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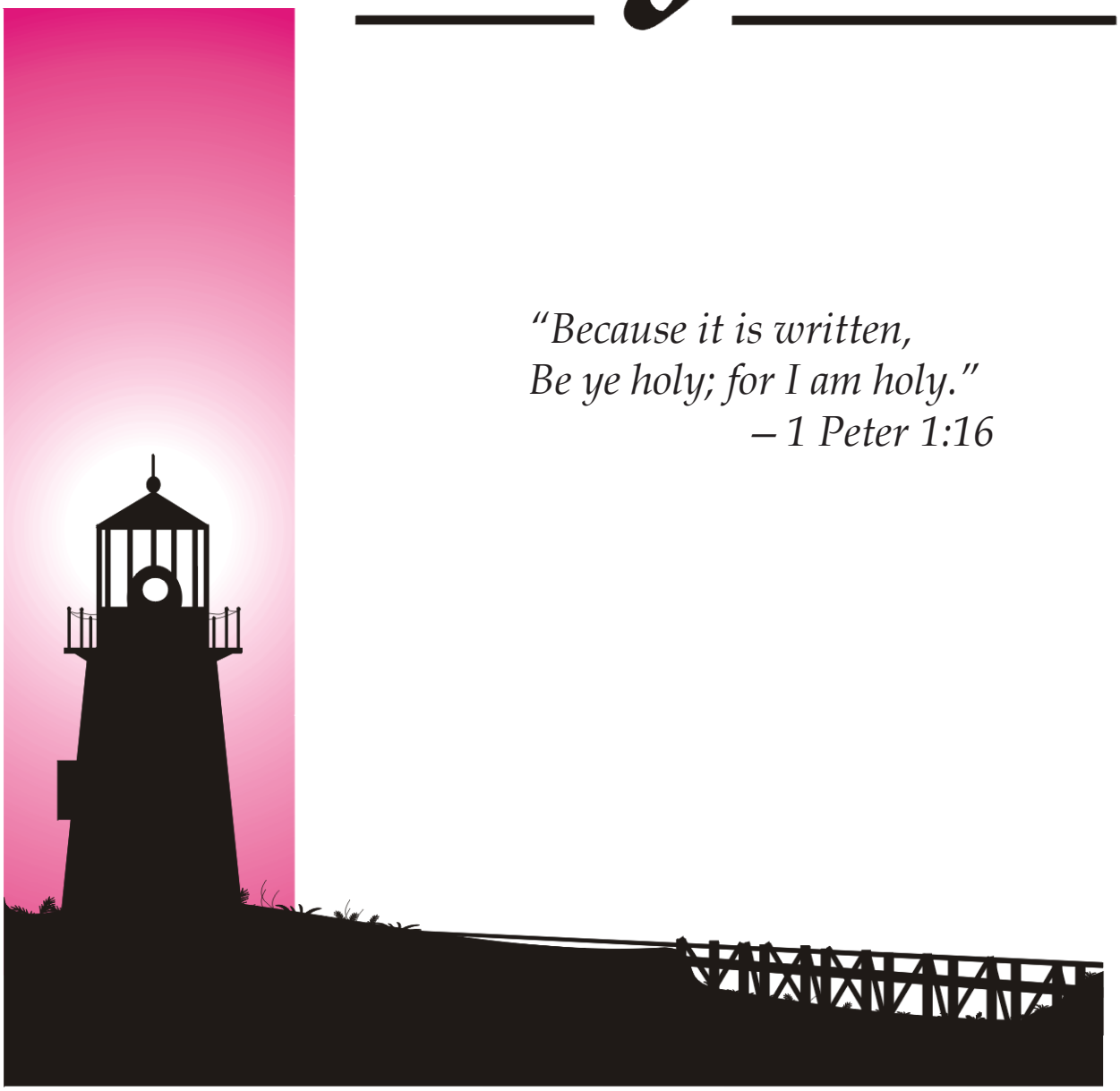

"Because it is written,
Be ye holy; for I am holy."
– 1 Peter 1:16

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Biting on the Wrong End

by John Kalsbeek

A young mother and her five year old son were busy one morning making their beds. After the mother had finished straightening up her room, she went to see how her son was doing in his room. She arrived in time to find him struggling violently to get a clean pillowcase over a large feather pillow.

"Here, son, this is the way to do that," she said as she took one end of the pillow firmly in her teeth and slipped the cover on.

"Oh, mother," he cried, "I know! I was biting on the wrong end!"

In the illustration above, it makes little difference of course, which end of the pillow one holds in his teeth while slipping on the pillowcase. However, in the daily life of the child of God many actions are justified and rationalized as being all right by "biting on the wrong end."

The child of God as he lives from day to day faces numerous choices and must make many decisions. Sometimes these decisions are acceptable and right while at other times they are questionable and even objectionable decisions. Often questionable and objectionable decisions are made because we begin by "biting on the wrong end."

Some examples will suffice to illustrate the point being made.

The local high school is putting on its annual play and as a high school junior or senior, you would like to attend. However, when you ask for permission from your parents, you run into a grave problem. Your parents say, "No, you may not go." If your response is, "What's wrong with it?" you are biting on the wrong end. If you ask, "What's wrong with movies?" "What's wrong with dating young people that go to other churches?" "What's wrong with going to the Senior dance?" "What's wrong with drugs, drinking, or smoking?" "What's wrong with wearing short dresses or long hair?" you are biting on the wrong end. It is, of course, important that you do know what is wrong with movies, dances, drugs, etc.; but this is not your primary reason for asking the question. It is an escape technique—a means of putting your parents on the defensive. You force mother or dad to make a statement regarding the wrongness of a certain activity and then proceed to argue against it with might and main. You've learned that occasionally your technique is successful and permission is reluctantly given because your parents find it hard to pinpoint the wrongness of that particular activity. Your conscience is now clear because your parents have made the decision for you. But I say, you are "biting on the wrong end."

Instead of asking, "What's wrong with it?" it is better to ask the question, "What's right with it?" or "What's good about it?" Remember, moreover, that goodness is an attribute of God. If we try to judge the goodness of these activities by our own standard of goodness we will continue to do that which is questionable and objectionable. God demands that we walk uprightly before him in righteousness, holiness, and perfection. In obedience to that calling, the child of God tries to determine what is good and acceptable before God and not those things which are good in the sight of the world.

It is important that we be positive rather than negative. "What's good about not going to movies and plays?" "What's good about drugs or drinking?" "What's good about short dresses and make-up?" "What's good about television?" "What's good about the pill?" "What's good about motorcycling on Sunday afternoon?" "What's good about lotteries and door prize drawings?"

Considered in this light, many of these questionable activities would become objectionable and the sincere child of God would be determined to deny himself these questionable "pleasures." "Biting on the right end" will help us in walking a life of sanctification before the Lord our God. ❖

Reprint of editorial from the August-September, 1973 issue of Beacon Lights.

Feminism and the Drop-Kick of Scripture

by Margaret Laning

A game of football, of sorts, is being played in many churches today. Most people enjoy watching a good game of football, but this particular game is rather disturbing. First, a ball is not used at all. These churches use the Bible instead. And secondly, they kick the Bible so hard it whizzes completely away leaving everyone in utter confusion.

You may wonder if this is so. Do some churches really play football with Bibles? Actually, this is something you can see for yourself. Whenever a church promotes feminism, you can watch the drop-kick.

Feminism denies that God has given to men the authority to rule in the home and in the church. Wives, say the feminists, do not have to submit to their husbands. Women are permitted to hold the church offices of minister, elder, and deacon. Churches that teach this are punting the Bible. They are punting the Bible right out of the hands of anyone who will listen to them.

Years ago when I was a college freshman I attended a Bible class on campus. We were taught by a woman with a hyphenated last name. "In the past," she said, "the church taught that the Bible commands the husband to rule over his wife. That is because the culture in that day saw women as second-class citizens. Today, women have more freedoms because we finally understand that women have so many gifts."

Sadly, many young women contemplating marriage are fooled here. The issue here is not about whether women have gifts, but about who has received from God the authority to rule. Scripture says that God has given the man authority over the wife, and that this reflects the headship of Christ over the church. Ephesians 5:23 teaches, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church…"

This headship of the husband goes back all the way to the creation of man. Adam was first formed and then Eve. She was taken from Adam's rib to be a helper perfectly suited for him. On the seventh day our God saw this beautiful order along with all his perfect creation and said, "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). But the feminists say that this is not good. They drop-kick the Scriptures in the name of cultural change.

"Today," the teacher continued, "we are going to discuss an important issue in the church world: women in office. Are women allowed to become ministers, elders, and deacons? Some think not. What do you think?"

One student raised her hand and quoted 1 Timothy 2:11-14, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

"Yes, that verse was true in Paul's day and in his culture," the teacher explained. "The culture in Bible times viewed women as incapable of teaching the Word of God. Today, we know better because culture has progressed. Churches are finally recognizing that women have many gifts."

