Beacon Lights

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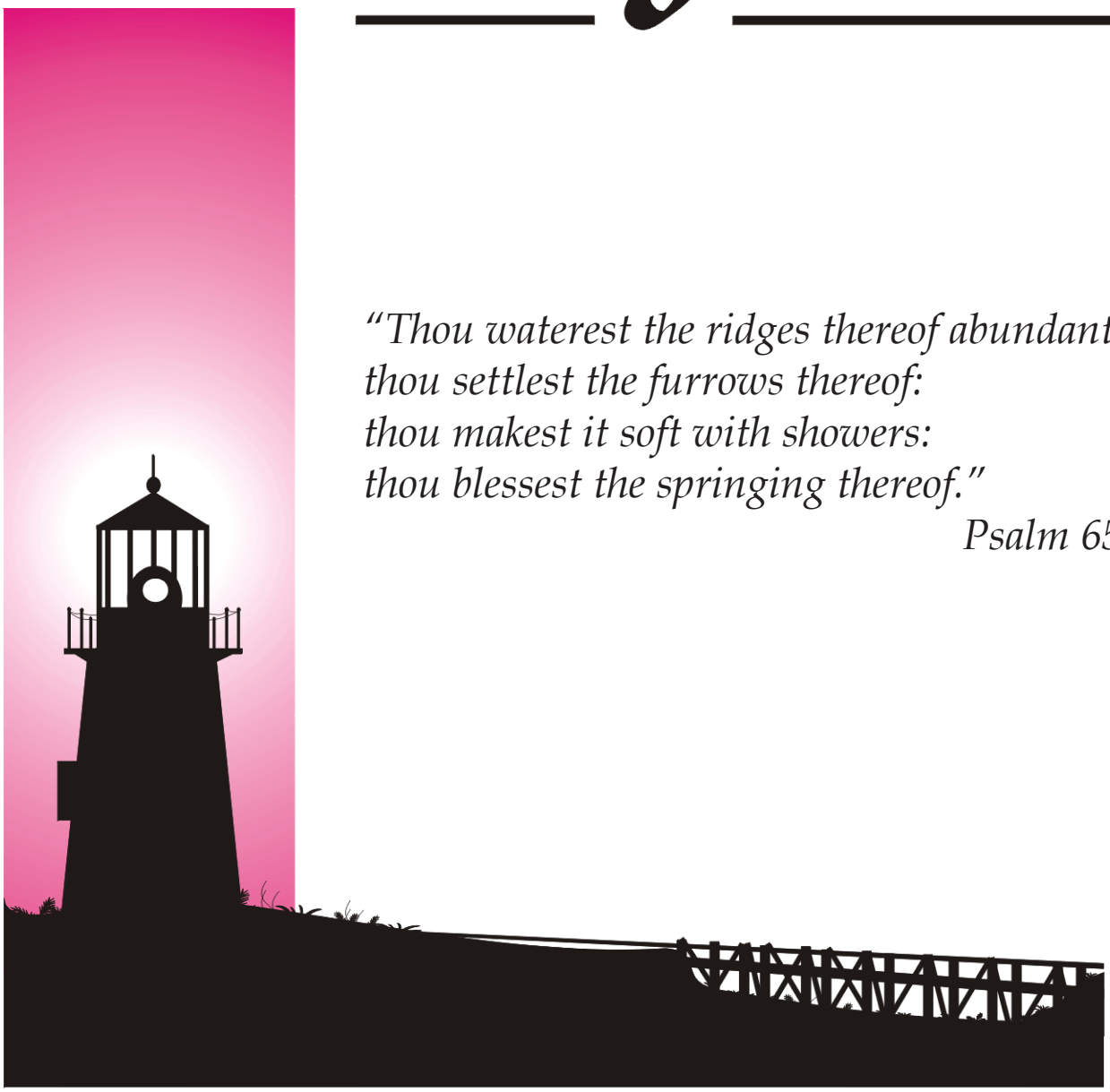

"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly:
thou settlest the furrows thereof:
thou makest it soft with showers:
thou blessest the springing thereof."

Psalm 65:10

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Life Lessons from the Foundry

by John Huizenga

After God had called his people out from the bondage of Egypt and formed them at Sinai into a nation, one of the great tasks to which he called them was to build the tabernacle and all the related decorations and equipment to be used for sacrifice and worship. Having spoiled the Egyptians of jewels, precious metals, wood, and material, the people willingly gave of these materials for use in the building. The task was to fit it all together according to the design laid out by God into a beautiful and serviceable whole. Not only did this structure bring God's people to express covenant fellowship with God, it would serve as a picture of the whole church as a living body, the bride of Christ, each member "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

The raw materials for this tabernacle did not come like pieces of a kit that needed to be fit together. Each piece required work to shape and prepare it for its particular place. As lively stones, we each experience in our lives a vigorous and often difficult and painful process of being prepared for our place. For this work of shaping and crafting the raw materials of the tabernacle, God prepared especially two men: Bezaleel and Aholiab. We read of their calling in Exodus 35:30-35:

> And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

These men had help, but God had given them the gifts necessary to oversee the whole project and direct just how each of the pieces needed to be worked on so that it would fit and serve the whole.

The process of taking a precious metal and forming it into the desired shape was an especially long, extreme, and complicated process. The process of forming a mold out of a mixture of clay and sand, melting and preparing the metal to be poured into the mold, and finally polishing the part for its final fit requires a great deal of planning, preparation, and skill. The technique of melting and casting metal is very old, but sand molds are still used today to make many metal parts, including the engine block of your car.

Part of the process of casting metal involves purifying the metal being used to remove gasses and other impurities that would weaken the final product, leaving it less than pure and perfect. In various passages throughout the Bible, God applies this process to his own word and also our spiritual lives, a few of which are the following: "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psa. 12:6). "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God" (Zec. 13:9). "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

A closer look at the art of using a foundry and molding sand to create a finished metal product reveals further application to our life as Christians. First a model (pattern) with the exact dimensions of the product must be made from some softer material like wood, wax, clay, etc. Next the molding sand is

prepared using a special mixture of sand, clay, and oil. The pattern is placed upon a table and a molding box (only sides, no top or bottom) is placed over the pattern. The sand mixture is poured over the pattern and rammed hard around the pattern until the box is full and leveled off. When this box is turned over, the pattern is on top, embedded in the sand. To this, a layer of fine powder is applied as a separating agent. A second box is fitted on top of the first, and more of the sand mixture is used to pack it full. At this point, a hollow pipe is used to cut holes into the packed sand. Molten metal will flow down one, and hot gas will escape from the other to make room for the molten metal. After these holes, this box is lifted from the first box, and the pattern is carefully removed from the packed sand leaving a perfect imprint. Channels are cut from the pattern to the holes through which the molten metal is poured. When ready, the top half of the mold box is placed again on top of the bottom half.

The whole process is a lot of work, and seems like a huge excess of material all for one little part. The original pattern makes me think of God's eternal plan for who we must be, and the whole process of making the mold is like all the material things, relationships, and skills for earthly life that we accumulate over the course of our life. These things are necessary and important, but in the end it is all destroyed for the sake of removing the final metal product.

The metal scraps must now be thrown into a crucible and subjected to the blazing heat of a furnace. Bezaleel and Aholiab would need to construct some type of enclosure to contain the heat and use charcoal and some type of blower to generate the heat necessary to melt the gold, silver, or brass. Today we can use the same materials, as well as oil, propane, or electric to generate the refiner's fire. The crucible eventually glows with a brilliant light and the solid metal gradually crumbles and melts into a shiny pool of liquid. A flux powder must be added to bring out the gasses and dross which is skimmed from the surface of the pool of shiny liquid. Nothing in the world compares to a glowing molten pool of brass, and God uses this to describe the feet of our exalted Lord upon the throne in Revelation 1:15, "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;" At last it is ready to be poured into the mold. The glowing crucible is lifted, and a silvery stream of liquid flows into the sand mold with a hiss and smoky steam.

Some may see only the great bulk of the mold and praise the accomplishment of accumulating all that he has—his wealth, talents, relationships, gifts, etc. It is the stuff of the eulogy, but eulogies miss the whole point.

At this point, I see a believer near the end of life having lived and experienced all that God would have him experience. Who he really is lies buried deep within the smoking and bulky mold. Some may see only the great bulk of the mold and praise the accomplishment of accumulating all that he has—his wealth, talents, relationships, gifts, etc. It is the stuff of the eulogy, but eulogies miss the whole point. It is not until the blows of a heavy hammer shatter the mold, and the sand breaks away and dissolves again into sand and dust, that we find buried within that beautifully shaped metal formed in perfect accordance to the original pattern. This is what we should strive to see in our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. It is something we only see dimly on this earth, but will see clearly in heaven.

At last the piece is finished. Bezaleel and Aholiab would smile to see a perfectly formed brass ring to receive the poles for the ark of the covenant. Again and again, the patterns and molds were made, and parts were fashioned until all the parts fitting perfectly together brought the whole plan of God together into a complete whole. The process can be long, and the trials like that of a refiner's fire, but it suits us perfectly for the place God has prepared for us. Only then can we fully experience the covenant fellowship with our God. Let us also keep in mind the new man in Christ, and not give so much attention and importance to all the things that only constitute the mold. The things of this life, our relationships, and even our bodies dissolve to reveal what God has created us to be. ❖

"...Soft with Showers..."

by Bridget Postma

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof" (Psalm 65:9, 10).

