger. We have the glory of heaven awaiting us! We need not fear losing our elect status. We are kept by his power until the day of Christ's return. As strangers we must endure the trials of faith. These need not lead us to despair; but rather they show forth the glory of him who calls us into his marvelous light. The goal is not on this earth; the goal is in heaven. Let us remember this as we live on this earth. Sing Psalter 323.

February 4 Read I Peter 1:9-12

Our salvation is precious to many. We see that prophets desire the salvation of God's people. Their work was not for themselves; it was for the people of God who waited for the Christ. Angels, too, desire to see the salvation of God's people. They eagerly await for the complete church triumphant to join them in singing the grand hallelujah chorus before the throne of God. And today ministers, elders, and parents should eagerly await the salvation of children and young people. For them it is the visible signs of confession of faith as well as a walk that is pleasing to God. The elders as watchmen on the walls of Zion can rejoice as they see young men and young women take their place in the church militant prepared to fight against Satan and await the day of Christ's return. That is their work, and you are their fruit. Sing Psalter 265.

February 5 Read I Peter 1:13-16

After showing to us the goodness of the salvation that he has prepared for us, God now shows to us what we must do. Notice, salvation comes first, and then our response to the great gift. First of all we are to be sober and wait for the end of our salvation which is heaven. Secondly we are to be obedient to what he has called us. Finally we must be holy. The reason for this holiness is simple. We must be holy because he is holy. This is not easy to do, but it is necessary for us to show our gratitude for our salvation. Sing Psalter 252.

February 6 Read I Peter 1:17-22

It is to the last verse to which I wish to call your attention. God's word endures forever. No matter how much we may wish to change its teaching; we must know this. It is a great comfort because it never changes. We do not have to depend on man's wishywashyness. We must not depend on them even though at times it sounds like the

right way. We must believe God's word, and we must follow God's word. Anything else will lead us to folly. Sing Psalter 333.

February 7 Read I Peter 2:1-5

Desiring the sincere milk of the Word! What a desire! As we live in this world we must have this desire. Peter does not make an age difference here. He calls all of the saints to put away all kinds of sin and seek after the Word. That is the Word that shows to us the grace of God that has delivered us. Then another figure of speech is used. Christ is a living stone; but we, too, are stones chosen by God to build his church. We are to be active in that church. We are to live active lives offering the sacrifices pleasing to him. We do this in our daily lives. We do this by leading a daily life that is without the sins of verse 1. Live and walk that way knowing that the Lord is gracious. Sing Psalter 318.

February 8 Read I Peter 2:6-10

There are two well-known passages in the above excerpt from I Peter 2. They are very connected. First of all you have the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of Christ. Christ is our rock; of that, there is no doubt. Because he is our rock, we need not fear what might happen to us. Because he is our rock, we are a chosen generation. He is not a rock for each person in this world. He is a rock for his people saved by grace out of the mercy of God. Because this is true we can do our work each and every day knowing that it is his work. We do that work different from others because we are a peculiar people. We need to show that we are a peculiar people by the way we work. Do all know that we are the people of God? Sing Psalter 71.

February 9 Read I Peter 2:11-17

After instructing us about how we must behave toward God, Peter instructs us about our behavior toward men which is also behavior toward God. We must behave honestly in all of our dealings. First of all, he speaks about those who are not members of the church. Our walk testifies of our salvation that brings glory to God. Then we must obey those in authority over us. It is no different now than it was during Peter's time. Government does not follow God's law, but we must obey government to obey God unless it directs us in strict disobedience toward him. He mentions the "cloak of liberty." Christian liberty is a right; we must not misuse it to break laws, but rather we must use it to glorify and serve God by honoring all men, loving the brotherhood, and honoring the king. When we do this, we will fear God. It may not be easy. It was not easy for the church of Peter's day; it won't be easy during the last days; but it is what God wants us to do. Sing Psalter 326.

February 10 Read I Peter 2:18-25

We will take this passage in two parts. First of all we see what our attitude must be toward suffering. The fact that the child of God will suffer at the hands of the world is undeniable. If we walk according to our calling, we will suffer for it. But our suffering must be because of a good walk not because of our sins. Peter is not using this suffering as our way into heaven. He is looking at a very practical part of the Christian life. We suffer because Christ also suffered. We must walk the antithetical walk of the Christian even as Christ did on this earth. When we walk antithetically, we can expect persecution. This is what Christ told us in Matthew 5:10-12. But there is hope for us. We will look at that tomorrow. Sing Psalter 25.