"So," I thought. "When we don't want to obey a command of God, we can simply disregard it by calling it cultural? As culture changes, the meaning of Scripture changes, too?"

This troubled me profoundly as I realized the ramifications of this. If this were true, the entire Bible would then be questionable and unreliable. After all, how then could we possibly know which commandments are merely cultural and which are God's infallible, unchangeable Word?

What is being taught today in numerous "Christian" colleges is the same error that I was taught years ago by that Bible study teacher. There are many college professors who on the pretense of promoting freedom for women are really casting doubt upon the reliability of God's Word. In reality, however, there is nothing liberating about having the infallible Scriptures taken away from us.

It is the height of pride and selfishness to disregard God's Word when we do not like what it says. If we

choose to live for our own glory, the Lord will not be pleased. When a woman covets the authority in the church and home that has been given to men, God will take away his Word from her and cause her to be blinded in her pride. But if, by God's grace, a woman humbly submits to the Scriptures, her eyes will be opened to the riches of his Word.

So we must ask ourselves this question: What kind of a girl or woman do I want to be? Do I want to be a woman who is obsessed with my own glory or a woman who is obsessed with the glory of God?

In our new man, we know the answer to that question. We sincerely desire to live for God's glory. By humbly submitting to his Word, we learn of his purpose for us.

In his wisdom, God has all his people work together as many members of one body. Every member of Christ's body, male and female, has important gifts. I Corinthians Chapter 12 teaches that we have different functions in the body of Christ. For example, some believers function as the eye, another as the hand, yet another as the mouth.

How wrong, then, for a woman to say, "Not fair! I want to be the mouth and preach in the worship service." Or, "I should be the head in the home because I can give better direction than my husband can!" God's will is good. He alone has set things in good order. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18).

When we faithfully live in harmony with God's Word our lives are richly blessed. Rather than having our Bibles kicked out of our hands, God graciously gives to us his Word of life. We hear it in the lively preaching of the Gospel, in our Young People's Societies, in our personal and family devotions, and in our conversations with one another. What spiritual riches, freedom, and peace with God we girls and women have when we live faithfully according to his Word. ❖

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

The Error of the Doctrine of Free Will

by Stephen Mulder

In spite of the fact that the doctrine of free will is against Scripture, many churches, including the Roman Catholic Church believe that this doctrine is true. This is not to say that we do not believe that man has a will; man does have a will, but it is sovereignly controlled by God's will. The doctrine of free will is in error for three reasons: that it denies the fact that God is completely sovereign over his creation, secondly, that man is totally depraved, and lastly, that God has predestinated us. Thus, let us look at why free will is against Scripture.

In the first place, God is completely sovereign over his creation. The doctrine of free will denies this fact by saying that man has control over himself and whom he believes in. To prove that this belief is false and, that God is in control of even the smallest matters of creation, we must go to Matthew 10:29-30: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Isaiah goes even farther, to state that God causes men to execute his counsel. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11). This verse obviously states that whatever God has willed and counselled, will happen. Man cannot change the will of God; God has complete power over the will of man. Lastly, God has created the whole universe as we read in Genesis 1, and therefore he must be in control of it.

Since God is in complete control of his creation, nothing can happen without him willing it to happen.

Secondly, man is completely and utterly depraved. Humans can do no good at all, as Psalm 14 tells us "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Mankind is so corrupt, that the psalmist describes us as being filthy with sin. We do not even seek after God; that is how utterly depraved we are. This is not just a belief of the Old Testament church, but of the New Testament church as well, as Romans 3:10-12 makes clear. In addition, apart from Christ we are all the servants of sin, only doing wickedness and evil. John 8:34 makes this clear: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." We are all servants of sin doing no good. Thus, we are completely depraved, and cannot accept God by ourselves.

Lastly, Scripture makes it clear that God has predestinated man and is in control of man's salvation. In Ephesians 1:4-6 we read that God has predestinated man before the foundation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." This is a very clear verse stating that God has predestinated his people unto Christ, by the pleasure of his own will. It is not man who decides to accept God, but God works in us by his Holy Spirit so that we believe. In Romans 9:21, 22, we read that God also has power over who is saved and damned. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." As the earthly potter has power over the clay, so God has the power to save some men by his grace and to damn others. Finally, we only believe in Christ, because God grants us the grace and works in us as Ephesians 1:19 tells us. It is of God's grace and mercy to us that we believe, not of our own free will.

As we have shown, free will is not a true doctrine of Scripture. An examination of Scripture clearly shows that free will is a heresy. First, God is in complete power over his creation, he controls even the most minute details. Secondly, man is so depraved that he cannot even do the slightest good. He does not even seek after God. Lastly, the Bible states that God has power over man like a potter has power over clay; he can save some by his grace and damn others. Therefore, God works in us, so that we believe. By ourselves, we would never even accept God because of our depravity, but the grace of God works in us, so that we believe. The beauty of the doctrine of predestination is that we do not have to do anything for our salvation, but it is all of the grace of God. Therefore, the doctrine of free will is not a true doctrine of Scripture, but something man invented, so that he could save himself. ❖

Stephen is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, Canada.

Christian Living

The Tongue Is a Fire

by Rev. David Overway

Bullying has become a problem in schools across the country. It is talked about by the news media. Many books are available on the topic. Almost every state has passed anti-bullying laws and many schools are mandated by the state to adopt anti-bullying policies.

Despite all this attention and even legislation, bullying continues. As Christian young people and children we understand that this bullying is sin. We also understand that we must be lights of charity in the midst of this darkness of bullying. We must be sure that our schools are marked as different from the world, that they stand as

places of proper conduct toward one another. Of course, the same charity must prevail in our relationships toward one another outside of school.

Over all, I hear good things about the way our young people and children treat each other. For that we thank God. But we are sinners and therefore need to be on guard against this sin so it doesn't begin to develop among us. There are also, no doubt, occasional instances of bullying that do occur in our midst.

So let's spend a few moments hearing from God's Word with regard to our calling toward one another. First let's be clear what we mean when we refer to this sin. Let's understand what forms it can take.

Most directly it involves the sinful use of the tongue against someone. One chooses a person, for whatever reason, and speaks cuttingly to them to their face. Maybe the person spoken to is different in some way from the person who is doing the sinful speaking. Maybe the one speaking just wants a target and picks the person that appears most vulnerable. So he uses his tongue to mock his target to his face. He criticizes in a belittling way. Jokingly he says things that tear down.

But we remember, too, that the tongue can be used sinfully against someone even when that person is not present. Mocking, criticizing, joking about someone behind their back is still sin against them. It destroys their reputation and if they hear of what was said, it wounds them sometimes more than if it was said to their face.

This sinful use of the tongue is prohibited by Scripture. But we must beware, for each of us has a tongue that can be used in this way. James says "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." The tongue is not innocent then, or harmless. Rather, every tongue is connected to a dreadfully sinful nature and when used by this sinful nature destroys like fire. In this connection, James also says, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5, 6). Let us watch our tongues, then, lest a little iniquitous fire from them ignites a great matter among us or a great painful matter in the heart of even one of God's elect children.

We need to be reminded, too, that the use of technology for sinful communication is also referred to by these verses in James (and in similar passages in Scripture). When James writes of the tongue, he means anything we use to communicate. Today there are many different types of technology we use to communicate and these can easily be used to "speak" sinfully to or about one another. In fact, it is often much easier to be cruel through these means than with our actual tongue. Though easier to do, it is just as sinful to communicate something hurtful using our cell phones or the internet as it is to use our actual tongues.

Though easier to do, it is just as sinful to communicate something hurtful using our cell phones or the internet as it is to use our actual tongues.

We must be careful as we speak on our cell phones. We must think twice (or thrice) before sending that text message. We must pause after writing an email and before we click "send," to re-read what we've written and compare it to what James has written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We must ask if God would approve before we post our thoughts about someone on Facebook or another social networking site.

Such guarded carefulness must characterize all of our communication because the tongue is a fire and only a fool is careless with fire. As children of God, we don't play with fire. For we know that the fire of an uncharitable tongue destroys. And destroying another is sin, hatred, murder. It's not just what kids do. It's not funny. It's evil. And it kills.

The fire of a sinful tongue does not burn and kill the body. In most cases it does not kill in ways that we can see. But it kills something within the person who is sinfully spoken to or about. It lights a destroying fire within their heart. A fire that destroys their self-esteem. That burns down their confidence. That tears away their happiness, reducing it to ashes. That causes deep, and sometimes abiding pain. In fact, such deep damage can be done that a person may live with the effects of it all his or her life.

What further helps us to see the seriousness of the sinful use of our tongue against our Christian brothers and sisters is the consideration that they belong to God. James points to this too, when he writes about using our tongues sinfully against those "who are made after the similitude of God" (James 3:9). If we claim to love God, then how can we use our tongue against one who has been re-created to bear the image of God?

> Christ valued them so much that he died for them. Then how can we act as if they have no value by speaking critically or mockingly to or about them?