Rain. Rain. More rain. It was the topic of discussion around many coffee tables. Men were grumbling. They could not get in the fields to plant their crops. Sunday conversations after church revolved around this abundance of rain. Regrettably, it resembled more the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness, rather than humble submission to a Creator that had worked out all things for the good of them that love him.

May 5, 1995, was one of the brightest and most beautiful days of spring. There was hardly a cloud in the sky. Dust was rolling from behind all the heavy equipment rumbling down the gravel roads, hurrying to their fields. Farmers were anxious to get their crops planted before the next downpour. The roads and fields were filled with farmers moving from one field to another in organized chaos, and the air smelled of a new beginning. Winter had passed; the snow had melted and washed everything of its pollution. God had withheld the rain long enough to allow everyone to get back to work.

The morning at school passed very swiftly; for it was Friday and I was in a hurry to get home to deliver seed corn to Dad, planting in the field. I anxiously awaited the 3:12 bell. And then, as an alarm awakes you in the dead of your sleep, it rang! I raced to the bus. The bus soon rolled down the hill. As we bounced and bumped along to the bottom of the hill by school, we were alerted to a siren, a sheriff's siren. We spotted the white blazer streaking west out of town.

The dusty bus ride came to a stop at the end of our driveway around 3:45 that afternoon. My siblings and I jumped off the bus and raced to the house to engulf a snack before going back outside to tackle our daily livestock chores.

We entered the house, full of enthusiasm for the weekend. We discovered an empty house. We shrugged it off by thinking Mom was bringing lunch to the guys working in the field. But as we began looking around, everything seemed to have just stopped in its wrong place. In the garage, Mom had been cleaning and had left the hose attached to the hydrant. Everything from every last corner in the garage lay sprawled out on the lawn. This was odd, for Mom never left a job without finishing it first.

We ate lunch, only to be interrupted by a phone call. It was my Aunt Fran. (What was she calling for?) I could tell she was swallowing back tears. She asked if Mom was around. I replied with no. Not having the foggiest idea of what was taking place, I asked if I could take a message. She then started crying and told me that my father and brother and sister had been in an accident. It struck me like a slap in the face. I was in shock. I did not cry. I could not cry. Not now, maybe later. We hung up.

I frantically told my brother and sister what my Aunt Fran had just told me. Then, I changed my clothes and ran outside to do chores. I jumped on the tractor, my heart pounding. No sooner was I out of the machine shed, than a string of cars filed onto the yard. I recognized many of them as close neighbors, friends, family, but a few strangers were also present. I also saw a mangled corn planter being dragged on the yard. It did not even sink in. (That was our corn planter. How could it be? Why would ours be wrecked, let alone, be pulled by a neighbor?)

There were so many willing hands that night; I cannot begin to name them all. The helpful men refused to let me do my chores and so I told them what had to be done. I ran back to the house and changed my clothes. Grandpa and Grandma came unexpectedly and drove us up to Sioux Falls. That was one of the quietest and most nerve-racking trips to Sioux Falls I have ever made.

We walked into the hospital. As we entered the building, filled with buzzers and beepers and the aroma of cleanliness, we spotted my other grandpa and grandma. They took us to find Mom and Dad. The minister also

came. We were all taken to a small, cramped room. Here, a doctor came and told us that my 2 year-old, brother, Michael was in critical condition. Michael was taken up to Peds ICU (Pediatrics Intensive Care Unit). The doctors came and gave updates on Michael about every hour.

That night was an awful night. There were many tears shed for a boy we had known for only two years. They brought us bad news about 10:00 p.m. Michael's brain was swelling.

I left around 11:00 that night. I never really found out what had happened until I was ready to leave, and I overheard my father's explanation to a family member.

Dad was driving the tractor with the corn planter in tow from a piece of ground about 15 miles away. Lindsey and Michael, my youngest siblings, were riding along with Dad in the tractor. Dad turned a corner and noticed Michael had fallen asleep. Dad decided to lay him down in the back window. As Dad laid him down, the tractor veered off towards the ditch. Dad turned back around and corrected the steering too quickly, causing the tractor to catch the shoulder of the road and turn over on its side. Michael flew through the side window, while Lindsey was thrown clear of the wreck through the front window. As the tractor slammed into the ditch, Dad stabilized himself with the steering wheel.

Dad crawled out immediately, only to hear the fan run into the radiator. He quickly shut off the tractor. Frantically, he looked for his children! He spotted Lindsey standing on the road uninjured. Then, he saw Michael's body lying with his head still underneath the tractor cab. Quickly, he pulled him out from underneath the tractor and began sprinting to the nearest farmhouse, an eighth of a mile away.

A carpenter, remodeling at the nearest farm place, had seen the tractor lying in the ditch before Dad got to the yard. Thankfully, the carpenter had already dialed 911. My father laid my brother on the lawn and the woman who lived there started performing CPR on my brother. They could not get him to breathe! They rolled him over onto his side, allowing them to remove the blood and mucous that had built up in his bronchial tubes. Soon after, the ambulance arrived. Michael was transported to Canton Community Hospital by ground ambulance, and from there he was airlifted by helicopter to Sioux Valley Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Miraculously, my father and sister did not have any major injuries.

Michael spent six long weeks in the hospital. He suffered a broken skull, a broken jaw, broken nose and lost vision in his right eye. Since then, he has undergone numerous surgeries and extensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy.

The day following the accident, my uncle and I went down the road a few miles to look at the accident scene. The grassy ditch squished under our feet as we walked about trying to visualize the events of the day before. The deformed tractor was sitting on the yard of a nearby farm place. There were a few pieces of debris scattered around the accident scene. Not much else. WAIT. There was something else. Something I will never forget. Next to the fence line, was a small imprint in the soft, soggy soil. The imprint was round and few inches deep. It reminded me of a bowl that someone had stomped in the ground. The imprint was splattered with blood.

Our Father in heaven was softening the earth with showers for a purpose.

As I stood there, staring at the blood-sprinkled indentation, our previous complaining came to mind. It was the rain, the rain we had complained about, that God used to keep my little brother alive. If God had not sent the rain, the ground would have been rock hard and Michael's head would have been crushed by the weight of the tractor. Our Father in heaven was softening the earth with showers for a purpose. Granted, this might not have been his only purpose, but it displays the absolute sovereignty of an awesome God! Praise be to HIM! Psalter 373 vs. 3 and 4 puts the contents of this essay to song so succinctly:

I know that the Lord is almighty,
Supreme in dominion is He,
Performing His will and good pleasure
In heav'n and in earth and the sea.

His hand guides the clouds in their courses,
The lightning flames forth at His will,
The wind and the rain He releases
His sov'reign designs to fulfill. ❖

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

Lessons I Have Been Taught by My Special Needs Friends

by Deane Wassink

I have known and loved many saints with special needs whom the Lord has brought into my life to bless me through the years. Some of my friends are with us here. Some have grown up and have a very important place in the life of our congregations. And some have left us to enter into the joy of their heavenly home. In fact, perhaps I have had more opportunity than most people to get to know them. I have been a teacher and I have been a part of our Special Ed School by serving on the Board at different times from the very beginning. In fact, I have the privilege of serving on the Board at this time.

When I was young, and especially when my parents were young, family and school did not know what to do with special needs children. They were often just kept at home to help as they could with chores or they were sent away and put in institutions. How wonderful it is that these children are in school with us. This week, we get to show our appreciation of their place among us and understand the various trials they face by our involvement in the "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" events of this week in school.

I want to turn things around. I want to consider with you, not what I can teach my special needs friends, but what I have learned from them. Who are these friends? They are children in our school or our church family with special needs in learning or with physical limitations. They may need a wheelchair. They may have problems seeing or hearing. They may be adults from our congregation who are out of school, but through birth, sickness or injury have severe limitations on part of their life. They may also be seniors, elderly saints, who in the final years of their life are unable to care for their own needs. Maybe you have a grandparent who is in a nursing home or needs special care.

What are the lessons my friends have taught me?

Joy in our afflictions

When we face trials and struggles in our life we tend to get depressed. We feel sorry for ourselves and think we have it worse than anyone else. I have seen my friends in wheelchairs full of the joy of the Lord. They were good at cheering up others. They were not full of self pity, but, joyful in affliction. I enjoy the writings and radio program of a paralyzed woman named Joni Eareckson Tada who encourages those with special needs by her drawings she does with her mouth, her beautiful singing and her lessons on God's loving care. You would enjoy some of her books.

Trust in the Lord

We get scared and worried when things are not going our way. We worry about the little things: homework, hairstyles, clothes, sports ability. My friends face their trial and go forward. Maybe they deal with what we call handicaps: maybe they are deaf, blind, unable to walk or even move. Everyday they depend on our heavenly Father to care for them. One friend of mine, a blind man named Art from our church in Redlands, California would come to live with us in Michigan for a couple of weeks at a time by traveling alone with his seeing eye dog, named "Niner," by riding on a train or plane. He was fearless and great fun. He would play the harmonica for our family while we would sing. We still tell stories about our dear friend who is able to see perfectly now in his heavenly home.

