Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

May 2012

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Volume LXXI Number 5

Editorial Notes

Mark H. Hoeksema

I want to use my first written words as the new editor of *Beacon Lights* to add my thanks to the many expressions of gratitude to John Huizinga. Seventeen years is a long time to do anything, especially to be responsible month after month, year after year, both for the content of the magazine and for meeting publication deadlines. As the intricacies of this task become more apparent, it also becomes increasingly evident that his will be big shoes to fill.

I immediately add kudos to the staff. After being asked to assume this position, I met with the staff to ask and answer many questions. It was not difficult to think of reasons to refuse this request, some of them valid. My intention was to ask and answer carefully and thoughtfully, and then politely to decline. But the knowledge and competence of these young people quickly became obvious. Even more significant was their positive attitude and their enthusiasm. I could not overcome this combination. I took the job. Since then they have helped me greatly and taught me what I need to know.

Welcome to a new staff member, Matt Kortus, who is rapidly proving to be an asset to the staff. Matt is originally from Loveland, and is now studying on the doctoral level at the University of Michigan.

If you are reading this, you have already noticed that *Beacon Lights* has an entirely new look. The staff felt that a modern, twenty-first century look was in order. Thanks for this sharp design to Ryan Kregel and Bob Vermeer.

Also new for May is a new and improved website, which can be found at beaconlights.org. Thanks to Ben Rau for his diligent work in this re-design. One of the helpful features of the new site is the ability to pay for subscriptions by credit card instead of being limited to cash or check. Coming soon will be the addition of the *Beacon Lights* archives in a more easily accessible and searchable format all

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Beacon Lights encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.
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the way back to the magazine's inception in 1941. This is a work in progress that we hope to complete sometime next fall.

The staff is also working on other improvement opportunities, the most significant of which is investigating making *Beacon Lights* available as an E-magazine. If you readers have suggestions concerning any aspect of the magazine, please feel free to send them to editor@beaconlights.org. The same goes for articles. We are always looking for good material from anyone, especially the young people, so we issue this renewed "call to all writers."

Until next time…

Editorial — Ryan Kregel

Deep Simplicities—"I count all things but loss"

Young people, consider with me the deep meaning of the simple phrase, "I count all things but loss," found in the context of Philippians 3:7–9, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

John Calvin poses the question, "Why loss? Because they were hindrances in the way of his [Paul's] coming to Christ. What is more hurtful than anything that keeps us back from drawing near to Christ?" (*Calvin's Commentaries, Philippians*). The things in this life that were gain to us, such as entertainment, possessions, pride, etc, we now claim as loss for Christ. These things often clutter the relationship we have with our Father. Notice what Paul says concerning these things that we "counted loss for Christ." Consider verse 8: "…and [I] do count them but dung…." The dung here refers to what is thrown out. It's garbage! All the things we might lose in the way of taking up our crosses and following Christ we count as dung. We don't even want those things when we truly realize the treasure we have in Christ; and that treasure is eternal!

Let's allow ourselves a short analogy. You have a dirty room. You have clothes on the floor that needed to be washed weeks ago. There is dust all over your furniture. Your room stinks like old, forgotten school lunches buried under the mess. Your mother tells you to clean it, and clean it now, or else consequences will ensue. Paul in these verses is telling us to clean our lives. He is telling us to remove the clutter that is darkening our relationship with God. He recognizes the very real danger of letting the things we often count as gain in our lives—entertainment, possessions, pride, and the list goes on—get in the way of what really matters during the short time we have here on this earth. How much money we make, what we do for fun on the weekend, what we are going to wear to school tomorrow—none of this matters! We cannot go through life looking toward what the next Friday night might bring. Rather, we need to be looking at life, asking ourselves these questions: How can I better serve my God? How can I shape my life based on what God has accomplished for me through his Son? We must be constantly looking toward the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory and planning our lives around this reality. On that day there will be nothing left on this earth. Nothing else will matter. We will be taken to glory to be with him everlastingly. Eternity with Christ is our everlasting treasure and future, not the distractions of this earthly life. The promise of this secure treasure is found in Matthew 6:19–21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where

moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

It is incredibly easy for us as young people to lose our proper perspective of life. The distractions are innumerable. The devil works through all of these to try to pull us away from our faith in Christ and our view of life that is the fruit of this faith. We read, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Satan wants our hearts to be set on the diversions of this world. Anything that we do to distract ourselves from a proper Christ-centered life is pleasing to Satan. His one goal for our lives is to pull us away from God.