February 11 Read I Peter 2: 18-25

The second part of this passage of Scripture gives to us Christ as our example. This is a theme that is repeated in the New Testament. Probably the passage here as well as in Philippians 2 is the most noteworthy. After showing us what Christ endured; and teaching us that this is the way we must endure afflictions in our lives, Peter then shows us the way in the last verse. Because we like sheep go astray, Christ by his death has brought us back to the fold. Do we need any other incentive? Thanks be to him who has given to us the victory! Psalter 342.

February 12 Read I Peter 3:1-6

In the last chapter Peter speaks of Christian liberty. He connects it to our ability to honor the king, the church, God, and the brothers. Then he relates that Christian liberty to the calling of being a servant and really a slave. Here in this chapter he tells women how they may live a life of liberty. They do it by being in subjection to their husbands even if he is an unbeliever. They live that life of liberty not outwardly by trying to outdo the next woman in outward beauty but inwardly by chastity and a fear of God. Neither of these ideas is received very well in today's world or even the Church world. Supposedly everyone has "rights." We need to go back and see what our rights are under the law of liberty of our God. Sing Psalter 360.

February 13 Read I Peter 3:1-7

You may be looking at the verses above and wondering why am I reading the same passage two days in a row. But, if you looked closely, I added the seventh verse. Notice again that it begins with likewise. First, we saw how servants were to live under the law of liberty. Then, we saw how wives were to do so. Now we see that husbands have a calling under that law. Husbands need to know how to live with their wives. They must honor their wife knowing that she, if the husband is married in the faith, is an

elect child of God. He must not treat her with contempt, but rather hold her in the highest esteem. The husband who lives this way will be able to pray to our heavenly Father, in confidence. Young men and young women must approach marriage in this fashion looking at the pattern that Peter by the operation of the Holy Spirit has left us. Sing Psalter 360.

February 14 Read I Peter 3:8-22

The possibility of our living out of the law of liberty is found in these verses. That possibility is Christ. Not only is he our supreme example, but he is also ascended into heaven and sits at God's right hand. This is the right hand of power. There he sits making daily intercession for us. So as we live this life of affliction, we can do it without fear. We can do it in hope. We can do it in the confidence that we will be delivered into a life of joy before that very throne. No matter what station and calling is ours in this life, we all have the same goal. We must glorify God in that station and calling. This often takes much patience. We must wait and see where he leads us. But we can do this because we know that the way in which he leads us is good. Sing Psalter 58.

February 15 Read I Peter 4:1-6

Notice that Peter continues on the theme that Christ lived on this earth as an example for us to follow. Now, of course, that is not the only reason, and Peter states many others as well; but it is one of the reasons. As he walked, so must we walk. One of these examples is how we walk among the world. They may think it strange, maybe ludicrous, that we do not follow their mode of entertainment. They ask and then mock us when we do not make use of the movie, the dance, alcohol, drugs, etc. the way that they do. It is a comfort to know that our Savior was tempted as we are. Because he overcame those temptations, so can we. It is the only possible way. Sometimes an antithetical walk is not easy, but it is possible because of Christ's sacrifice for us. Sing Psalter 271.

February 16 Read I Peter 4:7-11

Notice how this thought goes. After confessing our faith in Christ, knowing that he is the only way unto salvation, we are called to watch for his return. We do this being sober-minded. We care not for things of this world, but we care for the things of the kingdom. We also do this by praying. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ spent the night before the crucifixion in the garden in prayer, so must we pray. Then we are called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. We are to do this by loving our neighbor. And we are to love him in all things even when he has harmed us. We are to carry out this love so that God may be glorified. This is not just a good suggestion. This is a command from our heavenly Father who loved us so much that he gave his Son for us. Sing Psalter 24.