Patience and bravery

I have seen a loved one paralyzed by a stroke lie there without complaint and praising God. I have seen a loved one dying from cancer full of hope of seeing Christ. I have talked with a special needs friend unflinchingly facing one painful surgery after another. They were not fearful, but placed their care in the loving hands of their heavenly Father, patiently waiting for him to carry them through.

Contentment

We get caught up in ourselves. We are often frustrated when our lives don't go the way we planned. Yet, I have many friends who cannot do the types of things you and I do with sports, study and work. Yet, they are content with their Father's will.

Love of fellow saints

How much time do you spend thinking about your fellow students, family and friends? My special needs friends know the name of everyone in church. Some even send birthday cards to everyone in church. I should take

the time to show that kind of concern and love. I should spend more time helping my fellow saints.

What is the most important lesson I have learned from those with special needs?

I may surprise you when I explain this. You see, often those who are weak (sick, paralyzed, disabled, elderly) and dependent on others for care feel like they are of no value to the church and to God. They feel so useless; like they are a burden to others. There are four lessons I have learned from my friends.

a. When I see the joy, trust, bravery, patience and contentment in my special friends I behold the work of God's grace in them in their afflictions. The apostle Paul says, "for when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Cor. 12:7-10) Then, I glorify God through his care of them. I witness his love for his children in action.

b. My own faith is strengthened because I see in my friends the reality of the promise that my heavenly Father will care for me when I face the trials that will surely come my way. No matter how strong and healthy I may feel now—I know there are trials ahead. I saw that in two of my children when they were in the hospital because of serious car accidents. I know that someday, if the Lord spares me, I will grow weaker and weaker until I die. I am no different than my godly grandparents I visited while they were lying helpless in bed in a nursing home. That time is coming for me—and for you.

c. God has put these friends in my life so that I have the opportunity to serve him through serving others. That is what communion of the saints is all about! Because of them, I have a way to show my love of Christ by helping them. Do you say "Hi" to them in the hallway? Can you encourage them with kind words? Can you be a special friend to them? Can you carry their books for them? Can you push their wheelchair if they need it? Can you hold their hand? I see this in the halls of school. I watch you living out your faith and bless God for you, and I and your teachers are blessed in seeing you.

d. Some day, in my needs I am comforted to know that other saints will show the love of Christ to me. May I, like my friends, thankfully receive that loving care.

Are you showing the love of Christ to the special friends God has given you? May God give us grace to learn from our special friends, and to show the love of Christ to them. ❖

Deane is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan. This article is based a chapel speech at Heritage Christian School.

Letters

Abstruse Melancholy

Having read the most recent articles in the "Abstruse Melancholy" series, I would like to make a few comments.

First, many thanks to the author for the amount of time and effort that clearly went into writing this series, and many thanks for much of the good practical and medical advice contained therein. The brother has done some excellent work in this respect.

Second, I would like to sound a warning about some of the books recommended in the final installment of this series. Though it is of course true that the Reformed believer may, by the sanctified use of discernment, read things which are not fully in conformity with God's Word, I feel this does not relieve us of the responsibility to *warn* others, even other Reformed believers, about the erroneous contents of books. For example, a book by Joyce Meyer was recommended; Meyer is an infamous "word of faith" or "health, wealth and prosperity" false teacher who holds to countless heresies. Another example is the book *The Magic of Thinking Big*, whose product description on Amazon makes it clear that its purpose is to make people happy—*without* God, simply by the power of "positive thinking."

Third, though it is certainly true that with people suffering depression we must be especially willing to "bear all things" and not take personal offense at what they might say, their depression does not absolve them from the need to repent of insulting or verbally hurting people around them. The brother in his final article in this series says that "it's the depression, not the loved one, that is talking"; at the same time, we must remember that it is *always* the "old man of sin" that sins, not the new nature, whether the believer is suffering depression or not, and that it is still *sin*. As the Apostle Paul says,

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:17), and the Apostle does not mean that this absolves him from moral responsibility and the need for repentance and forgiveness.

May the *Beacon Lights* continue to be a ray of light, hope and truth in this dark world.

Yours in Christ, Manuel Kuhs, member of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship, Ireland.

Response

I would, first and foremost, like to thank brother Kuhs for his kind words of thanks and positive comments about my article series. Many thanks to the Christian brother as well as all those who have made positive remarks about this series. It is all greatly appreciated.

I would now like to respond to what brother Kuhs has said about this last installment. He mentioned the book *The Magic of Thinking Big*, and says that the product description on Amazon "makes it clear that its purpose is to make people happy—without God, simply by the power of "positive thinking." Also, that such authors "hate God and write in order to deceive people."

It is really too bad that the brother feels this way and that he bases any opinion on a product description. True, God is not the focal point of this author and book, but I do still strongly feel that God uses authors and books like this to help his people. I, as well as many other Christian men and women, have read this book many times and have found it to be very beneficial and useful to help clear the "cobwebs" and negativity that constantly gets sucked into our heads from the world. We should then read such books through "the lens of Scripture," as Dr. David Murray, Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan would say.

Joyce Meyer was also mentioned and attacked by brother Kuhs. I do not know what brother Kuhs is basing his opinions of Ms. Meyer on, but I would like to thank the brother for his opinion. I do know a fantastic Christian psychologist (as well as many other fellow Christians) who has heard Meyer speak many times and has also read a few of her books. They have all found her teachings to be quite helpful and firmly based on the Word of God. The Word of God which Joyce Meyer teaches will defend itself. Here are a few excerpts from Ms. Meyer, each one from a different book of hers.

> If you are in a place right now where nothing in your life makes any sense, trust God anyway.
>
> Second Corinthians 10:4, 5; …any thought that attempts to exalt itself above the Word of God we are to cast it down and bring into captivity to Jesus Christ.
>
> The Lord has to be our Source and Supply. He is the only one who can bring about changes in our lives.

The brother also mentioned how the depressed person still needs to repent of insulting and verbally hurting people around them. I completely agree and never intended to imply otherwise. Dr. Murray gave a depression conference a few weeks ago in Michigan. At that conference, which was taken directly from his little book (*Christians Get Depressed Too*) which he handed out to all who attended, Dr. Murray mentioned how the body gets physically sick and our spiritual life and our thinking and our feeling processes are also affected. He adds, It is, therefore, no surprise that when our mental and emotional health is poor and when our thinking and feeling processes go awry, there are detrimental physical and spiritual consequences. Does this excuse the depressed person? No, but it does help give us a better understanding to why they act in certain ways, such as verbal assaults. Also, as mentioned before, unless we have gone through depression ourselves, we can't fully grasp what a depressed person is going through and how their thinking and feelings are so different.

It is also true what brother Kuhs said about it being the old man of sin that sins and that it is still sin, however we may look at it. We do need to be ever so careful how we look at sin with depression and also not to blame our depression on our sin. As Dr. Murray also points out in his book, it is both wrong and harmful to blame our depression on our sin, because it increases false guilt and deepens feelings of failure. It also makes depressed Christians seek a spiritual solution to a problem that may actually originate in the body, life events, lifestyle, or unhelpful thought patterns. We should still leave the possibility that a depression may occasionally be the result of specific sin or sins (as prophet David mentions in Psalm 32).

Many thanks again to the brother for his opinions and kind words. May God use all this kind of information to help us better understand what a depressed person is going through and how we can help them. May we also always remember to use the lens of Scripture when reading any non-biblical literature that we may find to be very helpful when dealing with depression. May all things serve his purpose!

In Christ's never-ending love, Dan Bergman ❖

Outliers: The Story of Success

reviewed by Tom Bergman

Outliers: The Story of Success, by Malcolm Gladwell. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008; 285 pages.

Outliers is an odd choice for a *Beacon Lights* book review. Perhaps readers of the *Beacon Lights* would be expecting a religious book of some sort. *Outliers* is not. It is a thoroughly secular book intended for a secular audience. However, this book is a real gem for the discerning Christian reader.

The author of *Outliers* (as well as *Blink* and *The Tipping Point*), Malcolm Gladwell, would have us consider "outliers"—people who are so smart, people who are so rich, people who are so highly skilled—that is, people who are so very far above normal that they are "off the charts." How did they get to be that way?

Which Canadian hockey players become the stars? How did Bill Gates get to be one of the world's richest men? Why do Asian students perform so much better than American students at international mathematics competitions?

Mr. Gladwell challenges the common notion that these are all self-made people who worked hard to make themselves into what they are. The whole idea of the self-made success story living the American dream is a naïve misconception. For a person to tell himself, "I deserve it, so I'll dream it and by strength of will and positive attitude, I can achieve my own success" is foolish. Although it is true that hard work is quite necessary and often rewarded, Gladwell insists that there is much more to the story of outliers.

The author proposes that Canadian hockey players born in January or February have a significantly better shot at success than their peers born in November or December. Bill Gates' success story hinges on the fact that the mothers' club at his school purchased a computer terminal in 1968, when Gates was in seventh grade. To find the reason behind excellent math students in Singapore, the cultural background must be considered. Gladwell insists that circumstances and culture matter a great deal more than one might care to admit.