One of the ways the devil is trying to pull us away from true communion with God is through the heresy of the prosperity gospel. Prosperity theology teaches that the Christian's relationship with God is a contract. If man has faith in God, God will bless him with "health and wealth." John Piper, a major opponent of the prosperity gospel, loathingly addresses the issue in one of his sermons:[1] "I don't know what you feel about the prosperity gospel… but, I'll tell you what I feel about it—hatred. It is not the gospel…believe this message, and your pigs won't die, and your wife won't have miscarriages, and you'll have rings on your fingers and coats on your back…here is the reason it is so horrible. When was the last time that any [one] ever said, Jesus is all-satisfying because you drove a BMW? Never!" This so-called gospel of, "you pat God's back and he'll pat yours," is pure idolatry. Prosperity theology is teaching people to trust in cars and money, because when they have health, wealth, and safety, it must mean that God is shining down in favor on them! Piper puts it well when he says, "It elevates gifts above the giver." People with health and wealth say, "Look at what I've gotten because I believe in Christ. I have a good job, my family is healthy, my kids are smart and will probably make a lot of money too…." Others look at this and are drawn toward Christ based purely on idolatrous notions. People believing the lie of the prosperity gospel are allowing earthly gain to clutter their relationships with God.

We as believers of the true Christ are called to have a different way of thinking. It's simple: I don't deserve any of this. I don't deserve the money God has blessed me with. I don't deserve the home God has given me. I don't deserve the car God has given me (rusty or brand new). I don't deserve the church I am a part of. I don't deserve the friends God has given me. I don't deserve the wife or husband God has given me. Most of all, I don't deserve the sacrifice Christ made to free me from my sin and guilt! This is the perspective we must have as we go through life.

Young people, many of you are either in college or are thinking about college. With this comes the decision of what career you will pursue. Many of you might pursue a career that will bring you a large paycheck. There is nothing wrong with this. However, we are instructed in Psalm 62:10, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Wealth is an undeserved blessing from God. Now what do we do with this blessing? Do we set our heart on wealth and waste it on all the earthly gain this world has to offer, or do we spend it on kingdom causes: the poor, missions, evangelism, Christian education, etc? If God blesses us with earthly wealth, we need to have wisdom in how we use it.

The devil uses the world to place right in our laps: sinful entertainment, opportunities for self-pride, and a love of earthly possessions. Billboards on the highway scream at us to "get rich!" as if that is to be our only goal in life. Advertisements suggest to us how we ought to dress in order to look better than our neighbors. Our televisions blare God-defaming agendas right in our homes. Computers bring whatever the heart desires with a couple clicks of the mouse. All these things are irresistible to our sinful human nature. By nature we love all of these things and hate God's word.

How do we then fight against our natural affection for the gain of this world? We live a life of sacrifice. We live a life of self-denial. We find "distractions" from our earthly distractions. Turn off the television and pick up a good theological book or Christian periodical. We need to immerse ourselves in things pertaining to God and his word. We must constantly say to ourselves: "He must increase, but I must decrease." This confession in John 3:30 ought to be our daily declaration. In this passage, John is making way for Christ. He is throwing away all the

1 Video on YouTube is titled *John Piper and the Prosperity Gospel.* Although this video is not necessarily reformed in perspective, Piper brings out the ridiculous nature of the prosperity gospel.

honor and prestige those around him have heaped on his name. He is suffering the loss of all things, and with Paul confesses that they are but dung when compared to Christ's honor, and the "excellency of knowledge" of Christ. So also must we put off the things that are distracting us from true communion with God.