February 17 Read I Peter 4:12-19

Peter was writing this epistle at the time of the intense persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire. It was hard for these new Christians to walk in the faith. Their very lives were at stake at times. Peter calls them to impeccable conduct. If they were to be persecuted, it was to be for this crime: they glorified God. It is no different for us today. Christians in this country may not have to worry about their lives, but there are persecutions out there. If we are to be persecuted, let it be because in our conduct we glorify our heavenly Father who saved us through his Son. They day will come, however, that we like Christians in other parts of the world will be persecuted even to our death. Let us look to God who will defend and protect us. Let us look to Christ who will deliver us to the throne of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Sing Psalter 392.

February 18 Read I Peter 5:1-7

Peter ends this epistle with some instructions and admonitions to those to whom he writes. There are many of these on which we could focus. Let's look at the last one. There is a song titled "Cast Thy Burden upon the Lord"? That is the thought here. We have many cares and concerns in this life. Some of them are cares that afflict us now, and others are cares of the future. Each and every one of them must be cast upon our elder brother, Christ Jesus. His death shows how much he cares for us. If he cared for our salvation so much, how much more, will he not take care of our daily burdens? he calls to us to come unto him when we are heavy-laden. He draws us to him so that he can give to us the blessed rest in heaven. Go to him in prayer, and cast each care upon him because he does care for you. We may never say, "No one cares about us!" Christ cares, and he gives to us rest. Sing Psalter 152.

February 19 Read I Peter 5:8-14

Peter finishes this first epistle with a few more admonitions to the church then and the church of all ages. First of all he calls us to soberness. This is not the soberness of the Quakers or other such groups. This is the soberness of those who live an antithetical life in the joy of Christ. We must be watchful, for Satan desires to take that joy away from us. But we have the confidence that God will give to us the victory even in such suffering and afflictions. He is forever! He will deliver us into life everlasting! Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 241:1-5.

The Antithesis and Witnessing (7)

by Prof. Herman Hanko

Our defense of our hope, according to I Peter 3:15, must be with meekness and fear. Fear is just that: fear that we will do something in our lives, our confession, our witnessing that makes God angry with us.

So it is true that we are very much afraid that we may do something that makes God angry with us. But we are afraid also that doing something displeasing to him will **hurt** him. He has done so much for us and given us so many wonderful things: churches where the gospel is preached, schools where the Reformed faith is put into the knowledge of God in all creation, homes which are covenant homes and parents who love us, forgiveness of sins, the privilege of representing Christ's cause in the world, a glorious hope at the end of our journey here – a book could be filled with what he has done for us.

If now we sin against him, we hurt him by our ingratitude. We slap in the face the One who loves us so much. It is the point that our Heidelberg Catechism makes when it devotes the third chapter to "Our Gratitude" and reminds us that gratitude means walking in obedience to God's commandment.

There are those who say that in our witnessing we must not "come at people like a bulldozer and simply run them over and plow them under." There are those who plead for tact, for carefulness, for diplomacy. There are people who claim that we must take a soft approach to witnessing and "catch them with guile."

I hear what they are saying and take it all to heart. But all these things are, in the truest sense of the word, included in giving a defense of our hope "with meekness and fear." If we follow Peter's advice (no, not advice but command, for what he says is inspired by the Holy Spirit), we will not be guilty of any of these things.

I think I learned that in college when there were many PRs in Calvin. Some thought it their solemn duty to pick a fight with every professor who said anything that they thought wrong. They made a nuisance of themselves and gave to PRs a bad name. It is one thing to stand for what one believes and to do so whenever the opportunity presents itself, but it is quite another thing to defend our hope without a smidgeon of meekness and fear.

Some thought it their solemn duty to pick a fight with every professor who said anything that they thought wrong. They made a nuisance of themselves and gave to PRs a bad name.

I recall an instance when my wife and I were in Northern Ireland. There was a man who was interested in and convinced of the truth of the Reformed faith. He wanted to be a minister and wanted to attend Seminary to prepare himself. He was persuaded that the best Seminary in NI was a Baptist Seminary. He enrolled and began his studies.

It so happened that in this school the students were required to deliver a sermon at student chapel toward the end of their first years. This particular man preached on the theme: "Ten Things That Are Wrong With The Baptist Church." I do not know what text he used. We can easily understand that he was forthwith expelled. His claim was that he was persecuted for his faith. But I had to tell him that what he experienced was not persecution at all, but simply foolishness which brought on him what he deserved. I had to remind him that he knew what the school believed before he enrolled, that he was a guest at the school, and that, while he had thought he was defending the faith, he was not doing so with any discernible meekness and fear—to say nothing about wisdom. He did more harm than good. His "zeal" took him away from the Reformed faith.