It was incredibly fascinating to read the whole story and get the full explanation behind these success stories. The entire book is full of captivating insights into the complex circumstances of life which can send one toward success and another toward anonymity. (Who has ever heard of Chris Langan, the man whose IQ is almost immeasurable?)

Truth be told, random "circumstances" do not determine who will be successful and who will not. God does. He is the Lord and Maker of us all, according to Solomon's proverbs (Prov. 22:2). Yet, to someone who is familiar with the doctrine of God's providence, Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* is a wonderful testimony to how "nothing happens in this world without His appointment" (Belgic Confession of Faith, Art. 13). Gladwell shows no signs of being a Christian, but a major premise of his book is this: something is responsible for the phenomenal success of some people, and it isn't the people themselves! The author makes no mention of God and his providence, but we know what is true. God is God. For a child of God, reading *Outliers* can be a refreshing, worthwhile taste of God's sovereignty in the lives of all men.

Not everything in this book was equally appreciated. The author points out that the Beatles didn't get to be world-class by accident, either. In his discussion of the Beatles' rise to fame, he also briefly exposes the sleazy side of their lifestyle—something better left unsaid. Another point of disagreement would be what Gladwell means by "success." To him, success is judged by the world's standards: fame and riches. However, if the young people of the church strive to be godly citizens in the kingdom of heaven and healthy members of the instituted church of Jesus Christ, then that would be true success, even if they earn a bit less than Bill Gates or fail to make it to the big leagues.

Outliers is a fascinating book, but Gladwell drops the ball. Think about it—he actually managed to write a book about God's providence without mentioning God or providence. It is a serious flaw. Still, I heartily recommend the book. Read it with God's providence close to mind and God's name dear to heart. ❖

Tom is a member of Providence Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

May 7 Read Psalm 92:1-6

Are we happy to sing praises to our most glorious God in the church service? Or do we merely pay lip service to that part of worship? This is a question that we must face for ourselves and our families. Singing is a part of the worship service in which the congregation takes an active part. It is the part in which we give thanks unto our God for all that he has done for us. How do we sing- with our whole being or barely at all? Are we fools or brutish men? If we are, we have nothing to sing about because we would not know God's works and thoughts. Let us sing, and let us sing with joy! Sing Psalter 250.

May 8 Read Psalm 92:7-15

Yesterday, the last verse was the transition into the end of this Psalm. Here we see the contrast of God's people and his enemies. Where we are on Sunday describes who we are. Are we trees in the house of God, or are we bringing forth some other fruit in some other place? We have a glorious heritage in our Rock. Let us proclaim it in his house Sunday after Sunday. Sing Psalter 251.

May 9 Read Psalm 93

In this Psalm we see several of God's attributes. These attributes not only help us to know him, but they also give to us a reason for trust when the storms of this life beat upon us. Those storms are not mere "tempests in a teapot"; they can be raging storms which control our lives for a long time. They are the blasts of Satan trying to dislodge us from our anchor that is mightier than any storm. Because God is everlasting, we can resist with confidence all of Satan's storms against us. Sing Psalter 253.

May 10 Read Psalm 94:1-11

Notice the Psalmist's train of thought in this imprecatory Psalm. First of all, he gives to God the title of one to whom vengeance belongs. He calls upon God to see what is happening to his people on the earth. Then the Psalmist enumerates those things. Next, he portrays the thoughts of the wicked about God. Then he addresses those wicked about who God is. Do we think that God does not see or hear what we do? If we do, we are no better than the wicked described here. God knows our thoughts. That, alone, should be enough to cause us to walk in his way. Sing Psalter 254:1-6.

May 11 Read Psalm 94:12-23

To conclude this Psalm the unknown writer shows that the man chastened by God is blessed. By chastening his people, God brings them in the right way of his law. When we walk in that law, we will know that he will uphold us in all adversity. By knowing that God will not leave his people to wallow in sin, we can be comforted knowing that he is our defense and our refuge. We also do not need to be envious of the way of the wicked, for that way will lead to everlasting destruction. We know that we have an advocate to defend us, and knowing this let us truly be happy. Sing Psalter 254:7-12.

May 12 Read Psalm 95

Look at verses 1, 2, and 6 once more. Here we are called to worship our God. We are called to worship by way of our singing. Think of the various types of music to which we listen. Some of it is enjoyable but does not call us to worship. Others may be enjoyable but is profane and not fit for the child of God. Then there is the music that is conducive for worship. We sing in this way because our God is great. This is why we sing and sing the proper music. We are also called to worship because God is our God. If we do not worship, we will fall into the sins of Israel of old. Let us worship to prepare for the eternal day of worship in heaven. Sing Psalter 256.

May 13 Read Psalm 96

Here we have another Psalm calling us to worship our covenant God. Notice the number of times that the word LORD is used. That use can be read and understood as Jehovah, the I am that I am. Once again in worship we are called to sing. But we are also called to spread the good news of salvation among all kinds of people. Do we daily worship in this way? What is the ultimate goal of our worship? We worship because Jehovah comes in judgment. Will we be ready to bow the knee before Christ at that time? Sing Psalter 258.

May 14 Read Psalm 97

Our God is a majestic God, of that there is no doubt. Look at the various ways he is described in this Psalm.

This is the God that we must worship. This Psalm is a companion to the ones that come before it. The last verse gives to us the call to worship. We are to rejoice for all the good that God has done for us and especially for giving to us his Son that we may appear righteous before him. We must pray in order to give thanks for his holiness into which we must desire to enter. It is in that holiness that we can worship Jehovah who is high above the earth. Sing Psalter 260.

May 15 Read Psalm 98

As we continue with this section of the Psalms that call us to praise Jehovah, let us look at his goodness toward his people. In the old dispensation his people were those of the nation of Israel. We need to know the history of that nation in order that we can know God's goodness to them but also to us. Today his people are those taken from every nation and tongue. Which of us cannot but cry out, "O God how good Thou Art!" He has shown his goodness to us in many ways. Of course, the highest form of that goodness is our salvation. Let us look at the world around us and see Jehovah's goodness and praise him from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalter 261.

May 16 Read Psalm 99

Notice the repeated word holy throughout this Psalm. Not only does the Psalm use the word holy, but it also demonstrates the holiness of our covenant God. This is an attribute of God to which we must always pay attention. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness. We must be holy because he is holy. The hymn "Take Time to Be Holy" really has it incorrect. We must be holy always before our thrice-holy God. We must strive to be holy in all that we do knowing that the whole earth is his temple. We must never put anyone else or anything else before God because he alone is perfectly holy. Sing Psalter 265.

May 17 Read Psalm 100

This well-known Psalm admonishes us to praise Jehovah through the use of singing. Five times in this short Psalm we are told to praise God through this means. While our catechism tells us that prayer is the chief means of thankfulness, singing is a means as well. In fact many of the Psalms that we sing are prayers. We sing because we thank the God that has made us and has given to us salvation. He is good, and his mercy will be upon us forever. Let us not ignore this way of worshiping God, and let us sing with our whole being. Sing Psalter 270.

May 18 Read Psalm 101

After David states that he will sing of God's attributes of mercy and judgment, he states that he will behave himself wisely. Parents use that term behave often to their children. But adults must behave as well. After stating that he will behave, David enumerates the ways in which he will behave properly before Jehovah. Read through verses 2-8 once more. Are these what we do? Do we walk this way in the church and in the world in which God has placed us? Let us behave ourselves wisely and in that way glorify our God. Sing Psalter 271.

May 19 Read Psalm 102:1-11

There are times that the child of God believes that he is without hope. Such was the feeling of the Psalmist as he penned this Psalm. The writer turns to the only help that he has or that we have when we are overwhelmed by such concerns. We must go unto God because he is our help and our shield. We need to go to our knees in prayer for deliverance from any feelings of distress in our lives. When we pray like this, we can have the confidence that Jehovah will hear us and will care for us. Sing Psalter 272.

May 20 Read Psalm 102:12-22

Even when we are seemingly without hope, we can turn to our covenant sovereign God. Many times in the Psalms we see this phenomenon. A child of God is suffering all sorts of calamities, but he is brought to realization that the sovereign God loves him. God's sovereignty will sustain us through all and any difficulties. This must be our hope, and this must be that which holds us even as a mother holds her baby away from all danger. Because God is in control, we know "that all things work together for good." Let this be our confidence every day. Sing Psalter 273.

May 21 Read Psalm 102:23-28

There are times in our lives when we must confess that God has weakened our strength. God does this so that we turn our attention to him and away from our activities and ourselves. We need this so that his name might be glorified in our lives. When this is done, then we, like the Psalmist, can confess that Jehovah is the sovereign God of the covenant. He forces us to our knees to say Jehovah is God alone. We must learn to trust only in our sovereign God. When we do, we will find meaning in this life and hope in the life to come. Sing Psalter 276.