Young people, remember this: God is sufficient! Nothing else matters! Through all of our suffering, in all of our health, through all our insufficiencies, in all of our wealth, GOD IS SUFFICIENT! Let us take our lives into consideration. If there are things in our lives that are getting in the way of our relationship with God, they are garbage and we need to throw them out. These are hard words for us to hear because by nature we love the "noise" of the world; but this is the true and pure gospel that God has revealed to us. Nothing of this earth, neither ourselves, nor our possessions can or ever will avail us anything when we take that God-assisted step back in faith and look at eternity. Let us then pray to God, the giver of all good things, to instill in us a continual zeal for the things of his heavenly kingdom; and that we may by faith count for loss those things that are of this earth.

Ryan is assistant editor of Beacon Lights *and a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.*

Our Goodly Heritage — Elizabeth Ensink

Covenant Christian High School:
God's Blessing for His Covenant Young People

"We are gathered here because within six months we hope to see covenant young men and young women, through the covenant faithfulness of their parents and friends, enter through the doors of Covenant Christian High to be taught the matters of their natural life by covenant blessings to be bestowed upon them, through this instruction, by our covenant God." These were the opening words of Rev. Heys at the date-stone laying ceremony for Covenant Christian High School on April 20, 1968 (Doezema). To this day, these words hold true as hundreds of God's covenant children have received the blessings of an education centered on God's word at this school. Truly to appreciate this blessing, we must examine the history of Reformed education and see the hard work of the men and women who made the school possible. The establishment of Covenant Christian High School not only marked the end of a long struggle to establish true Reformed secondary education, but it was also the beginning of a school which has grown, strengthened, and remained a firm foundation for the education of God's covenant young people for forty-three years.

To understand the purpose and benefit of Covenant Christian High School, we must first understand the importance of Reformed education. Proper education of God's children is a command of God and a high calling to parents. Article 21 of the Church Order states "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." Also, part of the baptismal vow is the parents' promise to "see these children …instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power." God establishes his covenant with the children of believers. In order to share in the covenant relationship of friendship with God, children must be brought up in the knowledge of God through an education that is centered on God's word and the Reformed confessions. This education must not be limited to catechism and Sunday school. According to Professor David Engelsma, we cannot uphold this command and still send God's children to worldly schools, "five days a week, six or seven hours a day, nine months a year, for some thirteen or more years of their life" (Engelsma). If we did not have Covenant

Christian High School or any of our other Protestant Reformed schools, our churches would be filled with poorly educated members who question and change the principles of our churches (Engelsma).

Although our church fathers understood the need for good Reformed education, an important question came up. What is a "good" Christian school? In the years just after the Protestant Reformed churches were formed in 1924, members of the church continued to send their children to the schools of the Christian Reformed church. At first this was a good solution, since they were the best Christian schools available at the time, but as the years went by, church members began to question whether we needed our own PR schools alongside of the CR schools. Some believed that the schools were slowly moving away from the Reformed confessions, and so in the 1930's a movement to establish our own Protestant Reformed schools began.

One of the main supporters of this movement was Rev. Herman Hoeksema. Even before the Protestant Reformed (PR) churches were established, Rev. Hoeksema preached about the high calling of Christian education, and as dangerous teachings began to creep into the schools, he began to express his concerns. In 1931 and 1932, Hoeksema wrote a series of 11 articles in the Standard Bearer in which he closely examined the Christian Reformed (CR) schools of the day and declared that they were a "failure." One of the issues that made the schools a failure was the lack of support from the parents for the Christian Reformed schools. This was caused especially by a movement to introduce religious education into public schools. With this in place, the CR schools would seem unnecessary and inferior. Hoeksema warned of mistaking a religious education for a Christian education. He believed that sending children to the Christian Reformed schools would still be better than a public school education. However, Hoeksema was not so much interested in the failure of support for the schools, but rather, the failure of the CR schools to remain true to the Reformed confessions. He argued that the schools that were established by Christian Reformed parents would eventually walk down the same erroneous path as the CR churches did in 1924. Another minister, Rev. George M. Ophoff, shared this opinion and wrote in the *Standard Bearer* in 1926 about his deep concern for the Christian schools of the day (Lubbers #3).