And this reminds us, also, that Christ died for each of his children so that they can bear that image of God. Christ valued them so much that he died for them. Then how can we act as if they have no value by speaking critically or mockingly to or about them?

Let's also bear in mind that the fellow saint is a member of God's covenant and therefore is a friend of God and a friend of Christ. What if Jesus were still on earth in his body and he stood next to the one that we were tempted to speak sharply to and Jesus put his arm around the shoulder of that person and said to us "This is my friend." Would we dare to say the slightest thing against that person? And yet, by faith, that is how we always ought to view every one of God's people. Remember Jesus' warning about our brothers and his friends in Matthew 5:22 "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Our Lord takes the sin of the tongue very seriously, and so, if we are wise, will we.

Have you fallen into this sin? Repent before God. Sincerely ask him for forgiveness and you will be forgiven. But then, too, apologize to the person you've sinned against. Put out the fire you've started in their heart. And if others are aware of what you've said, do what it takes to put out the fire with them, too, so it spreads no further. And finally, don't continue in this sin. Pray daily for strength to guard your tongue.

Has it happened to you? Are you the object of someone else's bullying and sinful speaking? Don't retaliate. So often those who bully others have been bullied first themselves. Don't become one of them. Rather follow God's way for dealing with someone who has sinned against you. Go to them and talk to them privately, seeking to forgive them. If they apologize, forgive them. If they don't, follow the steps of Christian discipline found in Matthew 18. Yes, it's that serious.

> Do you know of a situation where this sin is taking place, but you are neither the bully nor the bullied one? Then God has placed on you the solemn responsibility to help the one who is being picked on.

Do you know of a situation where this sin is taking place, but you are neither the bully nor the bullied one? Then God has placed on you the solemn responsibility to help the one who is being picked on. Help him or her to deal the right way with the one who is hurting them. And talk to the person who is using their tongue as fire against a child of God. Help them see the seriousness of their sin and their need to make things right with God and the offended brother or sister. (Perhaps you could also give them a copy of this article if you think it would help.)

In the end, the best way to guard against using our tongue for sin is to use it for good. When we are actively looking for opportunities to use our tongue for the good of others, it is much less likely that we will fall into the sin of communicating sinfully to or about others. Let's speak, personally and through the use of technology, in love toward one another. Let's speak to build up one another in Christ. "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31, 32).

The world continues to be tortured with the problem of bullying and cannot find a solution to their problem. But let us thank God that he has revealed to us that the problem is sin, serious sin. And that the solution is grace—grace of forgiveness, and grace that enables us to guard against and fight against this tongue of fire. By that grace of God, let's continue to make sure that our schools and our circles of friends are safe, blessed places in which all of us can live. ❖

Rev. Overway is pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

Instructed to Love and Hate

by Derek Bleyenberg

In Matthew 5:43-48, Christ instructs us to love our neighbor and in Psalm 139:19-24 instructs us to hate those who hate God. Seeing the Bible is inerrant and infallible, how do we reconcile the message in these passages?

> *"Do not, O Lord, I hate those that hate thee?"*
> *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies."*

These two texts found in Psalm 139:19-24 and Matthew 5:43-48 respectively, are two texts that have caused much controversy in their interpretation of the text. As Christians we must look at the infallibility of Scripture and look to the Bible for true meaning of these texts. Our duty is to live according to Scripture, and in order to do so we must live according to God's commands like the texts of Psalm 139 and Matthew 5. With these two passages in mind we have to look at our faith and our calling in life which is found in Matthew 22:37, "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all they heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

In order to interpret the messages of these texts it is important to look at them separately. First of all, Matthew 5:43-48 speaks about God's command to us to love our enemies.

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

This passage is such a reassuring text to Christians today that our work with the wicked here on this earth is meaningful. God commands us to "Love our enemies, bless them that curse you and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." This can be hard for the Christian because every day is a battle against the world and we have to constantly defend ourselves against those who hate us. The world hates us and wants nothing to do with God and it is very hard to show love to them. But our command is to love our enemies and show compassion for them. God has created all creation and this includes man and our command is to love them. A great example of why we show love is shown in Luke 23:42-43 when the sinner on the cross says to Jesus, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Jesus replies, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise."

What a blessed reassurance of salvation for the man on the cross as Jesus directly tells him that he will go to heaven. This is why as Christians we are to show compassion to all men. People can live unrepentant their whole lives, but God can work in their hearts the forgiveness of sins even on their death bed. By loving our enemies we are a witness to them of the love of God and his power over creation. It is important to be examples and followers of God demonstrating love, compassion, and constant prayer so others will see Christ in us. We are to love our neighbor because it shows our Christ-like obedience to God our Father.

God gives us these commands to love our enemies for several reasons. First of all that we may be like God our Father, as we read in verse 45, "that ye may be… the children of your father." Secondly, if we only show love to our neighbors and not our enemies, we are not following this command. This love for our enemy can take on many implications.

In verse 44 this doctrine comes to light "…bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you…." Although we live in a world where the wicked hate the righteous, God commands us to love them. We have to show love to our enemies and do good to them while hating the sin that they are living in. This can be such a hard struggle for Christians because even though the wicked are living an unrepentant life and want nothing to do with God we may not hate them, but we have to hate their sin. This also means that we may not make friends with the world because God commands us to be in the world, but not of the world. We must look to our savior who gives us the strength to do this and live it

out in an upright heart. Our faith is a work of God and our works are not of ourselves but are a result of God's compassion for his people. By faith we will experience this wonder of God as he works it in our hearts.

The other text of discussion comes from Psalm 139: 19-24:

> Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. 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.

The psalmist here talks about how God will slay the wicked because of their evil works. Every human being is responsible for their own actions here on this earth and God will judge us according to our works. The wicked have continual hatred for God's people and they "speak against thee wickedly" and they "take thy name in vain." Matthew Henry writes, "Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying by using them in an inappropriate manner take God's name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him."[1] These actions lead to God's hatred for the wicked and his wrath in sending them into eternal damnation. This is not to be taken lightly, because for eternity the wicked will experience God's wrath forever and their evil deeds can never be taken back.

The evidence can be seen from this as the psalmist writes, "depart from me ye bloody men." God wants nothing to do with the wicked as they depart into hell. His hatred for them is a cruel and damnable punishment and we as Christians are supposed to hate them that hate God. The psalmist answers this by saying, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee…I hate them with a perfect hatred." So as Christians we do hate the wicked because they hate God. But we do not hate the world by judging them, it is not our duty to judge the world and hate those whom we think are "of the world." God is the only judge as Asaph writes in Psalm 75:7: "God is the judge: he putteth down one: and putteth up another" and not sinful man as Matthew writes "judge not, that ye be not judged." Then, how are we to hate those if we cannot judge? God commands us through this psalm to hate with a perfect hatred. We do not hate man and what God has created here on this earth. We hate the sin of man which man has created. God is not the author of sin because if he was we are to hate something he created. We have to honor all of God's creation and sin is not part of it.

Hatred then becomes a spiritual aspect for Christian. In Psalm 139:22, "I hate them with a perfect hatred" which means I hate the work of those that reject God's sovereignty. As Christians it is our duty to hate those who hate God and hate their evil deeds they commit. Through the eyes of Christ we hate those who hate God but it is not our duty to judge those who are of God and those who are of the world. This is why we have to pray continually for those who do wrong to us and persecute us. Our work here on this earth is a work through the Spirit in our hearts. We have to hate the workers of iniquity and the work they commit from day to day. When sinners live in an unrepentant lifestyle we have to hate their sin that they are living in. We may not make friends with those who do not show love for God and his creation. This is why Christ commands us to live in the world but not of the world. This doctrine explains a clear definition of why we have to hate the sin of the wicked, but show compassion to our enemies.

This doctrine is a complex doctrine that can be a struggle in understanding. As we read in Matthew 5 our command comes from God to love our enemies. This has to be the work of the Christian every day we live. We have to live in a conscious effort to show love to our enemies and have mercy upon them.[2] This can only be done with constant prayer and faith in God that he will direct our paths in an upright manner. Then as we read in Psalm 139 we have to hate those who hate God which means that we have to hate the work of those that continually live in sin and show no repentance for their actions. Their work is a damnable work and we are not to associate ourselves as friends with them but rather pray for them that God will turn their hearts and follow him.

With these two passages in mind we look at our faith and our calling in life which is found in Matthew 22:37, "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all they heart, and with all thy soul, and with all they mind." ❖

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1 Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. Vol. 3. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d. 758-759. 6 vols. Print.

2 Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. Vol. 5. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d. 66-67. 6 vols. Print.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 2 Read Psalm 26:1-7

Here David asks God to judge his works in his walk of sanctification in this life. When we read through the first five verses, we might think that David is boasting in his own works. But then in verses 6 and 7, we see the reason for the request. David wishes to approach the house of God and to speak of God's goodness to others with a clean heart and clean hands. Is this our desire? Are we looking to speak of God's goodness to others? Are we willing to walk in his law daily? This must be our desire as the way to show thanksgiving for our salvation. The first 5 verses are a road map to right living. May they be our guide every day. Sing Psalter 69.