May 22 Read Psalm 103:1-7

The word bless means to speak well of someone. We might be inclined to say that God does not need our blessing; we need his blessing. When we speak well of a king such as Jacob did when he went to Egypt, we show proper honor to that authority. When we bless Jehovah,

we show proper honor to the supreme authority, the Lord of heaven and earth. The Psalmist goes on to show why Jehovah should be blessed. He starts out with the forgiveness of sin. We can only bless him when we can approach him as those washed in the blood of the Lamb. We also approach him as the one who sustains our lives with all things. We need to bless him daily as he cares for the church of all ages. Sing Psalter 278.

May 23 Read Psalm 103:8-14

What a comfort verse 14 is! Our covenant God knows us! He knows all about us; he knows that we are from the dust and to the dust we will return. He knows this because he has created us. He also knows that we are sinners who deserve destruction at his throne of judgement. But not only is he a just God, he is a merciful God who has removed those sins from us as far away as possible. He has done that; we have done nothing to deserve such mercy. This mercy is like that of a father who comforts his children with a big embrace. He does that because we are his children. Let us be thankful for a merciful father who knows all about us. Sing Psalter 278.

May 24 Read Psalm 103:15-22

After speaking of God's covenant faithfulness and his eternity, the Psalmist contrasts that with man's frailty. Man is on this earth but for a short time, but there is another life. For those to whom God shows his mercy, that time will be spent in heaven. There is a work that man must do while waiting for the reward Christ has obtained for him. Man must keep the covenant and walk in God's commandments as a way of thankfulness for that great mercy. For this gift we must bless our creator and redeemer. Let us constantly bless Jehovah. Sing Psalter 282.

May 25 Read Psalm 104:1-9

Here we see other reasons for which we must bless Jehovah. This portion of Scripture enumerates ways in which our God is great. He is great in his creation of the heavens and the earth. As we walk outside, we cannot but confess the greatness of God. It is hard to understand those which would say that this world was constructed by chance. But then we must see that our understanding only comes by the faith described in Hebrews 11. We also know that in the great flood God exhibited his greatness to Noah but also to us. As we see so-called catastrophes in this world, we must know that our God is great and he will care for his people. Sing Psalter 285.

May 26 Read Psalm 104:10-18

God not only has created this world, but he also continues to give it existence by his acts of providence. We must not be deists who say that God created and then leaves the world to its own devices. We must not be like those who see a catastrophe such as an earthquake, a tornado, or a tsunami and say that God had no part in that. Each movement of each molecule is controlled by his hand. This control is not only for his glory but also the good of his covenant people. Do we confess this, people of God? We need to seek this understanding each time we step outside. Sing Psalter 286.

May 27 Read Psalm 104:19-30

Here we see a continuation of that enumeration of the roll call of God's providential care for his creation. In that creation man must work. Adam was called to work in the garden. After the fall Adam and his posterity were called to work. The work was different since sin has brought God's curse upon this earth. We are called to work by the sweat of our brow no matter what calling God has given to us. We must not rebel and not work. We must not rebel and work lazily. We must work hard as this is our portion in this life. In our work we must live a life of thankfulness. Let us pray for that grace to do our work to God's glory day by day. Sing Psalter 287.

May 28 Read Psalm 104:31-35

In comparison to any glory that we enjoy in this creation or even in our work, is the glory of God. That glory is far greater than any thing we can experience on this earth. His glory is forever. He can just look on the earth, can just touch the earth, and it will be greatly moved. When we confess that it is God's hand that moves this earth, then we will pray and we will break forth into singing for his greatness. We will be glad for the salvation that has saved us from the end of the wicked. Then we will speak well of Jehovah and praise him every day. Sing Psalter 288.

May 29 Read Psalm 105:1-15

This Psalm is another nationalistic Psalm. Now, the idea of nationalism is somewhat different than we use the word in today's world. Israel could be nationalistic because God was their God, and they were his people. Do we carry out the 10 commands found in the first 5 verses? Do we remember the works of our God and daily praise him for them? As we follow Israel's journey through the wilderness, we must remember that it is an illustration of our journey through the wilderness of this world. Let us glory in the God of our salvation as we walk in his Spirit-led ways. Sing Psalter 289:1-7.

May 30 Read Psalm 105:16-25

As we read through the history of Israel from Abraham to Saul, we must be impressed with the path on which

God led them. We must see his sovereignty in all these things. Look at verse 25 once more. We might want to ask the question, "Why would a loving God make someone hate his chosen people?" In asking the question, we have already given the answer. He has done this precisely because he is a loving God. We must, however, go on to the next question. "Why would God sacrifice his own son?" The answer is simply: he loves us. Sing Psalter 289:8-13.

May 31 Read Psalm 105:26-45

As we read through this history once again, we must notice that it is God that decreed and carried out these acts. At the end of the section, we find out the reason for these acts. First of all we see that he remembered his promise to Abraham. God never forgets. It is not possible for him to do so. Secondly, all these events happened so that his people might remember his holy name and keep his laws. Do we? Sing Psalter 289:14-19.

June 1 Read Psalm 106:1-12

Here we have another nationalistic Psalm like the previous one and like Psalm 78. Scholars are unsure of the time period in which it was written, but many think that it was written during a time of some calamity. We do well to pay heed to the words as we seek Jehovah's guidance through our sojourn here on this earth. It is obviously a prayer for forgiveness and help. It starts out with praise for the goodness that God has shown his people and for the salvation that has been afforded to them. Do we think to sing his praises when he delivers us from troubles even as he delivered Israel from Egypt? Sing Psalter 290:1-5.

June 2 Read Psalm 106:13-23

Even after all the great works God had done for Israel in Egypt, they rebelled against the most high. Are we any better? Do we forget the wonderful things that God has done for us, especially the most wonderful work of all, our salvation? We, too, complain about the seemingly sparseness in our lives and wish for more of this world's comforts and pleasures. Have we forgotten that this world is not our home, and we are but strangers and pilgrims here? If we do, we like Israel deserve God's wrath. But we, like them, have a mediator. Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses was a type, stands between us and God. By his blood we are redeemed and will one day enter the Canaan of heaven. Sing Psalter 290: 6-11.

June 3 Read Psalm 106:34-48

After describing Israel's sins in Egypt and in the wilderness, the Psalmist goes on to give an account of their sins in the Promised Land. And then we have verse 44. Notice how it starts. After all the sins committed by Israel, God still remembers them. Why? Not for what that had done, but for the covenant of grace which he had established with them in Abraham. This is a comforting thought and one that should spur us on to walk in the way of that covenant. We need to pray the prayer of the last two verses of this Psalm. And we need to do it daily. Sing Psalter 291.

June 4 Read Psalm 107:1-16

Once more we see an accounting of Israel's historical acts. Once again we see the covenant faithfulness of God in spite of those sinful acts. Notice how the Psalm starts. We are called to give thanks to God because he is good and is a merciful God. How many times have we tasted of that mercy? Do we give thanks? Secondly notice the words of verses 8 and 15. We give thanks by praising him. Here we see the reason for thanks is the works that he has done for us. They are merciful works but they are providential works that lead us on the path to glory. Let us give praise and thanksgiving to our covenant God for all that he has done for us. Sing Psalter 292.

June 5 Read Psalm 107:16-32

We not only see Jehovah's covenant goodness in our lives, but we also see it all around us. When we are in trouble because of our sins, he comes to us and lifts us out of the mire into which we are sinking. Throughout the world of nature we can see that same faithfulness evidenced by his works of providence in that creation. Once again we find the same refrain in verses 21 and 31. In verse 32 we are called to exalt God in the church and with the congregation. Do we think about that as we prepare for the Lord's Day? Do we enter into the house of God determined to lift our voices in thanksgiving to our most gracious God? Sing Psalter 294.

June 6 Read Psalm 107:33-43

When Israel was brought into Canaan, they were given a land ready for them to inhabit. They did no work for it, and they did not have to rely on their own strength to drive the wicked out of it. In fact, they could not rely on their own strength, as it was not sufficient for the task. We, too, are going to be given a land for which we did not work. Our place in heaven is given to us only through the Joshua who is the Son of God. He vanquished our foes by his sacrifice for us on the altar of the cross. We must observe these things, and then we will understand God's lovingkindness toward us. Thanks be to him for such a gift! Sing Psalter 295.

"The Lord Gave the Word": Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Version (1)

by Jon Langerak

The year of our Lord 2011 marks a momentous and monumental occasion for the English-speaking members of the church catholic of Jesus Christ, including the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA); her sister churches in Northern Ireland and in the Philippines; and the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches of Australia (EPCA), with whom she has a corresponding relationship. In 1611, 400 years ago, the first edition of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible rolled off the London printing presses of Robert Barker, "printer to the King's Most excellent Maiestie [Majesty][1]," as the grand title page of the first edition proclaims. The massive edition of 1611—11 inches by 17 inches, over 5 inches thick, and weighing in excess of 30 pounds—contained the fruit of the blood, sweat, and tears poured out in nearly seven years of labor by 50-54 men to produce what remains to this day the most majestic, reverent, accurate, faithful, and God-glorifying English translation of the Bible, and what would be for almost 250 years after its first printing the only and most-beloved English translation of Holy Scripture.