It is possible to be overly zealous and bring damage to the cause of Christ. It is also possible to be wishy-

washy, soft and bland, a colorless person who mouths insipid nothings, who presents in his witness barley water rather than the meat of the Word. It is possible to be so "tactful" and "diplomatic" that the gospel gets drowned in carefully chosen words and fear of being offensive.

Meekness and fear take care of it all.

It is possible to be overly zealous and bring damage to the cause of Christ. It is also possible to be wishy-washy, soft and bland, a colorless person who mouths insipid nothings,

* * * * *

One more matter, and then I am finished with I Peter 3:15.

That word "ready" is one of no little concern to me. Are we **ready?** It is a question worth asking ourselves. When someone asks us a reason for the hope that is within us, are we ready to defend our hope? Suppose the question concerns our belief in creationism instead of evolutionism? Must we tell the one who asks: "Give me a little time. I'll ask my pastor about that. I'll have to see if I can find a book in my dad's library that speaks of that." Or, if someone wants to defend an Arminian position and teach that God loves all men and that Christ died for all men, are we "ready" to answer him? Or do we put him off until we can read Reformed Dogmatics on the subject?

If someone wonders why divorce and remarriage are wrong and asks you about it, do you have to rush away and read Marriage: the Mystery of Christ and the Church? before you can give your defense of the position that divorce and remarriage are wrong?

In other words, is Scripture an important part of our lives? And does the study of Scripture occupy our attention on a regular basis? Or to put it more specifically: Do we know what our churches believe and why they believe what they do? Do we understand why it is important to believe the doctrines that our churches say are important?

I do not think that when young people make confession of their faith, the consistory must make the central question of the examination: Do you believe that Christ is your personal Savior? Nor do I believe that the Consistory must, above all, judge the matter of sincerity. The all-important question has got to be: "Why are you making your confession in **this** church? and not in the Baptist Church around the corner?" The answer to that question is crucial for Christian witnessing. Sincerity is not enough. There are many sincere people in the world. What is one sincere about? Paul even speaks of the Pharisees and Israel as a whole who had "a zeal of God." But he quickly adds, "but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2).

Here, I think, is where the pinch comes. Many of us are excited about witnessing—as we ought to be. But to take the time to study, to learn, to read, to prepare ourselves to defend our hope—that is something different. We have so many obligations. We are so busy. The demands on us are so great. We can't find the time for private devotions, must less for studying and reading.

Many of us are excited about witnessing—as we ought to be. But to take the time to study, to learn, to read, to prepare ourselves to defend our hope—that is something different.

Be ready! That means working hard to learn as much as we can in catechism where we have a golden opportunity to learn. That means attending classes where the truth is discussed and taught. That means being diligent in learning what the PR church stands for and why this is the truth of Scripture. That means a life of diligence in the pursuit of true knowledge.

I say again: Without being ready to defend our hope, we are going to make very poor witnesses and run the risk of doing more harm than good.

Peter's words are packed with wisdom. I Peter 3:15 is our polestar on the road of witnessing. ❖

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

I Remember Herman Hoeksema: Personal Remembrances of a Great Man (4)

by Prof. David J. Engelsma

My earliest memory of the man, Herman Hoeksema, hardly counts. It goes back to the middle 1940s when I was six or seven years old. A member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, I would spend a couple of weeks in the summer with Grandpa Jasper Koole, his two daughters, Winifred and Thelma, and his two sons, Peter and John. They were members of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

First Protestant Reformed Church

We walked some two miles to church from the narrow alley, Batavia Place, off Fulton St. on the northeast side of the city (Grandpa Koole was far too poor ever to have a car). As we neared the church building, coming from the north on Fuller Ave., an astounding scene unfolded before the child, accustomed as he was to gathering for worship in the sparsely populated farm country of the Riverbend area. Fuller Ave. and the streets in all directions were filled with people, thousands of people, old men and old women, families, young people, boys and girls. All were obviously dressed for worship. All were walking to church. All seemed to the boy to be pouring into the massive building at the corner of Fuller and Franklin that was the place of worship of First Protestant Reformed Church.