To give reason for their disapproval of the CR schools, both Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Hoeksema individually critiqued the six principles of the Christian Reformed schools as published in July 1925. Although their critique is too lengthy to include in great detail, the general conclusion was that these principles were vague and subtly supported heretical ideas such as common grace, free will, and Pelagianism (Lubbers #3). After critiquing each point, Rev. Hoeksema wrote his own six points of Reformed education that would properly "regulate the instruction, discipline, and administration of truly Christian schools" (Lubbers #1). Hoeksema's points are more specific, accurate, and hold firmly to the Reformed confessions (See chart below). It is a testimony to their completeness and agreement with the confessions that Hoeksema's six points are still used as the basis for all of our Protestant Reformed School societies today.

After seeing the problems with the CR schools, Hoeksema at first encouraged believers to reform the schools according to the specific principles he established in these six points. However, he soon saw that this was impossible due to the common grace movement and the strong influence of other heretical ideas (Lubbers #2). He then began to promote the necessity of forming our own Protestant Reformed Schools. He said that our position should be that "wherever and whenever the Lord makes it possible, or opens the way, Protestant Reformed people should establish and maintain their own schools" (Hoeksema).

Through the work of these ministers and other believers who promoted the establishment of our own Protestant Reformed Schools, God was working to bring about the establishment of CCHS. But before our high school was established in West Michigan, God worked in the believers on the other side of the country to establish the very first Protestant Reformed school. In 1934, First Reformed Christian School began in the basement of the PR church in Redlands. Sadly, after many years of success, the existence of the school ended during the 1953 controversy. However, in 1975, a new society was formed and established Hope Christian School in Redlands once again. Regardless of its early struggles, this school served as a stepping stone towards establishing the other PR schools (Dykstra).

While the PR school in Redlands was busy developing, the believers in West Michigan began to

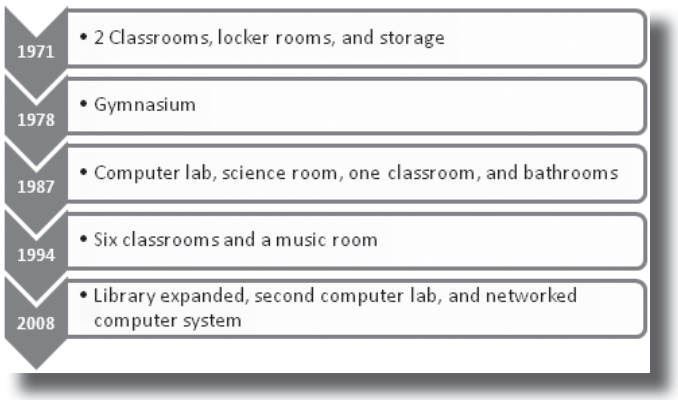
take the first tentative steps towards establishing their own school. On February 5, 1937, a group of men met in the basement of First Church of Grand Rapids and made the decision to start a society for establishing a high school. A few months later, the Protestant Reformed Society for High School education was created. Immediately this group of men began to gather information about the requirements for establishing a high school, but as they learned more over the years, their goal gradually shifted to building an elementary school instead. In a meeting on April 18, 1941, the Protestant Reformed Society for High School education disbanded, and a new society was formed without the specific goal of a high school (Doezema). Through the work of this new society, Adams Christian elementary school opened on September 6, 1950 as a PR elementary school (Dykstra).