The 400th anniversary of the KJV must be of most heartfelt interest to the members of the PRC. Most, if not all, of our membership is English-speaking, whether as a first or as a second language. The KJV is the Bible officially used in our divine worship services, and in our instruction of our children and youth in the catechism classes. Our Bible study and society groups gather around the KJV. Missionaries sent out by the PRC to destinations both domestic and foreign carry with them and preach from the KJV. It is the version of Scripture required for every student of our Christian day schools, and used in those schools for devotions and chapel exercises, among other things. And it ought to be, cheerfully and gladly, the version which we use in our family devotions in the home and in our own personal study of God's Word.

This series of articles will unfold the fascinating, twisting, sometimes disheartening, and oftentimes surprising history, not only of the King James Version, but of the English Bible in general, beginning with the translations by colleagues of John Wycliffe in 1380-82 and continuing through almost 220 years to the first printing of the KJV in 1611. These articles will not enter into the worthy, but sometimes bewildering, area of textual criticism, except to state the facts of the case as they are known with regard to the *Textus Receptus*, the Greek text of the New Testament used by the King James translators, and to defend the verity of the *Textus Receptus* against the faulty text of Westcott-Hort which is the basis of most, if not all, of modern Bible versions. Nor will these articles give a detailed critique of modern Bible versions,[2] although our above description of the KJV as the "most majestic, reverent, accurate, faithful, and God-glorifying English translation" demands a general defense over against the modern versions.

You may wonder, as the questioning reader and perhaps as a student who has never much enjoyed his history classes, why it is necessary to begin 220 years *before* the KJV and recount the *entire history* of English Bible translation, if this year is a commemoration only of the *King James Version*. The reason is that the history of the translation of the English Bible is an *organic history*, by which is meant that it is living, growing, and progressive. Each successive English Bible translation built upon the one before it—or, more accurately, sprung out of its preceding translation—while at the same time checking the previous translation against the original languages and other vernacular translations to improve upon the previous translation and provide the church with a more

1 *The Holy Bible* (London: Robert Barker, 1611; reprint, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), n.p.

2 For a detailed critique of modern English Bible versions and a spirited defense of the continued use of the KJV by the PRC, as well as a defense of the *Textus Receptus* over against Westcott and Hort's faulty Greek text, I point the reader to the excellent pamphlet *Modern Bible Versions* by Prof. David J. Engelsma (South Holland, IL: Evangelism Committee of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 1999).

faithful rendering of God's Word in their own tongue.

This was exactly the perspective of the King James translators. Listen to Bishop Miles Smith in the "Translators to the Reader," the great preface to the original 1611 edition that is no longer, regrettably, included in editions of the KJV. Smith writes: "Truly (good Christian reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one…but to make a good one better; or, out of many good ones [to make] one principal good one…that hath been our endeavor, that our mark [goal]."[3] Therefore, it is our endeavor in these articles to trace, if sketchily, the whole organic history of that "one principal good" translation, the KJV.

Now, we may not launch at once into the history without sharply defining from what viewpoint we will describe that history. Well, you may say, is that not obvious? But look. The PRC will not be the only ones marking the 400th anniversary of the KJV in 2011. There are and will be many commemorations of the KJV in this year. Especially will these take place in Great Britain—where, not unexpectedly, the KJV has fallen into disrepute—in an attempt to revive it among the people as a mark of British identity and a flower of British history and culture. The "King James Bible Trust" (KJBT) was launched in London on November 23, 2010, amid great applause and aplomb in the presence of the Duke of Edinburgh himself, who is the husband of the Queen of England. The KJBT began its celebrations of 2011 at Hampton Court Palace, where the KJV was commissioned in 1604, and will continue them throughout the year with great energy to the culmination on November 16, 2011 in a grand service in Westminster Abbey. The target of these festivities and energetic activities was pointed out by KJBT chairman Frank Field in his remarks at the KJBT launch evening in 2010. Said Field: "We are here to celebrate a man and a book, a king and a Bible…we are here to celebrate the one book associated with [James I's] name: his Bible."[4] The focus of the celebrations of the KJV, for the KJBT, will be *man*. And, mind you, not even the 54 men whose blood, sweat, and tears produced this translation. These men were noted only as "academics" in one speech at the launch on Nov. 23 (of all persons, by the atheist Harvard professor Niall Ferguson). No, the sole honor goes to the king! He is *the* man of the year! It is "*his* Bible"!

For just a moment, leave the "King James" part out of it! It is highly significant that the appellations "King James Version" or "Authorized Version" date only from the early 19th century, to distinguish this translation from the modern versions that began to spring up like hydra's heads about that time; up to the early 19th century, all the way from 1611, this version was known simply as "The Holy Bible."[5] What is the Holy Bible? Our Belgic Confession explains that to us in Articles 3-7. Article 3 reads in part: "We confess that this *Word of God* was not sent, *nor delivered by the will of man*, but that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," as the apostle Peter saith. And afterwards *God*, from a special care which he has for us and for our salvation, commanded his servants…to commit this revealed Word to writing."[6] Concerning the source of the authority of holy Scripture, Article 5 declares: "We receive [the books of the Old Testament and New Testament–JL], and these only, as holy and canonical…believing, without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from *God*, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves."[7]

> …the PRC will recount the history of the English Bible from the antithetical perspective of God's sovereignty, and of God's providential guidance of this period of church history, whereby he provided his English-speaking church with a Bible translation that faithfully ascribes all glory to him alone.

Therefore, far from being a celebration of man, let alone of King James, the PRC will recount the history

3 *The Holy Bible*, "The Translators to the Reader," n.p.

4 www.kingjamesbibletrust.org; see the video "King James Bible Trust Launch Evening" on the home page.

5 www.kingjamesbibletrust.org/files/kjbt-booklet.pdf

6 *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2006), 24; emphasis added.

7 *Confessions and Church Order*, 25; emphasis added.

of the English Bible from the antithetical perspective of God's sovereignty, and of God's providential guidance of this period of church history, whereby he provided his English-speaking church with a Bible translation that faithfully ascribes all glory to him alone. We will govern our account of that history in these articles from that perspective, and will point out where God's guiding hand is especially revealed. These articles will apply the Reformed confession of "Let God be God!" and "God everything; man nothing" to the history of the English Bible.

Such a perspective is possible only because of God's graciousness to us. The means he has been pleased to use to preserve this high regard for the Bible as the very Word of God in our midst is our Reformed creeds. The creeds of our churches are a bulwark against the degradation of Scripture by unbelieving men and churches. The Reformed creeds are not additions to Holy Writ. Rather, the Reformed standards arise from it as the walls of a fortress built upon a sure foundation. The Reformed creeds interpret the doctrines of holy Scripture for us. When the attacks of the enemy are launched, and when the Bible is called into question as God's Word, we are not bewildered and overcome, but have a ready answer and a sure defense. Moreover, the creeds provide our unity with the church as it has confessed the truth of Scripture as the very Word of God throughout all ages. This is why they are also called the Reformed *confessions*. To "confess" is literally, "to say the same thing as," and by holding to the ecumenical creeds of the Apostles, of Nicea, of Chalcedon, and of Athanasius; to the Three Forms of Unity; and to the Reformed liturgical forms, the Church Order, and the Formula of Subscription, the PRC "say the same thing as" the church of Christ of all ages with regard to the truth of holy Scripture.

Therefore, as we recount the history of the English Bible and of the King James Version in particular, let us also be eagerly studying our Reformed creeds, including and especially, in the Protestant Reformed Churches, our settled and binding "Declaration of Principles." ❖

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Christian Living

Love for the Lord's House

by Ben Rau

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand…" (Psalm 84:10).

Young people, do you live for the weekend? You might think that a strange question, or one you aren't quite comfortable answering. We don't have to answer that for ourselves, though. The Word of our God answers for us that we *must* live for the weekend. Not to party, not even primarily to relax and enjoy some time away from our earthly cares and duties. No, the joy which we confess to be our greatest joy with the psalmist in Psalm 137 is Jerusalem, or the New Testament church of God. David stated in Psalm 84 that his soul longed and even fainted for the courts of the LORD. This love for the Lord's house and the worship which we do there ought to be our chief, or principle joy. Can you and I make this same confession with the Psalmist?

What drives this love for the house of the Lord? What makes the brief time we spend there our greatest and most comprehensive joy? The answer is found in the activity in which we engage there. There is nothing special about the buildings to which we go. It's also not about the man on the pulpit. We don't even attend primarily to fellowship with others of like faith, though there is some importance in that as well. No, the center, the focus of our time at the house of the Lord is and must always be the preaching of the gospel.

What makes this preaching so powerful? The Heidelberg Catechism rightly states that faith is worked in our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel, and also confirmed by the sacraments (Lord's Day 25). The preaching has power that is very real, dear reader. Haven't you experienced that? How many times haven't you heard a word from the pulpit that exposed a sin that you feel within your own heart? Or a word that brought you the comfort of the redeemer when you needed it the most? Remember, the word you hear is very really the word of Jesus Christ, though it is brought

faithfully by his appointed servants. Christ, the Word of God, speaks to us in the preaching. What almighty power then this preaching has!

The fact that it is Christ speaking in the preaching has great significance; this is the center of our life within the covenant which God has established with us. It is Christ talking. And to whom? To us, people of God. Consider that for a minute in light of who we are.