First Church parsonage

Astonishment became amazement inside the great brick building. The vast space and beautiful interior were impressive to one used to worshipping in the small, plain, white, frame building on Wilson Ave.

But the size of the congregation! Looking down from the heights of the back balcony, where Grandpa Koole tucked his family out of the way and out of sight as much as possible, I marveled at the size of the congregation, a veritable throng of worshippers. Five hundred families and nearly two thousand members made up the congregation in those halcyon days. Hope had fewer than twenty-five families.

Suddenly, a door in the front of the auditorium opened, and a seemingly endless stream of men flowed out—the consistory. When a man—a small figure from high up in the back balcony—took his place behind the

First Church inside

pulpit, Grandpa leaned over to inform me in a whisper laced with utmost respect, "That's Rev. Hoeksema."

This must be the greatest church in the world, I thought.

And Rev. Hoeksema must be the greatest minister.

Hoeksema for President

A few years later, as an eighth grader at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, in 1952, I put Hoeksema's name in nomination for president of the United States. Well, not exactly. It was Alice Reitsma's doing—the outstanding teacher of the upper grades at Hope and ardent admirer of her pastor, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema. She proposed, in that election year, that I give a speech to the regular meeting of the Hope PTA. The main thesis of my speech would be the necessity of a Reformed, Christian man's running for the presidency. The only slightly secondary thesis would be that that man should be Herman Hoeksema. When Miss Reitsma proposed, we students disposed, partly out of love and partly out of a godly but very real fear. I gave the speech, largely drafted by my speechwriter and full of praise for the abilities of her minister.

For one night, there was a boomlet of at least two for "Hoeksema for president"—Alice Reitsma and me. The responsibility for not forming a Reformed political party and running Herman Hoeksema for president will forever reside with the Hope parents. Dwight David Eisenhower won the presidency.

Years later, sitting in class at seminary as Hoeksema criticized Abraham Kuyper for abandoning the ministry to run for political office in the Netherlands, I briefly entertained the temptation to inform him that he himself was once put up for the highest political office in the land. I thought better of it.

Hoeksema at Hope

Not long after the abortive effort to thrust Hoeksema into the political realm, I had my first real contact with the man, and took his measure as best a thirteen-year old boy could. It was the late spring of 1953, a date indelibly stamped on the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches and burned into the soul of every one who lived through that fateful year. Rev. Herman Hoeksema came to preach the Sunday evening service at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, in the country southwest of Grand Rapids.

This was a rare and notable occurrence. It was rare because Hoeksema never preached at Hope, at least not in the memory of this thirteen-year old church member. It was notable because Hoeksema was a household name throughout the Protestant Reformed Churches, and highly regarded in the boy's family. It was as though, twenty-five years after the Reformation, Luther were to visit for the first time a little burg in the German countryside that loved the Reformer's gospel.

Even a young teenager, whose spiritual and theological interests competed with sports (and by no means always victoriously), sensed why the famous preacher was coming to Hope. The times were fraught with doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversy—of all warfare the most passionate. Rumor had wings throughout the Protestant Reformed denomination: First Church was divided; a split in the denomination was impending. Family gatherings, formerly peaceful and happy, broke up in angry shouts and crying women, to the consternation and fear of the children. Friends and families in the closely knit congregation of Hope that had worked together, for example, in establishing the school a few years earlier, visited regularly, and vacationed together no longer had anything to do with each other, apart from the requisite worship on the Lord's Day.

The worship services were tense. Not many Sundays before Hoeksema came to preach, a fierce and noisy conflict had broken out on the Hope churchyard immediately after the morning service. Prof. G. M. Ophoff had preached for the Rev. John A. Heys, Hope's pastor, as a guest minister. His sermon, like every other sermon preached at Hope in those days, condemned "conditions," "a conditional promise," "a conditional covenant," and "conditional salvation." Hardly had Ophoff exited the building than a prominent member of Hope challenged the professor's sermon, at least, its application to the

conditional theology of those promoting conditions in the Protestant Reformed Churches. At once, Elder Richard Newhouse, who was accompanying Ophoff like a one-man bodyguard, sprang to Ophoff's defense.