January 3 Read Psalm 26:8-12

As David finishes this Psalm, he expresses his devotion for God's house. We know from both history and other Psalms that this was not an occasional desire. David often makes note of the fact that he wants to be in God's house. He had to be content that God, in his counsel, would have his son build the temple. Is our chief desire the house of God? Do we look forward for every Sunday service with great anticipation? We, like David, need to pray the prayer found in these verses. We, like David, need to live with the same desire for God's house. David knew that God's house on earth was only temporary. We must look for the same eternal dwelling that David did. We must live the same life filled with the desire and devotion for God's house on this earth and in heaven. Sing Psalter 70.

January 4 Read Psalm 27:1-6

This is a Psalm of faith that can be confessed by any believer at any time. To have a God who is our light, our salvation, and the strength of our life gives to us utmost peace and a freedom from fear in our lives. David was faced with many foes and many fears. He had to remember, like we do, to go to his God. He realized that when he was in trouble he could not forget God's house. Is this our reaction in our troubles? Do we tend to "miss" church when we have problems? That is the worst thing we can do, for in church is the only place of refuge. We do not hide from our problems there, but we find the answers for them there. When we find those solutions, then we need to praise the name of him whose mercies endure forever. Sing Psalter 71.

January 5 Read Psalm 27:7-14

Even though we are reading the last 8 verses of this beautiful and comforting Psalm, we are only going to look at verses 7-10. These verses are a sincere prayer from the heart. Do we pray it? Do we pray it often? Do we seek God's face in all that we do? For us we can find that face in the Bible. We can find it in the preaching of the Word. In seeking that face in these ways, we can be assured that God will not hide it from us. We can also know that he will stay with us no matter what circumstances of life come upon us. We need to seek his face in the confidence that he will care for us forever. Sing Psalter 72.

January 6 Psalm 27:7-14

As we finish this beautiful Psalm, let us turn our attention to verse 14. The Psalmist has thanked God for all of the goodness that God has given to him through all of the trials that he has faced. Now he asks for patience. This is not an easy virtue for the child of God. We are apt to wish "to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps." We must learn to wait on God to provide for us solutions to all our trials. As evidenced throughout David's life as well as our own, God always provides for his people. Often it seems like God is "too slow." We need to pray for the needed patience to wait on Jehovah for all things in his time. Sing Psalter 73.

January 7 Read Psalm 28:1-5

Here we have a passionate prayer from the pen of David. Are we this passionate in prayer? Do we pray for spiritual help from our God, or are we focused on some physical need? While both are definitely matters for prayer, we often forget to pray for spiritual aid. We also see him praying for help against the wicked who oppress him. Do we have this experience? Should we have this experience? We also need to make sure that we do not become as the wicked. The works of Jehovah are precious; let us regard them and hold them precious in our lives. Let us pray, and let us pray without ceasing. Sing Psalter 75.

January 8 Read Psalm 28

To end his prayer, David gives thanks because Jehovah has heard his prayer. He again reiterates his trust in the Almighty. He not only gives thanks in prayer but also in song. These are the two chief means of thankfulness that we have to thank our God for all of the blessings that he has bestowed upon us. Do we use these means? Do we pray each day and often throughout the day for the salvation given to us by grace alone? When we have the opportunity to use music, do we do it? Do we sing the songs of Zion as lustily as we can? I often see the very young singing with all of their might. I often see the elderly sing with whatever strength that is left in their frail bodies. What about those of us in-between? Do we use our strength to praise God at all times? Let the words of this Psalm be our praise and our prayer. Sing Psalter 75.

January 9 Read Psalm 29

Do you hear the voice of Jehovah? He calls in many ways. We can hear him peacefully calling us in the myriad of stars that shine down upon us from on high. We can hear him in the roar

of the wind as it whistles past our homes by day or night. We can hear him in the crash of thunder and the lightning's flash. He speaks loudly in the storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes that seem to increase in number. What is he saying to us? First of all, the Psalm says he calls us to worship. We are to worship him in the beauty of holiness. Secondly, the Psalmist tells us that he is conferring upon us strength and peace. Let us worship daily giving thanks for the strength to live in this world which will soon experience his second coming. Let us worship daily giving thanks for the peace that is ours through Christ Jesus. Sing Psalter 76.

January 10 Read Psalm 30:1-6

David looks back at the wars that he has fought and won with God's help to enable him to establish his throne in Jerusalem. Some of the time as he was fighting, he thought death was very near. Think of being in Saul's throne room and the javelins that went whistling by his head. His response to becoming king is to sing and realize that the joy that was his was spiritual joy afforded to him by his covenant God. May we, too, live this life in the realization that it is God who gives to us what we need. It is God who cares for us in all things. May we, too, say that in God we shall never be moved. Sing Psalter 78.

January 11 Read Psalm 30:7-12

There are times in our lives that it appears that God has turned from us. It may be that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It may be that in his counsel he has willed a trial in order to strengthen our faith. It may be something for which we can find no reason. What will our reaction be? Will we turn from him? If we do, we will be sorely tried. He is our refuge and the rock of our strength. If God be truly gone from us, and that will never happen, we are dead, and the dead cannot praise God. No, God will turn to us. He will show us the way once more. Let us give thanks for all of his goodness now as this is the way that we will be able to eternally give thanks in heaven. God will have mercy upon his people; he will help them in all situations. He is God. Sing Psalter 79.

January 12 Read Psalm 31:1-8

In this Psalm of David we have a prayer which proceeds out of David's faith. Faith in God is necessary for us to pray. If we do not have the true knowledge of God and the hearty confidence in him, we will not pray in confidence. David is concerned about his spiritual life. This we see in verse 5, which words are also the words our Savior used as he hung dying on the cross for our souls. We need to go to God in prayer often every day. We need to do this by faith, for how else can we pray? We need to ask God to preserve our soul until the day that he takes it to heaven. Let us turn to him in prayer now and often each day. Sing Psalter 80:1-6

January 13 Read Psalm 31:9-18

In the first part of this Psalm, David recounts some of the troubles in which he found himself in his life. These were troubles from both outside Israel as well as inside Israel. When things looked the darkest, he speaks these words of verses 14 and 15. Do we trust in Jehovah to deliver us out of troubles? Do we confess that our times are in his hands all of the time? We must never hesitate to go to God in prayer for help in times of trouble. We can know that "all things work together for good to them that love God." This confession of Paul, who faced many of the same troubles as David did, can be and should be ours. Let us call upon our God daily and in all situations of life. Sing Psalter 80:7-12.

January 14 Read Psalm 31:19-24.

Here is a portion of Scripture that makes you want to read it over and over. In fact its words are so comforting that really we do not need to add ours to it. In verse 19 David proclaims God's goodness. How often are we not exposed to that goodness in our lives? How often are we not guilty of the error of verse 22? We speak in haste about many things, but speaking in haste about God's supposed lack of care in our lives is most damaging. He hears us! What a blessing and comfort that is!. Finally let us love him, and let us trust in him with our whole beings. He does care for us, and he will be with us at all times. Go back and read this section again, and then pray for God's care in your life. Sing Psalter 81.

January 15 Read Psalm 32:1-5

Sometimes when we read this Psalm we forget about how it begins. We are so busy commiserating and empathizing with David in his sin, that we forget that the first word is blessed. This Psalm speaks of confession and forgiveness that only belongs to the child of God. We find in this Psalm the three parts of the Heidelberg Catechism: guilt, grace, and gratitude. When we continue in our sins, we never get to the last two parts. If we have no knowledge of our sin and Savior, we will never find comfort. But the child of God is blessed in the way of confession. He is blessed because he does obtain forgiveness. Blessed means happy. The only way to true happiness is confession. Let us confess our sins to each other and especially to our God. Sing Psalter 83.

January 16 Read Psalm 32:6-11

After confessing his sin and being forgiven by our gracious heavenly Father, David reiterates his trust in Jehovah. He knows that even though he has sinned grievously, God will not cast him off. God will care for him in all troubles. David knows that he must pass these truths on to those around him. We, too, must never hide the trust that we find in God. We must instruct others. Our instruction must contain the mercy of God and the command to rejoice in Jehovah. David starts with prayer and ends with singing. Do we make these two parts of thankfulness ours? Sing Psalter 84.

January 17 Read Psalm 33:1-11

As you walk around this earth, do you look at it to see reasons why you should praise Jehovah? As verses 4-11 point out there are many of those reasons. Here is another of those portions of Scripture that those who are anti-creation need to remove from their Bibles. The Psalmist extols the greatness and the power of God in making all things. As we see the creation, whether it be the world of animals, plants, or nonliving creatures, we should be incited to praise Jehovah. What else can you do when you see a beautiful starry night, a majestic whitetail deer, a brilliant hibiscus, or the strength of the mountains? In all of those things

we can see some of God's attributes for which he must be praised by us. Look around you and praise Jehovah. Sing Psalter 85.