We confess and know the depth of our sins. As our Baptism Form says, we are "conceived and born in sin." It doesn't get much more desperate than that, don't you think? Elsewhere in Scripture we read that the heart of man is deceitful above all things, so much so that we cannot even know it (Jeremiah 17:9). And then, in spite of all of this, we are the ones to whom Christ speaks? How humbling!

To make this figure even more rich, however, remember that the communion that we have in the house of God is not just Christ speaking the Word of Life to us, but also us responding to him. We pour out our hearts to Christ. We make supplication to him, bringing to him our needs, our cares and our concerns. We cast our burden upon God in his house. We praise his holy name. And all of this praise, adoration, and supplication offered in true faith is heard by none other than the almighty God? That, dear reader, is true covenant life and joy. To be heard and received of our Father, and to speak to him and hear his voice assuring us of his love for us. What more could we desire?

That, dear reader, is true covenant life and joy. To be heard and received of our Father, and to speak to him and hear his voice assuring us of his love for us.

We ought to love the house of our God, for there we find strength for the battle of faith. Our earthly life is very really a battle. This figure is likely familiar to you; it is used many times in Scripture: reference Ephesians 6:10-18, I Timothy 6:12, II Timothy 4:7, and I Corinthians 9:26 just to name a few of the more commonly read passages. The battle we wage is at bottom with sin and the forces of Satan, as stated so plainly in Ephesians 6:12 and Lord's Day 52 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

What a formidable foe! We tire in our battle often, and we do grow weary. The battle is hard, especially because it is constant. Satan doesn't play fair; he doesn't let up once you tire. Instead, as the Heidelberg Catechism says in Lord's Day 52, the devil, our "mortal enemy," does not cease in his assaults against us. Not only is this battle unending, but this enemy desires to *take our very life*! The Catechism doesn't call him a mortal enemy for no reason; the devil truly desires the spiritual life that is within you and I. He desires to do to us what Jesus warned Peter of in Luke 22:31: Satan desires to sift us as wheat, or to turn our pure hearts of flesh to hard hearts of stone that serve him in wickedness.

Knowing this, then, how ought we to long for the house of our God! Here we find a refuge from the storms of life. Here we hear the word of our Saviour to us. In his house we hear him say, "I love you with an eternal love!" Here he takes us in his arms and gives us the comfort of everlasting life with him in glory; here our faith is strengthened, and we are made alive again; here we are made ready to fight the battle of faith.

And we *need* this strengthening. Think of our longing for the house of God in this way: imagine the warrior from the biblical times, fighting the enemies of God as Canaan is conquered. Day in and day out, away from home, away from family. Fighting battle after battle, one enemy after another. Violence, terror, death are all around on every side at every moment. Now imagine the joy of this same warrior after the battles are finished and the enemies of God are defeated. What unspeakable pleasure will he have when he is at last able to return to Jerusalem, the city of the church and of his God. Finally, there is a time of rest, a time to recuperate, and a time to regain strength. This, dear reader, is what the house of our God is for us in our very real battle against the powers of sin and the devil.

And yet, in light of all of this, we can still be weak. We can grow lax in our longing for the house of God. Each of us knows our own heart, and knows the weakness of our flesh. We can easily be distracted even when in the house of God. Sometimes, we even go to church with what we think are the best of intentions. We truly want to hear the Word of God, but when it comes right down to it we are distracted and can walk out of God's house empty. We don't meditate on the Psalms as we sing them; we don't focus on the law as it is read. Remember that the devil doesn't play fair, young people. He doesn't take time-outs when we step into the sanctuary. No, sometimes it seems like he tightens the bonds of temptation so much tighter. Though we have been redeemed in Christ and have received the new life of Christ within us, we still

feel this struggle within us.

Consider the figure of the warrior which we just discussed: remember that he is tired, discouraged, worn out and hungry. What would we think if this warrior did not want to return to Jerusalem, his home and refuge? What if instead he decided that he would remain in the barren desert, where no food, water, or nourishment could be found? How strange would that be!

Or, imagine that this warrior returned home and was greeted with joyous celebrations of the triumph of the battle. However, what if in the midst of all of this happiness the warrior only could think about returning to the barren wasteland? What if he counted the days to when he could leave the shelter of Jerusalem and again set foot on the treacherous battlefield? Wouldn't you agree that there would be something wrong with such a warrior?

In God's house we have joy and peace, and we find our true Life! But our mind wanders far from the house of God, to earthly cares and concerns, to all sorts of things.

As simple as that may seem, the reality is that we can often be just as irrational as that warrior. In God's house we have joy and peace, and we find our true Life! But our mind wanders far from the house of God, to earthly cares and concerns, to all sorts of things. We consider the week gone by; we think of what we have to do in the coming week. We replay our schedule and maybe what homework we have yet to do. In the weakness of our flesh, could it be that we even drift off and doze at different times in the worship service? What a shameful confession, young people! Sleeping in the house of our holy God? How dare we do such a terrible thing! So often we can feel like the disciples, whom Jesus commanded to watch in the Garden of Gethsemane. As Jesus warned them, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

How can we find comfort in the midst of our sinfulness? Only in the cross of Jesus Christ. We do not come to God's house to testify that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves. No, on the contrary, we come only because of the glorious work of the Spirit within us. That is the gospel, young people! We have been redeemed, not by our own works or our own worthiness. The Almighty strength of our Redeemer lives within us! We can come to our God in his house without fear, for we are assured by faith that he loves us and has loved us from before the foundation of the world itself.

What beauty, then, do we find in the house of our God. What unspeakable joy and life is present there. Our act of worship, as profound as it may be, young people, is and must be the highlight of your week. What do you live for? Our answer: the house of my God. May this truly be our confession. ❖

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

Where We Stand

God's Unconditional Predestination of Man's Will

by Stephen Mulder

In our last two articles concerning the Arminian's doctrine of freewill, we dealt with how God is completely sovereign over the will of man and how man's will is completely depraved. This article will be on the fact that God has predestinated men from before the foundation of the world, some to eternal suffering in hell, and some to eternal glory in heaven. Certain Arminians would agree that God has predestinated men, but this predestination is a conditional predestination that is dependent upon the will of man. This is contrary

to what the Bible teaches concerning the predestination of mankind, as will be proven from the story of Jacob and Esau, as well as other verses that state that God has predestinated man. This Arminian teaching of man's will is also against the reformed teaching of predestination. Men at the Synod of Dordt fought for unconditional predestination. Our creed developed out of that battle. Hence, let us look at the argument the Arminians pose against predestination.

Perhaps the clearest story in Scripture concerning unconditional predestination is that of Jacob and Esau. This story is found in Genesis 25:21–23, which states this, "And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." This difference between Jacob and Esau was appointed by God and revealed to Rebekah before these two children were born. In eternity past, God had already decreed that the younger would serve the older of the twins and therefore this cannot be a matter of their own wills. Rather, it shows that predestination was not conditioned upon the choices of man. God predestinated these facts from before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 1:4–6) and no choice of man can change what the sovereign God has decreed. However, some would go as far as to argue that this was just the case in the Old Testament, but the Apostle Paul in Romans 9:11–13, makes it clear that this is the case in the New Testament as well. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Before they had even done any good or evil, God had predestinated one to salvation and one to damnation. This was not based upon their own freewill, but on the will of God alone. God predestinated that one would love God and one would hate God. It was not a matter of their wills; God was completely sovereign in his predestination of these two men, and is sovereign in his predestination of the rest of the human race. In addition, Ephesians 1:11 shows us that God has predestinated according to his own will, not man's, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." God chose us from before the creation of the world. No will of man is able to change what God has sovereignly predestinated. Thus, unconditional predestination that is not based upon the choice of man is a very concise doctrine of holy Scriptures. It is a grave error when Arminians say that the will of man determines predestination.

The Canons of Dordt was a National Synod held from the year 1618–1619 in Dordrecht by the Dutch Reformed Church. It was assembled to settle a controversy over Arminianism. Thus, it has a whole head on the subject of predestination. Article 7, of the first head, makes it clear that God has unconditionally predestinated the elect unto eternal salvation.

> Election is the unchangeable purpose of God (it cannot be conditioned or controlled by the will of man), whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will (God's will, not man's), chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace.

From this statement it ought to be obvious that God's election of some to Christ and salvation, is not dependent upon the will of man. Also, Article 9, of the first head, clearly shows that this election is not based upon our own will, but solely upon the will of God.

> This election was not founded upon foreseen faith (not based upon our own faith or freewill), and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality of disposition in man, as the pre-requisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc., therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: "He hath chosen us (not because we

were) but that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love," Ephesians 1:4.

Thus, it is because God has predestinated us, that we are elect, not of our own freewill. In addition, God chose us not because of our faith, or our acceptance of God; rather he chose us so that we would have faith, given to us by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the kind of predestination that is taught by our reformed confession is an unconditional predestination that is not based upon the will of man. The Arminian doctrine of conditional predestination is a devil's doctrine that must be cast off.