A founding father of the Hope congregation at the time of the common grace controversy in the Christian Reformed Church in 1924, Newhouse was the embodiment of the Dutch description of a certain military hero (perhaps, Piet Hein), "klein maar dapper" (small but brave). Newhouse could not have reached five feet five or six inches in height in his wooden shoes. But he was an intrepid and indomitable defender of a great and sovereign God, and of Prof. G. M. Ophoff. Hoeksema, Newhouse respected; Ophoff, the first pastor of Hope and the man with whom Newhouse went through the common grace wars, he loved.

Stories about the "little Dutchman" of Hope are legion in the bend of the Grand River to the west and Lake Michigan. They are all true, and they are all good. Newhouse was one of Hope's great men, exemplifying the way of God with his church in calling the foolish, weak, and base, in order to confound the things that are mighty (I Cor. 1:25-31). We remember him with honor and affection.

Shortly before the founding of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, when the controversy over common grace was raging in the Christian Reformed Church, Prof. Samuel Volbeda preached for the Hope Christian Reformed Church in Riverbend, where Newhouse was member. Volbeda's sermon was a ringing defense of salvation by sovereign, particular grace. This was the kind of sermon that stirred Newhouse to the depths of his soul. "God moet alles zijn; de mens niets" ("God must be everything; man, nothing"). Nevertheless, after the service, the doughty Dutchman, whose occupation was that of a lowly "string-butcher" and whose education never went beyond the third grade, accosted the learned, aristocratic professor: "Why do you always come to Hope with a sermon on the sovereignty of God, when you will not defend Hoeksema and Danhof, who stand for God's sovereignty, in the papers and assemblies of the churches?"

For a few years after its organization as a congregation in 1916, the Hope Christian Reformed Church (out of which the Hope Protestant Reformed Church would be born in 1924) held its worship services in Newhouse's home. During the hot summer months, the congregation would hold the afternoon service outdoors, in Newhouse's yard, beneath the spreading branches of a large tree. On one occasion, in the midst of the afternoon service, a thunderstorm developed quickly in the southwestern sky. As the billowing clouds approached the worshipping congregation, a loud clap of thunder rumbled across Kenowa Avenue over the worshippers. The preacher that afternoon was a nervous seminarian. He paused, mid-way through his sermon, and asked, "What shall I do?" Came back at once the reply from Newhouse, "Keep on preaching!"

Once, and once only, in later years, did the perennial elder teach catechism. By every standard of proper catechetics, the class was a disaster. The opening prayer was half-English, half-Dutch. After asking the questions of the lesson on Reformed doctrine from the book, Newhouse began an explanation of the lesson in English. Within five minutes, he had lapsed into the Dutch language, his native tongue and the language in which he thought. After a few minutes of Dutch, the realization hit him that the class could not understand a word he was saying. Abruptly, he said (in English), "Let us pray," and prayed a closing prayer (in Dutch).

Class dismissed.

A failure, by men's standards.

But not, in reality.

For God, who delights in making straight lines with crooked sticks, blessed that strange, fifteen-minute class in Reformed doctrine to a class of sixteen-year old catechism students, who knew very well that the class was a botch. The opening Psalter number was Newhouse's favorite, Psalter number 367 (all the stanzas), "Gracious Lord, remember David." He sang it with obvious devotion to his great God, oblivious to the twelve or fifteen catechumens. His prayer was fervent—sheer worship of the God who was there—both the English and the Dutch components. And even the Dutch had its familiar word, "Heere."

The five or ten minute "exposition," which may or may not have been on the precise topic of the lesson, was praise of the mighty and gracious father of Jesus Christ.

There was no mockery by the students. There was no laughter during the class, or after. Not one of the students said one demeaning word as we trooped up the steps from the basement of the church building. No doubt, one reason was that we respected and loved the old man as our elder. The chief reason, I now realize, was that we had been, in an odd way, in the presence of God, and we felt it.

But he never taught again, and this was right. Standards of catechetics are necessary. And God usually makes straight lines with straight sticks.

Now, on this Sabbath morning, the little fighter took up the cudgels for Prof. Ophoff and for the sovereignty of covenant grace against his own fellow church member, who, truth to tell, may only have been seeking clarification. Ophoff never said a word. The battle was pitched. With all the rest of the congregation, we teenagers and children watched and listened with mounting trepidation and growing awareness that our church-world—vital to us already at that age—was being shaken.