Adams Christian School faithfully served the great purpose of educating God's young children in the fear of his name, but a huge problem remained: the Reformed foundation established in the elementary school was not built upon after the students graduated. Once they graduated, children of believers had to go to other schools that did not support the Reformed viewpoint of the PR churches. It was no mistake that the original society's goal was to establish a high school. Many believed that the need for a high school was much greater than that of an elementary school, including Rev. Hoeksema. He pleaded for a high school, saying that, "the age when our boys and girls attend high school is the period in their life when they begin to reflect, to think for themselves, when, more than in the years of their childhood, they are able to imbibe and understand definite principles and doctrines, when it is of utmost importance, that…they are guided in the right direction" (Doezema). God's young people need an education in their high school years that is "based on and permeated with the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed faith as set forth in the Reformed confessions" (Engelsma). With this great need in mind, our Reformed fathers set out once again to establish a high school.

In the late 1950's the Society for Protestant Reformed Education was established at a meeting in Southwest PRC. Just a few years later, in 1963, the society purchased 10 acres of land near Hope school and church (Doezema). But before the high school could open, the church members had to raise the money for it! The operating budget for the first year was set at $58,931. However, the fundraising goal for the first year was only $38,000. Today, we can almost laugh at how small this amount seems, but back then, raising that amount of money was a monumental task. To achieve this lofty goal, a group of men formed a fundraising group that became known as the "Father Marchers." They held a walk-a-thon type fundraiser and also performed a "10,000 minute drive" in which 100 father marchers devoted 100 minutes each to calling people for donations. Through these fundraisers and many generous donations, they were able to exceed the $38,000 goal. This group also continued to raise funds for the next few years and basically became the first fundraising committee of Covenant Christian High School.

Finally, after many years of planning and prayers, construction began in 1968 on the first Protestant Reformed high school. The date-stone laying ceremony was held on April 20, and in the fall of that same year, Covenant Christian High School opened its doors to about 60 students in 10th and 11th grade. There were originally six teachers, working under the administrator, Mr. Roland Peterson (Doezema). The school was equipped with one overhead projector, copier, and typewriter (all very advanced at the time). The society also had purchased microscopes, records, tapes, textbooks, and about 400 books to start the school's library. With all these resources, Covenant Christian became the academically sound and firmly Reformed high school that Hoeksema, Ophoff and hundreds of believers had prayed for.

God continued to uphold our high school, and over the years it grew and developed under his gracious hand. In 1969, just a year after Covenant opened, a senior class was added, bringing the total enrollment to 106 students (Dykstra). Also, from 1971 to 2008 there were several additions made to the school:



Not only did CCHS grow over the years, but many new Protestant Reformed schools were also established in West Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, including another high school. In addition, many of our churches that do not have a PR school today are working to establish their own schools. All of these schools and developments provide the wonderful blessing of a firm education based on God's word for his covenant children.

Today, in 2011, Covenant Christian School has 227 students, fourteen full time and three part time teachers, academic advisors, counselors, and a library media specialist. Even more amazing, right now the loud noises of construction can be heard outside the school as Covenant undergoes yet another development. Lord willing, in fall of 2012 Covenant will finally add a freshman class, bringing the total enrollment to about 350 students. With these new students will come many changes to the school. Currently being added to the building are six new classrooms, two science labs, additional office space, a larger teacher lounge, locker rooms, and a larger academic support room. What a gracious God we have that our small school can grow and develop so much!

The establishment of Covenant Christian High School marked the end of a long struggle to establish true Reformed secondary education, but it also was the beginning of a school that has grown, strengthened, and remained a firm foundation for the education of God's covenant young people for forty-three years. God was working throughout these years, from the early conflicts with the CR schools to the laying of the school's foundation to the development of the school. He has graciously enabled us to fulfill his calling of covenant education through this high school and the many other Protestant Reformed schools across the country. There is no telling where we would be if we did not have CCHS to give the future members of the church a firmly Reformed education, and there is no telling where God will lead the school next, but we can be assured that God will continue to preserve his young people in firmly Reformed doctrine.