He chose us so that we would have faith, given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Upon reading this, we must realize that God has predestinated all men and their choices. All that men do, and all things that happen are because God has predestined them to happen. God has predestinated some men to eternal glory and fellowship with God in heaven. Yet, others he has predestinated to eternal damnation in hell. Man's will has no power over this predestination, God's will is sovereign. Man has no freewill, it is utterly impossible for man to have freewill. The Arminian doctrine of freewill is in complete contrast to what Scripture teaches. It has no basis in a proper exegesis of Scripture and is a corrupt doctrine; it is something that the antichrist teaches. Therefore, let us have no part with the error of freewill, because it is not founded upon Scripture. ❖

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

Our Father and Friend

A Pantoum by Lanae Regnerus

God is our Father and friend
What a joyous thought
In sadness our hearts He will mend
With Christ's blood us He bought
What a joyous thought
We must never be scared
With Christ's blood us He bought
He has always for us cared
We must never be scared
For our loving Father is He
He has always for us cared
In eternity He planned my whole life for me
For our loving Father is He
In sadness our hearts He will mend
In eternity He planned my whole life for me
God is our Father and friend

A pantoum is composed of a series of quatrains; the second and fourth lines of each stanza are repeated as the first and third lines of the next.

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:

Annie Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim VanTil—Byron Center, MI

Gavin Joshua, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Lenting—Crete, IL

Ashley Kaye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric VanBaren—Crete, IL

Joseph Craig, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott VanUffelen—Faith, MI

Calvin Bruce, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Doezema—First, MI

Dexter Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Luke Engelsma—Grandville, MI

Ethan William, son of Mr. & Mrs. John DeVries—Grandville, MI

Miriam Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Derek Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI

Thomas Aiden and Kori Ann, twins of Mr. & Mrs. James Jansma—Loveland, CO

Trevor, son of Mr. Brian Johnson—Lynden, WA

Colton Bernard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Casey Meelker—Redlands, CA

Jaycob Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kirk Karsemeyer—Trinity, MI

Devin Hilbert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Hib Kuiper—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:

Tad Landheer—Byron Center, MI

Case DeJong—Crete, IL

Jacob Maatman—Crete, IL

Caleb Zandstra—Crete, IL

Jeff VanDyke—Faith, MI

Eddie Nienhuis—Hope, MI

Seth Engelsma—Hope, MI

Brian Johnson—Lynden, WA

Phil Johnson—Lynden, WA

Glen Regnerus—Randolph, WI

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. Aaron Kamps and Miss Magdalene Lanting—Hope, MI

The Work of the Holy Spirit

By: David J. Engelsma & Herman Hanko

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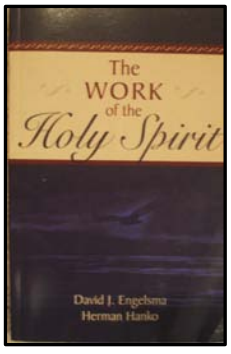
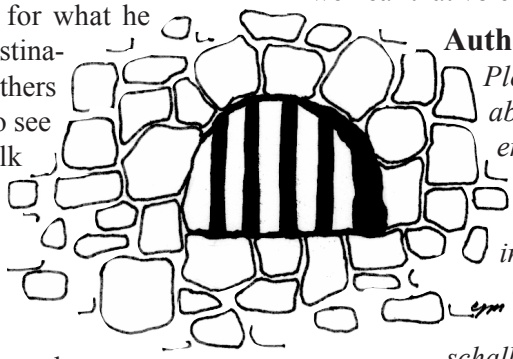


Gottschalk:
Lone Voice in the Night (8)

Hincmar could not believe it. The monk would not recant. What more could Hincmar do to make this heretic deny what he said? Hincmar had underestimated the man's courage.

That's what Hincmar, Bishop of Rheims thought. But others thought differently. Gottschalk had been terribly treated and put into prison for what he taught. No one else understood predestination like Gottschalk did, but a few others in the Church of Rome could begin to see some truth in what he said. Gottschalk had friends. They wrote letters to Hincmar, protesting how cruel he had been to the monk. They continued to discuss what Gottschalk believed and taught.



While Gottschalk was in prison, three more synods were held to consider the doctrines that he had discovered in the Scriptures and in the writings of Augustine. The truth would not be easily dismissed. Some decisions leaned in Gottschalk's favor. But in the end, the truth was firmly denied. With the final synod, Rome began to officially hold to doctrines that agreed with what Rabanus and Hincmar taught. These doctrines agreed with Rome's ideas about the monastic life and the mass. One doctrine led to another.

And what became of Gottschalk?

He recovered from his wounds, though he was kept in prison for the rest of his life. He wrote two confessions while he was there. From the damp, cold cell that was his miserable home, he carefully set forth the truth of double predestination and other teachings that belong with that doctrine. His confessions are remarkable documents for that time. He saw the important truths that Augustine had taught some 500 years before, but he was not joined in full understanding of those truths until Luther and Calvin saw them, some 700 years later. As it has been said, Gottschalk seemed to be a man out of time. He was alone in these spiritually dark days.

Yet he was not really alone. In 868, after twenty years in prison, he died to join the church of all ages, the church that waits in glory. He joined the martyrs in white robes beneath the altar who cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Indeed, God put Gottschalk there in that time and in that place to be an important witness and testimony, to be a voice—a lone voice in the night of this world. May we hear that voice, boldly and clearly, in our time, too.

Author's Note:

Please note that the preceding stories about Gottschalk's life must be considered historical fiction. Research from so long ago as the 9th century is often sketchy, and turning such information into stories requires adding details that can only be guessed at. Nevertheless, enough facts are known about Gottschalk to be certain that he is a man well worth considering and remembering. For more on this important figure from church history, read Portraits of Faithful Saints *(pages 68-72) and Contending for the Faith (pages 95-103), both by Herman Hanko and published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association.*

"LITTLE LIGHTS"
... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

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

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them…" (Revelation 6:9-11a)

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

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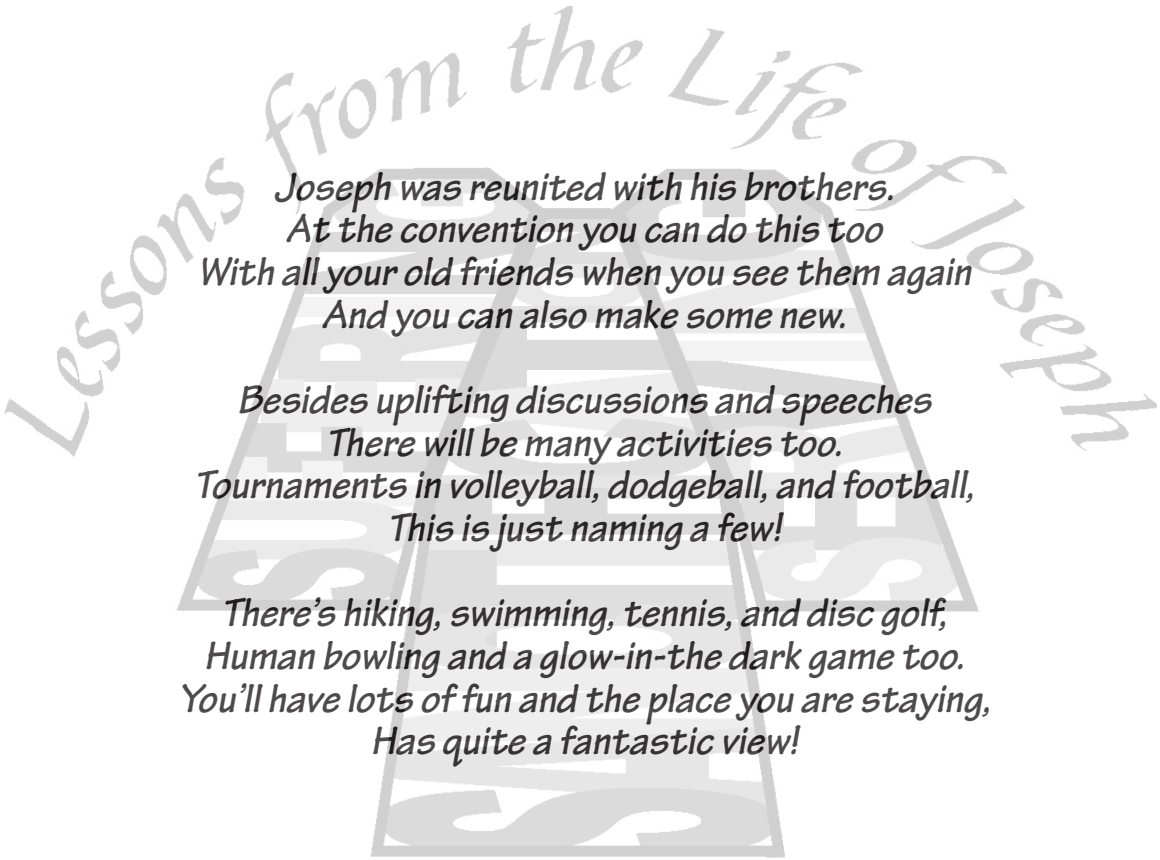

Joseph was reunited with his brothers.
At the convention you can do this too
With all your old friends when you see them again
And you can also make some new.

Besides uplifting discussions and speeches
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Tournaments in volleyball, dodgeball, and football,
This is just naming a few!

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You'll have lots of fun and the place you are staying,
Has quite a fantastic view!

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