January 18 Read Psalm 33:12-22

God sees us. What a wonderful and blessed truth this is! He sees us in all of our needs and cares, and he cares for all of our needs. The child of God can go through life with this as his confidence. God not only sees us, but he sees all man. He sees what man does to his children, and by his mercy cares for us. Sometimes we have to wait for our help and shield. This waiting is in God's time, not ours. God's longsuffering makes all things work out in his time for our good . Let us wait and let us rejoice because his mercy will give to us hope in all situations of life. Sing Psalter 86.

January 19 Read Psalm 34:1-10

As David penned this Psalm, he was away from his beloved Israel. He had been chased out by Saul. He had attempted to make his own way in Philistia, and when that had failed he realized that his only help was in Jehovah. God answered his cry for help as we read in the first few verses. He then realized that God cares for his people in whatever situation they might find themselves. We need to learn from this Psalm two lessons. First of all, we need to pray often unto our heavenly Father. We can pray in confidence that he will hear our prayers and care for us. Secondly, we must know that God cares for his people at all times. It may not seem like it at times, but even as he cares for the sparrow, he cares for all of the saints. Let us pray knowing that God will give to us all that is necessary for both body and soul. Sing Psalter 88.

January 20 Read Psalm 34:11-22

David not only wants Israel to hear his instruction about the way of the Lord; he wants all of Israel, including its covenant seed, to hear about that blessed way. Our children need to learn at a very young age about the goodness of Jehovah. And then they need to continue learning about that goodness each year until they reach the years of discretion. They need to hear about God in all his ways. In this way they will be able to take up their place in the church militant. In this way they will have knowledge about he who will deliver them out of all and any kind of trouble. Many of life's experiences are outlined in this Psalm. Young people, take the time to read it over again. Parents and grandparents, show these words unto them often. Sing Psalter 89.

January 21 Read Psalm 35:1-10

Some commentators say that this Psalm and the previous one form a pair and are written about the same subject. That subject would be David's persecution at the hands of King Saul. It seems from the text that this might be true. It is a beautiful confession of faith of the child of God that we would do well to take upon our lips. Look at verses 2, 3, and 9 once more. Would we be able to take them upon our lips in times of trouble? Do we even think about God in those times except to blame him for our situation? Yet, David calls upon his soul to be joyful and to sing in the way of salvation that Jehovah has wrought for him. Let us read and mediate these words in order that we may know what should be our thoughts in time of troubles. Sing Psalter 92: 1-3.

January 22 Read Psalm 35:11-16

Pride or humility: each of us exhibits one of those two characteristics. Sometimes we fall deeply into the sin of pride. We are called to exhibit humility like our elder Brother Christ Jesus as he left his throne in heaven and came to earth to die for our sins. David, in the face of his enemies, as a type of Christ, exhibited this grace. He treated his enemies as his friend or brother. Do we do this? We need to pray for the grace to be humble in all situations in life. May God grant to us this grace each day of our lives. Sing Psalter 92:4-6.

January 23 Read Psalm 35:17-28

There are two themes in this section of Scripture. First of all, David petitions God for relief from those who strive against him. David realizes that his struggles against the wicked will prove fruitless unless God is on his side. Therefore he asks for help. He does this on the basis of the righteousness that God has wrought within David. Secondly, David promises to speak and sing of this righteousness and praise God daily and even hourly. It is God who deserves this praise and not David himself. May we, too, go to God in prayer daily for deliverance from evil doers. May we vow to praise Jehovah in the congregation of his people. Sing Psalter 92:7-8.

January 24 Read Psalm 36

There are two doctrinal truths that can be illustrated in this text. First of all, there is the doctrine of election and reprobation. David clearly shows that there are two classes of people in this world. In the first four verses and the last one and a half we clearly see the wicked and their ways. In between those verses, David shows God's love for his people. Secondly, we find many of those qualities that show to us who God is. These qualities are his attributes. Some are communicable such as mercy, faithfulness, lovingkindness, and others. Others are incommunicable like his omnipresence found in verse 5. These qualities give to us great comfort. And as we walk in their light, we will see light upon our paths. May we know him, for to know him is to have eternal life. Sing Psalter 93.

January 25 Read Psalm 37:1-7

Can you find the seven commands in this passage of Scripture? They are seven ways to find true peace in this world of disorder and sin. We tend to look around us and become nervous and dismayed at what we see and hear. The antidote for this malady is found in these verses and summed up in verse 7. "Rest in the Lord." When we realize that there is no comfort or solutions to be found in the world around us, we must rest in Jehovah. When we realize that we are not going to make it doing it our way, we need to commit our way unto our covenant God who gives to us delight and affords us the trust that we need. Finally, let us not worry about the wicked, but rather let us wait patiently for our God to care for us. Sing Psalter 95.

January 26 Read Psalm 37:8-17

Two more commands are present in the first verse of this section of Psalm 37. How many of us are prone to anger at almost any happening in our lives? We are quick to be angry at what we perceive to be injustice to us or to someone we love. We are told in the catechism that anger is sin against the sixth

commandment. We need to know that God is in control of all things, and that he will vindicate any evil done to us. Secondly, we must realize that in this life God will also take care of our physical needs. It is hard for most of us to think of being poor. But the righteous poor are cared for by our heavenly Father who watches even the birds of the field. Let us go forward in life in love toward God and our neighbor. Sing Psalter 96.

January 27 Read Psalm 37:18-24

As we enter winter in the Northern Hemisphere, we can see the truth of verse 24. Sometimes we slip and fall on the ice. That fall sometimes may cause a broken bone. Yet we can pick ourselves up or be picked up and know that God has sustained us. God cares for his people, and even though the wicked seem to be prospering, we can have the assurance that our covenant God sees our needs and cares for them. We can show mercy to others only because he is merciful towards us. Let us be thankful that God cares for us at all times, and let us give thanksgiving in prayer for that care. Sing Psalter 97.

January 28 Read Psalm 37:25-33

In this section of reasons why we must be thankful at all times, we find verse 27. Here we have another of those commands. We are to depart from evil and do good. Evil is all around us; we might wonder how we can get away from it, but yet David tells us to leave it. This is a guide that should guide us in all areas of our lives. Secondly, he tells us to do good. We have many opportunities to do good. We will find more of them when we depart from evil. The section closes with beautiful words of comfort. God will never leave his children. He will care for them in all situations. Let us be thankful now and every day until Christ returns for such gracious care. Sing Psalter 98.

January 29 Psalm 37:34-40

As we finish this Psalm there are two ideas to which we should pay attention. First of all is another command. In verse 37 we have the word "wait." This is used in several places in Scripture. Waiting is a virtue that may of us have in short supply. We do not want to wait. We are of the now generation. But yet the Holy Spirit through the Psalmist commands us to wait on the Lord. We need to learn that his times are best. Secondly, we need to keep in the forefront of our thoughts that salvation is of the Lord alone. We like the idea of "pulling ourselves up by our own boot straps." But we need to remember one of main themes of the Reformation namely that salvation is from God alone. This virtue is related to waiting. As we go through this life let us wait on Jehovah who gives to us the salvation we desperately need. Sing Psalter 99.

January 30 Read Psalm 38:1-11

David, like all of God's people, fell into sin. David, again like all of God's people, delayed in going to the heavenly Father to confess that sin and receive the forgiveness, which only comes from Jehovah, for that sin. God will bring us to him when we sin. Sometimes the chastisement necessary is severe like that described in the first part of this Psalm. When we get the type of spiritual leprosy described here, we need to fall on our knees in prayer. Only in that way will we receive the sweet balm of healing that is the forgiveness of sin. Sing Psalter 102.

January 31 Read Psalm 38:12-22

In the final part of this Psalm, David continues his lament about the troubles that the wicked bring upon him. David was in sore distress, and humanly speaking, one might think that he was ready to give up all hope. But David knew that he must hope in God. He knew that God would hear him and prevent the enemies from coming upon him. This was not easy, but by grace he could prevail and cry out, "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation." This should be our cry. Is it? Sing Psalter 103.

February 1 Read Psalm 39:1-6

Sins of the tongue have plagued God's people throughout the ages. David knew what to do. We need to bridle our tongues. Is this possible? Not in our own strength as James told us in his epistle. Sometimes we fail to speak that which is good. This must be avoided as well. But we must not speak rashly. David realized that only God could help him in this kind of distress, and only God could show him the way that his life must go. Let us daily pray for help in the use of our tongue. Let us use it to praise God and not to sin. Sing Psalter 105.

February 2 Read Psalm 39:7-13

David realizes and we must too that the only way of help is from God. We must pray as David did. God is sovereign and controls all things. We must see this as we live in this world of vanity. If we try to find salvation in this world, we will find nothing. We must realize this and live as the strangers and pilgrims that we are. This world is not our home. Our home is spiritual and not earthly. Let us seek that home, and let us do that with prayer and supplication to our sovereign God. Sing Psalter 106.