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The Six Points of the CR Schools	Rev. Hoeksema's Six Points
1. The Bible is the Book of books. By virtue of its divine organic inspiration (II Pet. 1:21) it is unique among all books. The Bible is not only the infallible rule of faith and conduct, but also the infallible guide of truth and righteousness. All school administration, instruction, and discipline should be motivated by biblical principles.	1. The Bible is from beginning to end the written Word of God, given by infallible inspiration. All school administration, instruction, and discipline shall be based on it and permeated by its teaching, for we acknowledge that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
2. God is triune (Matt. 3:16, 17). He is the Creator of all that is, the Sustainer of all that exists, and the ultimate end of all things (Rom. 11:36). God who is transcendent (Is. 40) and immanent (Ps. 139) is the absolute loving Sovereign over all (Dan. 4:31); men should seek to do His will on earth as it is done in heaven.	2. God, who created and sustains all things and governs them according to his sovereign counsel; who is triune and, as such, lives an eternal covenant-life of friendship in infinite perfection; from eternity chose and in time forms a people unto himself, to stand in covenant-relationship unto him in Christ Jesus their Lord, that they might walk in all good works which he ordained for them, and in all their life in the world should be to the praise of his glory, children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.
3. Man is a fallen creature (Gen. 3). Though depraved man is nevertheless an image bearer of God (Eph. 2:5), and through restraining grace he is able to do civil good (Rom. 2:14). Though lost in sin, man can be saved through faith in Christ (John 3:16); and through restoring grace, in principle, is able to do spiritual good (I John 3:9).	3. From a fallen and wholly depraved human race, and in the midst of a world that lieth in darkness, a crooked and perverse generation, God saves his elect, establishing his covenant with them and their children in the line of continued generations, forming them by his sovereign grace in Christ into a people of himself, that they might be his friends, and, living in every sphere of life from the principle of regeneration through faith, they should show forth his praises and walk as children of light in the world.
4. The world is steeped in sin. All aspects of life, individual and family, social and political, industrial and economic, even the animal world, nature, and things inanimate, show the mars and scars, the subversions and perversions of sin (Rom. 8:22). The virtue, order, and beauty which is still present in the world is a manifestation of God's goodness (Matt. 5:45).	4. In the midst of and in distinction from the evil world that lieth in darkness and is perverse in all its ways because of sin, it is the calling of the people of God to live by grace from the principle of regeneration according to the will of God in every sphere of life, individual, family, social, industrial, political, and ecclesiastical, so that they may be children of light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Hence they insist that all education, that must prepare their children for such an all-sided Christian walk in the world, shall be adapted to this purpose.
5. The all-embracing objective of the school is to promote the glory of our covenant God: (a) by seeking in humble dependence upon God to equip the pupil for his supreme task, namely, to realize himself as God's image-bearer (II Tim. 3:17); and (b) by seeking in the same dependence upon God to reconstitute the sin-perverted world by realizing God's kingdom in all spheres and phases of life (Matt. 6:33). This is possible at least in principle through Christ, who is not only the Creator (as the Logos) but also the Recreator (John 1).	5. It is the objective of the Christian school to furnish the pupil with an education which in all its branches is rooted in the principle of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom; and thus to co-labor, in its own proper domain, alongside of and in distinction from the home and the church, to equip the pupil with that knowledge and wisdom which is necessary in order that he may be able to walk in the midst of the world worthy of the vocation wherewith God calls his people, and that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
6. In determining the Course of Study to be offered, in preparing the lesson material, in giving the daily instruction, the above purpose shall be consciously present as the all-embracing objective. To accomplish this great task, the teacher must have the fear of God in his heart and the determination to live it out in his profession; and he must utilize to the full whatever light God's Special Revelation sheds upon the various realms of human knowledge.	6. In determining the Course of Study of the Christian school the principles heretofore set forth should be adopted as a basis for the entire curriculum. And of the teacher, upon whom rests the responsible task of carrying out this course of study, it shall be required that he present a testimonial from a Reformed Normal School. It shall also be required of him that he express full and wholehearted agreement with the basic principles heretofore set forth and that he declare his purpose to make of the teaching profession no stepping-stone but his life-task.