A short time later, Richard Newhouse would be one of the two elders who gave a report to Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches condemning the doctrine of a conditional covenant, to the saving of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

In that highly charged atmosphere, the Rev. Herman Hoeksema climbed the platform in the small, frame church building on Wilson Avenue. that Sunday evening in early 1953. Two physical features of the man registered with me: his powerful build and his iron-gray hair. One spiritual characteristic struck me: his authority.

Two physical features of the man registered with me: his powerful build and his iron-gray hair.

In those days, the order of worship was the reading of Scripture before the congregational prayer. The chapter was Ephesians 4. Verse 14 of the chapter reads: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." Although there was no announcement of the text in the bulletin (Hoeksema was a visiting preacher) and although Hoeksema did not reveal his text before reading the chapter, I knew without any doubt, as did everyone else in the audience, the text he intended to preach—verse 14, a warning against being carried about with every wind of doctrine, that is, the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

After the congregational prayer, the collection, and the singing of another psalm, the remarkable, memorable thing happened. Hoeksema came to the pulpit, looked us over, and said this: "I had intended when I came here tonight to preach on verse 14 of Ephesians 4, because of the present serious troubles in our churches. But I have changed my mind. There are so many children and young people in the Hope congregation that I have decided that my sermon on Ephesians 4:14 would not be fitting. Therefore, I am going to preach a different sermon."

Whereupon he read a brief passage from John 10 and preached a sermon on Jesus as the good shepherd. There was not a word in the sermon about conditions, or a conditional covenant.

He was not the hard and unloving man they made him out to be in their campaign of whispering behind his back.

Hoeksema's behavior that night long ago left two powerful impressions. The first was that this must be an extraordinary preacher, who could come up with another sermon than he intended to give, on the spot. The second was that the evil reports being spread by his enemies in the churches were false. He was not the hard and unloving man they made him out to be in their campaign of whispering behind his back. In the midst of struggle over everything he believed, worked for, suffered for, and built, he showed a shepherd's concern for the children and young people of the Hope congregation. ❖

(to be continued)

Picture from December 1959 Beacon Lights *for outlines on the Book of Revelation*

Pictures from Therefore Have I Spoken: A Biography of Herman Hoeksema *by Gertrude Hoeksema, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969.*

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"He is the LORD our God: ...He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations." Psalm 105:7, 8

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Dalton Braydon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Derrick Buiter—Byron Center, MI

Alex James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Wynia—Doon, IA

Autumn Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Knott—First, MI

Avery Claire, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chris Dykstra—Holland, MI

Lydia Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Minderhoud—Hope, MI

Jenna Anne and Sara Belle, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Rick DeVries—Hope, MI

Harry Anthony, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak—Hope, MI

Leah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Kalsbeek—Hope, MI

Martin Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Everett Langerak—Hope, MI

Micah Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kuiper—Hope, MI

Landon John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff VanMeeteren—Hull, IA

Joshua Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Boonstra—Hull, IA

Calvin Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lee Kooienga—Loveland, CO

Hannah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Cammenga—Loveland, CO

Patrick Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Greg Duerr—Loveland, CO/Spokane, WA

Jack Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Mingerink—Peace, IL

Easton Joseph, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Schimmel—Providence, MI

Eli Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ross VanBaren—Randolph, WI

Logan Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Manuel Montalvo—South Holland, IL

Paige Kathleen, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clint VanderKolk—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end." Psalm 119:33

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

Dan Dykstra, Ben Lubbers, Jordan Miedema, Robb Westhuis, Matthew Gritters and Susan Oosterbaan—Byron Center, MI

Laurel Slice—Calvary, IA

Seth Bodbyl, Joseph Joostens, Emily Kregel, Cory Reitsma and Alisha Rus—Grandville, MI

Tyson Boeve—Holland, MI

Eric Miedema—Hudsonville, MI

Abby Engelsma—Hudsonville, MI

Emily Dorhout—Hull, IA

Brad Groeneweg—Hull, IA

Maria Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, AB

Rachelle Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, AB

Anna Feenstra—Kalamazoo, MI

Abigail Feenstra—Kalamazoo, MI

Joanna DeJong—Peace, IL

Adam Fennema—Peace, IL

Ben Feenstra, Grant Feenstra, Jeremy Feenstra, Zachary Feenstra, Maruso Lascelles, Kevin Meelker, Lauren Potjer, William Smit, and Lynnae Van Voorthuysen—Redlands, CA

Denise Doezema—Southeast, MI

Emily Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Joe Holstege—Southeast, 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. Jonathan Key and Miss Michelle Boone—Grandville, MI

Mr. Luke Wolfert and Miss Shari Haveman—Holland, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

. . . let it shine !