February 3 Read Psalm 40:1-10

In this Psalm we seem to see the answer to David's prayers of the last two Psalms. First of all David confesses that he has waited patiently. This we must do to find true peace on this earth. Secondly, we must sing that new song that is given to the saved ones. Then we see that the way of salvation is only in Christ as he is foreshadowed in verses 6-10. Those words are repeated in the New Testament about Christ. We must follow them and use them as our example throughout our entire life. Sing Psalter 111.

February 4 Read Psalm 40:11-17

We sin daily. We need to pray the prayer of verse 11 daily as well. It is only through the tender mercies and lovingkindness, which are "new every morning," that we will find true peace on our pilgrimage on this earth. Only the child of God can pray, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me." Only by grace do we dare take these words on our lips. Only the elect can pray that God will take vengeance upon the wicked. They can do this because those wicked are God's enemies. God will come quickly to save his people; of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 112.

The Eleventh Century of His-Story:
The Church Experiences Prosperous Times

by John Huizenga

Last month we saw how God took home Enoch, one of the mighty warriors of the church militant as she defended the faith and cut down with the preaching of God's word the pride of the ungodly. God took him in such a way that he inspired great hope in the church, but fear and consternation among the ungodly. That event marked a high point in the history of God's people. It was a spiritual victory of the seed of the woman, and as such it reveals a facet of Christ's victory.

It was in the afterglow of this victory that God gave a son to Lamech, a grandson of Enoch. "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed" (Gen. 5:29). This name, Noah, means "rest," and God reveals that this name was given in connection with a measure of ease in the area of manual labor. It would seem that the church had a bit of a "break" now from the unrelenting pressure of the ungodly as they staggered under the blow God gave them through Enoch. Perhaps the people of the church could finally devote some attention to some of the luxuries of life—like those in the city of Enoch had been enjoying for some time already. It was a time when belonging to the church meant a measure of respect and even prestige.

History has demonstrated over and over that such a time in the church is but a peak that is followed by a steep slope. The minute God's people relax their grip upon the sword of God's word and lay down their shield of faith, the Devil latches on from some direction that is largely unseen or felt by the church. Slowly at first perhaps, but then with ever increasing acceleration, the church finds itself facing spiritual destruction as the sinful world develops in sin. It is then, just when it is clear to everyone that the situation is hopeless for man, that the mighty grace of God shines forth and we are given another view of God's love in the victory of Christ.

Noah lived to experience the slide from this spiritual peak, all the way down to the horrifying depth of being the only man with three of his sons and wives left in the church! Do you think Noah during the first fifty years of his life imagined that he would be the only one left of the then prosperous church in which he lived? What happened to all his other children? (We are not told about all the children of these Old Testament saints, but of every one we are told that they begat sons and daughters. There is no reason to think that Noah did not have many other children.) What happened to all his relatives, fellow believers, and friends between this time and the years before the Flood? We will discuss the development of apostasy in future articles, but we must note that the seeds of apostasy were there in the church with Noah in his early years.

A sense of pride in human accomplishment, a spiritual lethargy, the toleration of false doctrine, laxity in church discipline, an obsessive pursuit of earthly treasurers and pleasures, a disinterest in heavenly treasures, deafness to the vanity of life apart from God; all these are seeds of apostasy—the gradual dying of a body of people that calls itself a church. These seeds are swelled by the showers of ungodly people who have some interest in this or that aspect of church life, but really are not interested in the sound preaching of God's word. A good work ethic applied to the pursuit of wealth quickly bears fruit and the seeds of greed and pride overtake some in the church. Under such circumstances, those who bring words of admonition are frequently ignored or scorned.

We never know at any moment in time exactly how many people living on earth are children of God. Some may appear to be, but turn out to be hypocrites. Some claim to be, but as our Lord's parable of the sower bringing God's word reveals, only some are good soil hearers. We don't know exact numbers, and we don't know who, but we do know that the church militant is never described as being large. Sometimes the church looks to be large, but when it really comes down to those who are fighting the battle of faith, the number is always small. In the Old Testament, the church appeared large at the time of Solomon, but later God says of her, "And the

daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city" (Isa. 1:8). And in the New Testament, Jesus calls the church a "*little* flock" saying, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Throughout Scripture the church is but a "remnant" (Rom. 11:5). Only when the church is gathered as the victorious body of Christ through all ages is it referred to as large and without number.

These people of God, whether they are surrounded by millions who call themselves Christians or alone in a spiritual wasteland are always found gathered around a faithful shepherd where they hear the voice of Christ. Where the preaching is, there we find the church. If the preaching is not the voice of Christ, you might find millions of people listening, but they are not the sheep.

Many in the church world today would vehemently object to the idea that the church is small, or that the world is developing in sin. They see a future of better understanding between different denominations, reconciliation, and eventually a world composed mainly of Christians and ready for Christ to reign over it. They cite passages like Habbakkuk 2:14: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." I would imagine that most of the people living with Noah in the early part of his life were very optimistic about the church's future as well.

But what is the reality about the true church that God reveals to us? The church is a little flock of sheep, a cottage in a garden of cucumbers, and a remnant. Its members are grafted by faith into a sturdy vine that has grown through the ages. There are times when millions cling with their own strength to the vine because it is the popular thing to do, but they bear no fruit, wither, and are cast into the fire. When we think the church is large and invincible, God reminds us that we are but a weak and helpless flock of sheep. When we like Elijah think we are the only ones left, God reminds us that he always has his 7000, that is, the exact number of his elect alive, growing in faith and serving him in his kingdom. "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1Ki 19:18).

When Jesus' disciples asked him about the future for the church, he did not describe a glorious earthly kingdom with all the billions of people living on earth living like one big flock of sheep eagerly eating the preaching of the word. He told them that the gospel would be preached throughout the whole world, but mostly he spoke about the increase in wickedness in the world and trouble for the church. Eventually the power of the wicked will become so great that the people of God will be spiritually hungry and scattered. Once again, and for the last time, when all appears hopeless, God will make a final display of Christ's victory. In fact, the situation of the church is so similar today to that in the days of Noah, that Jesus makes a direct comparison between the days of Noah and the days in which we live. We read, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:37-39).

We live in a day when anyone who attaches any hope and merit in the strength, wisdom, and works of man is blinded to reality just as they were in the days of Noah. When we cling by faith alone to Christ, we see that this earth is not our home. We willingly and joyfully serve him in this life and obediently follow the path he lays before us here, but our eyes are fixed upon our eternal covenant life with God. Like Noah, we are found in this life "walking with God," not pursuing all the joys and pleasures of this world. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). We willingly and joyfully pay tuition for Christian education and put the money God has given to us in the collection plate. We do all we can to grow in our knowledge of God, for "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Where the church enjoys growth, financial resources, sound preaching, schools, etc. let us not become complacent, but rather reach out to fellow believers scattered throughout the world. Let us preach the word far and near and invest our resources in providing for the preaching of the word. ❖

John is a teacher at Trinity Christian High School, a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church and the Editor of Beacon Lights.

A Reminder: Be Carefree

by Homer C. Hoeksema

The new year is upon us.

What did you think New Year's morning?

While you waited for the bells and whistles that sounded the beginning of a new year, or while you slept away the waning hours of the old year and slept through the dawning hours of the first day of the new year, did something old pass away and something new take its place? Did the imaginary mark separating the last second of the old year and the first second of the new year actually mark a change?

Are you any different?

Are things any different?

Or did the bells toll vanity, and the whistles vex your spirit, and the raucous "Happy New Year" of your drunken neighbor impress upon your soul more deeply the dreadful reality of the vicious circle?

Surely, our fathers have decreed that we shall celebrate the beginning of each new year. Certainly we must go up to the house of the Lord with his people and serve Him on that holiday. Don't be mistaken; I would not deter you. I would not that you lazily loll in bed on New Year's morning, seeking relief from the vanities of a vain Old Year's eve.

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. But we will go up, and we did go up to the house of our God on New Year's morning.

But why?

It is certainly true that there is nothing new under the sun.

This year will produce nothing new, nothing different than the last. The seconds and minutes and hours and days and weeks and months will fleet away, and when another year begins—if you are mindful of these words—you will say, "No, there was nothing new."

One might say defensibly that the first day of January does not mark the beginning of a new year. For each of us personally the years are marked from the date of one's birth. For our Federation of Young People's Societies the year is reckoned from our summer convention. And so on.

But granting, for the moment, that January 1 marked the beginning of a new year: will there be any changes? Really?

Beacon Lights will, we expect, be published at stated times throughout the coming year as it was before. Is there any change from December 1947, to January 1948? Its editors and contributors will as usual sit at their typewriters with mingled feelings of futility, pleasure and fear, pondering that recurring question: what shall I write this month? Its readers will scan its pages with the same old question: Is there anything new in this issue?

You will do your daily task at the same hour each morning for the same number of days this year as last, earning the same wages, for the purpose of satisfying the same appetite, that you may return to the same shop and earn some more money and…all is vanity! Even when that regular cycle of our daily work is broken, even then all is vanity.

There will be the same problems, the same quarrels, the same fear, the same sins, the same miseries, the same pains, the same sorrows, the same deaths. Man cometh in with vanity and he departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Vanity!

Emptiness, futility, vanity, vexation!

Flaunting the old and meeting the new with a drunken welcome will not change this, though men vainly try this every year.

The vigor of youth cannot change it.

The piling up of treasures and the making of great works, the peculiar treasures of kings, men-singers and women-singers, the delights of the sons of men—all these end in vanity.

Plans and resolutions, these cannot square the vicious circle.

Man's number is six hundred, three score, and six. He can get no further. When all is ended, the residue is vanity and vexation of spirit. Man's lot is always labor without rest, toil without success, plan without fulfillment. Vanity!

Despair will not remove the vanity.

I may hate all my labor, I may hate life itself. I may throw up my hands in despair, I may be as fatalistic as I please or as a man can be.

Then I belong to those who seek death but cannot find it.

All is yet vanity and vexation of spirit.

New Year's Day is a reminder.

It reminds you and me of human vanity on the one hand, but on the other we hear in it the Word of God: "Be carefree in everything."

True enough, this day is no different than any other. And the year which it ushers in shall be no different than the year just ended. And if in the first day of the year only you hear this Word of God, then you have not heard it.

New Year's Day as the first day of the year 1948 stands as a reminder to you and me, Protestant Reformed youth, that God calls us to be carefree.

Be careful in nothing!

No, we are not to go on our merry way, taking things in their stride, hoping for a better day, making new plans, striving for more riches arranging new peace conferences, arranging new battle strategies, devising more evils, seeking yet more vanities; we are not to travel our divinely appointed path in the coming year in hilarity, in carousing, in lust and godless pleasure, in despising things holy, in forsaking our God-given vocation, in dodging our obligations.

Yet…

Be carefree!

It means, does this exhortation, that I shall have no anxious care concerning those things over which I have no control, and which are not my responsibility. There are things for which I must care; I must care for my calling in life, whether I am in school, in the office, or in the factory. But over the future, over war and peace, sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, I have no control. Over the ultimate issue of things I hold no power. And I must be careful in nothing!

It means, does this admonition, that I must positively place childlike confidence in God, who controls these things in his all-wise counsel, in his abounding love, in his sovereign omnipotence; in God, who has determined to glorify himself, who eternally sees his church in Christ Jesus. I must place all my confidence in his providence, whereby he works out his counsel in its minutest detail, and carries out all his good-pleasure. Then I have no care. Because that God is my God for Christ Jesus' sake, and employs all his omnipotence and wisdom in love to me, therefore I can be carefree.

And the way to that carefreeness is prayer and supplication. We must make our requests known unto him. No, not in the carnal expectation that he will give us whatever we think is necessary for us if we only ask for it. Nor in the vain imagination that God has to be told of our needs. He knows them all.

But if we come before his face in prayer, we see our needs differently; when we speak to God, those things which we thought were real needs and causes of worry—reasons to complain—disappear. We thought we needed bread, and we had three meals today: we were looking anxiously and sinfully at the future. And our real needs appear when we face God in prayer and supplication. We need Christ and God in him: we need the things of his kingdom, which are not temporal: we need eternal life and glory, and we receive them from him abundantly.

And in the light of this assurance the vanity and vexation of spirit also disappear. For we see that through all things God is our God, almighty, all-wise, all-loving, who works all things with a view to our eternal welfare in Christ Jesus. Our foolish cares, our sinful anxieties fade away. We could not manage the affairs of the world so that they all worked together for our good.

And our prayer and supplication ends in thanksgiving. ❖

Reprinted from January, 1948 Beacon Lights.

60 Years Ago: *Beacon Lights* Looks Back

"The Publication Committee of the P.R.Y.P.F. takes great pleasure in introducing the first issue of our new periodical into your midst." (With these words written ten years ago, the *Beacon Lights* began its work among the Protestant Reformed young people. And *Beacon Lights* was organized to serve definite purpose, which was aptly expressed in the first editorial:

> *Beacon Lights* purposes to guide you on your course toward your goal. As an airplane pilot wings his way unhesitantly on his course by the sweeping rays of his beacon lights, so this paper designs to guide you on your way through this world of sin and darkness, that you may hold your course and unswervingly strive for your goal. Or, to use a more common, time tried figure, as a ship at sea is in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck on some hidden shoal or treacherous rock unless the beacon lights guide it through the raging storm and murky blackness of the night, so Protestant Reformed youth must be warned of lurking heresies and threatening temptations which so easily beset them.

The Federation at first attempted to find an outlet for itself in the church News, an independent paper published at that time; but soon realized that a separate magazine belonging to the young people was needed. Consequently, the South Holland Young People's Society was assigned to make all the necessary arrangements so that by January of 1941, the first editor, Rev. C. Hanko, could say,

> Not 18 months ago the Federation was organized in South Holland, Illinois. Not five months ago the second annual Convention was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today you have your own paper. And what this means toward filling the long felt need in our young people's societies can only be surmised.

The first five numbers were regarded as trial issues,

> …It is true, these first appearances were not without disappointments…. But the hearty reception soon banished every thought…. There were expressions of approval, of surprise, and no less of criticism. Yes, even the criticisms could warm anyone's heart. They show that our young people are not adopting this magazine as a foster child which is forced upon them, but are receiving it as their very own, a product of their own efforts, and are not afraid to handle it, to eye it critically and to say exactly what they think of it.

In form, these issues resembled the *Standard Bearer* with sixteen 11½ by 8½ pages. The editorials took the place that feature articles now occupy, and Bible Outlines and Book Reviews formed the main contents. All of the contents at this time were supplied by various ministers.

Volume two began with the sixth issue in October, 1941 and several changes were introduced. The most striking innovation was in the form of the magazine. The measurements were reduced to 8½ by 6½, and the number of pages increased to 32. At this time Current Comments and Nature Study first appeared, and a column of soldier's correspondence reflected the beginning of the Second World War. Also introduced was the Open Forum, about which the editor said, "This department will give every reader an opportunity to express himself on any subject or question of the day." The voice of the young people became more evident with several articles written by various society members.

Meanwhile, *Beacon Lights* continued to grow. By the first anniversary "*Beacon Lights* has crossed the boundary of ten states in the Union. … It now has 502 subscribers." The Publication Committee had set a goal of 1000 subscribers. At present, although the goal has remained the same, the '42 figure has been doubled.

The practice of beginning each issue with a feature article on some timely topic was first introduced in April of 1943 and has continued to the present day. Also the regular Christian Living department first appeared in 1943 with Rev. De Wolf writing it.

As the *Beacon Lights* developed, there was a marked tendency toward increased participation by laymen and young people in the work of publishing. As. Rev. Hanko said at the end of his four consecutive years as Editor,

> …The next issue, opening a new season, will also bring certain new changes in our paper, particularly in the editorial staff. From the very outset the Board intended to introduce less ministers and more laymen as writers of the various departments.

This policy has been continued. Under the succeeding editors, Mr. George Ten Elshof, Rev. Walter Hofman, and Mr. Homer Kuiper, the work of writing and publishing *Beacon Lights* was increasingly assumed by the Young People until today the entire publication staff is composed of Laymen and Young People.

As we look back upon the past issues of *Beacon Lights*, we see that much has changed. The appearance has been altered, new columns and departments have been added, new topics have been discussed. But we also see that *Beacon Lights* has never turned from its basic goal set forth in the first editorial, namely, to be a guide and a beacon for the Protestant Reformed young people as well as a ready means for expressing their thoughts—in short their paper. And as we stand at this tenth anniversary, and look to the future, we trust and pray that *Beacon Lights*, with the wholehearted support of the Young People, may continue to realize that goal. ❖

Reprinted from January 1951 Beacon Lights.

Seventy Years of *Beacon Lights* Now Available

A precious heritage of writing for our young people which has been locked up in attics, damp basements, and dusty boxes is now available for anyone with a library nearby or the internet in their home or school. Unlike many publications in which the material quickly becomes outdated, *Beacon Lights* contains a treasure trove of spiritual feasting. It is a record of the spiritual life of our youth through the ages. Our own history as Protestant Reformed churches along with the doctrinal controversies and the impact of world events such as WWII is recorded in living detail.