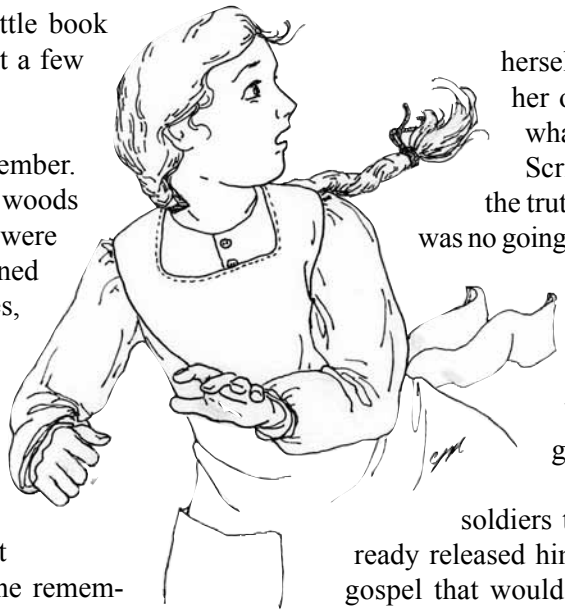
by Connie Meyer

1529

Lisbeth looked back but kept running. No one was there. The barn was close by and trees were beyond that. She knew just where to hide in the woods. She panted, muscles straining. The little book was safe in her apron pocket. Just a few more strides—

* * * * *

That's all Lisbeth could remember. How long she had lain there in the woods she did not know, but the shadows were longer than they had been. She leaned on her elbows to sit up. The trees, bushes, and barn began to spin around her. Her head hurt where she had bumped it. She shut her eyes and lay down once more. She heard voices coming from the direction of the barn and house. She tried to discern what they were saying. That's when she remembered. She groaned.



The soldiers had come to the house. She was cleaning there for her uncle when they burst in. She knew Uncle Peter owned a copy of the Gospel of Matthew translated into English by Tyndale. The newly printed book lay on the very shelf she was dusting. The soldiers were likely seeking exactly that! She shoved the booklet into her pocket and ran.

"A girl!" she heard one of the soldiers shout as she passed through the back entry of the modest English manor.

"A girl is of no importance," another officer responded.

That was all Lisbeth knew before she ran through the manor grounds and tripped and fell in the woods. Now she felt the copy of the gospel safe in her pocket, but she dared not get up. Soldiers could be waiting anywhere. The king of England was not happy about common people being able to read and study the Bible in their own language, and Sir Thomas More, one of the most powerful men under the king, despised it. To own such manuscripts was a capital offense. Books were being burned—along with the people who owned them. Uncle Peter was in great danger. And now, so was Lisbeth.

There were no more voices for a long time. Birds began to sing their evening song. Finally Lisbeth pulled herself up and crept through the woods to her own house. Her father would know what to do. Uncle Peter had shown the Scriptures to them. They had tasted of the truth of the Word of God, and now there was no going back as they began to understand and love the words they read and heard. Lisbeth clutched the beloved pages in her hand.

She found her father and breathlessly told him what happened, giving him the printed book.

"You were brave, Lisbeth. The soldiers took Uncle Peter, but they have already released him." Father pointed to the translated gospel that would have meant death for his brother. "Here is the evidence against him that they could not find." He hugged his daughter, and thanked God for their present safety. Then he stored the precious volume in a hiding place that no one would find.

Let us never take the Scriptures for granted, even now in the year of our Lord 2009.

Unscramble the letters to read the verse:

Ym dnash soal liwl I tilf pu nout hyt

— ——— ——— ——— – ——— — ——— ———

moscemdannmt, hhciw I veah vedol; dna I ilwl

———————, ——— – ——— ———; ——— – ———

teediamt ni yth testtaus.

———————— — ——— ————.

Psalm 119:48

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

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