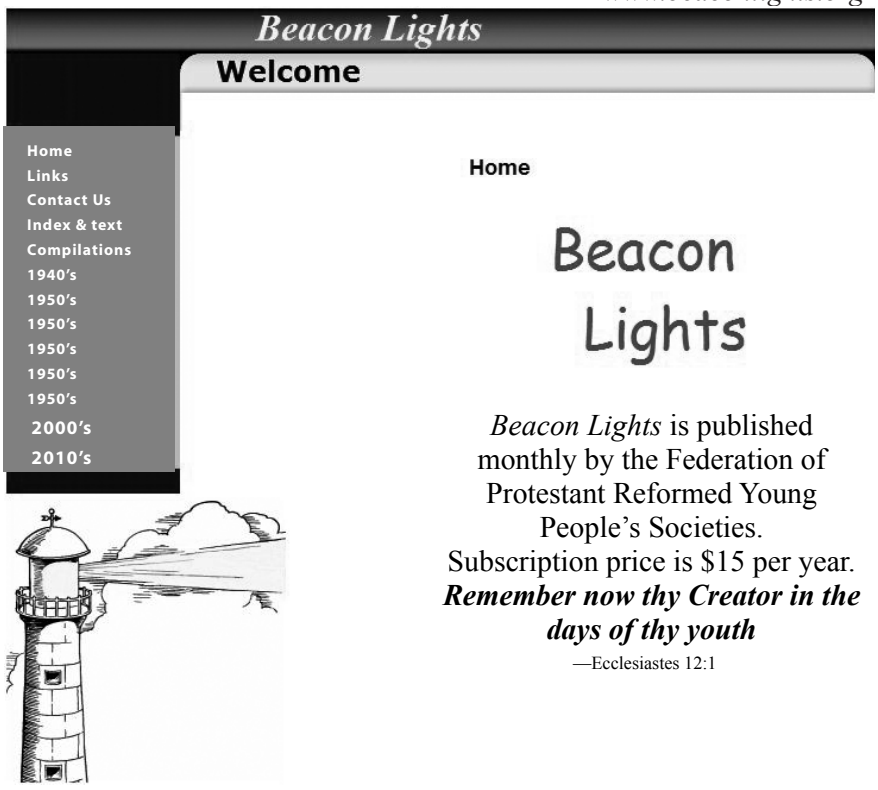
All this is available for your perusal and research online at www.beaconlights.org. You may have noticed that the website of the Protestant Reformed Churches has the text of the last 10 years available, and also includes a link to the *Beacon Lights* home page where you will find the complete archives.

The difficulty with having so much information is that it is difficult to find a particular article or topic that you are looking for. The website includes some resources to help you out with that such as an index and collections of special series of articles. Three of the compilations of articles available are especially useful for high school students studying our Reformed heritage. One is *The Fourth Man: A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding* by P.S. Kuiper and translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko. The other is *From Dort To Today: A History of Our Reformed Heritage* by Rev. H. Hanko. A third is the recent series by Prof. Englesma on his remembrances of Herman Hoeksema. We would like to make others available in this format so that they can be read in sequence, or printed off relatively easily in the form of a booklet. This would make these resources more widely available if they are not in print as a book.

There are many other series of articles and Bible study outlines that may be useful to our readers, societies, and teachers. We would appreciate input from our readers for suggestions on what to make available so that it is easier to use.

The pictures of the past issues which are available can be read, saved on your computer, or printed, but they are not very useful for having your computer search for particular words etc. Most of the older issues are simply not clear enough to get reliable text recognition in the pdf files that are available. But these files have all been analyzed with computer software to make this text readable by the computer. This text has been proofread to find mistakes that the computer software made, and finally edited to get a much better computer file that can be searched with a computer for particular words. These files are available on the website as well, but will not be complete yet by the time this article is in print. All of the issues from a particular decade have been put into one file that you can download and search on your own computer for research. ❖

www.beaconlights.org



The Word of God

The Bible is an awesome book,
Its pages tell a story;
The "new-born babes" may have a look
To see Jehovah's glory.
The simple milk of Father's word
The weak may understand,
And children young, or young-in-faith,
When guided by His hand
Are nourished and find pleasure great
In learning of His love.
They gain the joy of seeking Him
Who dwells in heaven above.

And when they are no longer babes
His word means even more.
They find this book a treasure trove
With grace and peace in store.
The longer that they study it
The richer still it grows;
The Holy Spirit guides their steps
As He new insight shows.
They see their overwhelming sin;
Repent, and are forgiven,
And through their precious Savior's blood
They're welcomed into heaven.

—Thelma Westra

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Lance Gavin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Derrick Buiter—Byron Center, MI

Emma Dawn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dustin Nead—Byron Center, MI

Atley May, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Brummel—Calvary, IA

Garreck Logan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bartosz Grochowski—Crete, IL

Joshua James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Baldwin—First, MI

Logan Gary, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Bylsma—Grandville, MI

Christian Duke, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Mingerink—Grandville, MI

Landon Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Andringa—Hull, IA

Clayton Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Moss—Hull, IA

Jerod Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Stains—Loveland, CO

Jessie Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Seth Griess—Loveland, CO

Tanner Blake, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Kooienga—Lynden, WA

Myra, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Mahtani—Providence, MI

Hunter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Mowery—Providence, MI

Ava Corinne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Trevor Kalsbeek—Southwest, MI

Grace Elaina, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Barnhill—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

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

Tyler Buys—Calvary, IA

Nathan VanMaanen—Calvary, IA

Brett Westra—Calvary, IA

Lisa Westra—Calvary, IA

Will Warntjes—Calvary, IA

Carl Bruinsma, Danielle Kamps, Jesse Lanting, Ethan Lanting, Michael Lenting & Christina Zandstra—Crete, IL

Bethany Mulder—Edmonton, CAN

Cody Cammenga—Faith, MI

Evelyn Davis, Kevin Huizinga, Sarah Joostens, Loren VanderKolk, Andrew Veldman & Monica Vink—Grandville, MI

Kelsey Terpstra—Hope, MI

Jonathan Vermeer—Peace, IL

Jordan Kooienga—Providence, MI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Peter van Iperen and Miss Cindy Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN

Rev. Daniel Holstege and Miss Leah Regnerus—Randolph, WI

Mr. Jeff Griffioen and Miss Kristin Warner—Crete, IL

Gottschalk: Lone Voice in the Night (4)

Gottschalk lifted his head and straightened his back. He looked out the window of the scriptorium and smiled. Sunlight was coming in. It was time for prayers and it would be a pleasant walk to the chapel.

He closed the book he was reading, carefully lifting its ancient pages back into place. "On Man's Perfection in Righteousness by Augustine," read the title page. Gottschalk smiled at this too. Ever since he came to the monastery of Orbais a number of years ago, he had tried to study the works of Augustine as much as possible. Now he was ordained as a priest and had reason to study Augustine even more. He liked to talk to the other monks about the things he was learning.

"We know that God is God and that he is unchangeable, do we not?" Gottschalk would say.

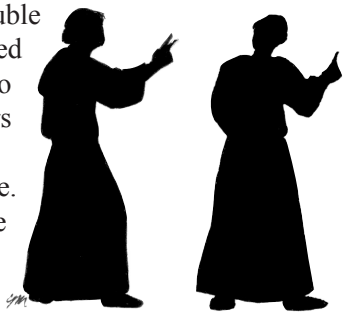
"Yes, of course, Gottschalk, we know that."

"Then we must also believe that there is double predestination. Augustine taught that. He said that God graciously chose some men to be his elect children and God decided that other men would justly go to hell. God did not try to look into the future to see who would be good or bad to do this. If God had, that would mean he could change his mind because of what he might see. But God can't change."

"No, Gottschalk, God only decided election," his fellow priests and monks would argue. "That is single predestination. And God does look ahead in the future to see who will be worthy to go to heaven or hell."

"But that is not Scripture," Gottschalk would insist.

Gottschalk continued to talk about double predestination. He quoted the Bible. He quoted Augustine. He found other church fathers who taught such truths, and he exchanged letters with other scholars about it.



And Gottschalk kept studying Scripture. In fact, the more he read, the more he saw the importance of believing that God decided from eternity both who would be elect and who would be reprobate. The whole gospel hangs on this truth! God decided both—or he decided neither. Man can't choose to be a child of God; only God can choose the elect. And Christ died only for the elect then, too. These truths fit together. Gottschalk saw that, and he proved it from Scripture.

Gottschalk was excited to share these discoveries with others. He started preaching these things in the surrounding countryside. Many people listened and were glad to hear this new teaching. He went from town to town, and traveled to other countries to bring the good news of the gospel there.

Yes, Gottschalk knew the church had not taught these things since the time of Augustine, almost 500 years ago. That was a long time. Instead, the church had been moving away from what Augustine and the Scriptures taught. In Gottschalk's time of the middle of the 9th century, the days were spiritually dark. But Gottschalk was opening up a small ray of light for all to see. He was a lone voice in the night.

The truth was so clear and so beautiful! Surely most people, if not all, would be able to see it and love it like Gottschalk did. That's what Gottschalk thought.

But Gottschalk was wrong. Not everybody did. In fact, some people were becoming quite alarmed by what he taught. To them, this was a "new heresy."

"LITTLE LIGHTS" . . . let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Find the underlined words of the following text in the puzzle below:

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:4, 5).

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

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

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The speakers we've chosen for this year's convention
are pastors Holstege, Brummel and Key.
You'll not want to miss the speeches they'll give.
They will be real edifying, just you wait and see!

We hope to see you at the 2011 PRYP Convention!

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