(quoted in Lubbers)

Watching Daily At My Gates

MAY 11 Read 1 Samuel 24

David continues along the long road of patience. An opportunity presents itself for David to kill Saul. David makes the correct choice in not killing the Lord's anointed. He continues to wait for God to give to him the kingdom. Even after Saul promises not to kill him, he retreats into the hold, the network of caves that makes up the countryside around Bethlehem. Are we waiting with patience because of the "hope that lies within us" for what God has decreed for us? We not only wait for things in our short-term lives, but we must wait with patience for the coming of Christ. Sing Psalter 192.

MAY 12 Read 1 Samuel 25

In this chapter we have two sordid happenings and two bright lights. First, we have the bright light of the death of Samuel. God took his faithful servant unto himself. There was probably not the fanfare on earth like we might see for some who die today, but you can be assured that the angels rejoiced in heaven as Samuel joined that "great cloud of witnesses." Then you have Nabal's foolishness and the sins that accompanied it. Then you have the spiritual beauty of Abigail as she helped the servant of God. Finally, the chapter recounts David's lack of wisdom as he "multiplies wives unto himself." This would cause him great distress later in his life. Let us seek the wisdom of God and flee the foolishness of the world. Sing Psalter 64.

MAY 13 Read 1 Samuel 26

Once again God brought David face to face with Saul. Once again David had an opportunity to end Saul's life and to take the kingdom by force. Once again David by the grace of God resisted temptation and did not kill Saul, choosing rather to admonish him before both armies. It was not easy for David to do this. He was a man with a weak flesh, but by God's grace he was patient and waited for God's time. Are we this patient? Do we show this measure of restraint and wait for God? Let us always pray for this grace. Sing Psalter 73.

MAY 14 Read 1 Samuel 27

David journeyed from the mountaintop of faith in chapter 26 to the valley of despair in chapter 27. Once again he takes matters into his own hands, leaves Canaan, and goes to Philistia. God does not bring him back right away. David must live a life of deception for which he will be chastised. We must learn a lesson from David's life. We must pray daily that we walk in God's path every hour of every day. Through grace we can be assured that he will preserve us in the face of any and all danger. Sing Psalter 191.

MAY 15 Read 1 Samuel 28

When God has departed from a person, what terror must flood his soul. Imagine Saul's despair when he realized that God would not answer him. It was time for the man of God's choosing to take over the throne. Saul visits the witch of Endor and finds out what he knew all along—that God was not on his side. The true believer does not have to face this despair. God will never leave his people no matter what "lamentable falls" they may have. This David and Peter both experienced. This is our comfort. Sing Psalter 204.

MAY 16 Read 1 Samuel 29

While Saul was finding out that God had destined him to death, David was learning that God provides a way of escape for his people. David thinks that his double life is going to catch up to him. Does he get away with it? The answer, as we will find in the next chapter, is no. Through that hard way, however, God is gracious to his servant, the man after his own heart. God preserves his saints no matter how grievously they sin. May we ever go to the cross and see the way of salvation provided by our gracious God. Sing Psalter 106.

MAY 17 Read 1 Samuel 30

As we intimated yesterday, David was chastised for his double life while in Philistia. He was chastised first by God's instrument, the Amalekites. Second, he was chastised through the means of his own men when they grumbled about the "disaster" and then in the distribution of the spoils. Through it all David relied on God.

This must be our way in this life. We must see all things as being in God's hands, and that "all things work together for good." Is this our experience? Is this our confession? Sing Psalter 386.

MAY 18 Read 1 Samuel 31

Here we read of God's hand upon Saul for his lack of obedience. His heart was not right toward God, and the kingdom was taken from him and his family. But we must also see that this is God's word to Israel for wanting a king like the other nations. Sometimes God brings into our lives circumstances that should cause us to examine the way we live. Are we living a life of obedience unto our sovereign God? Do we walk in his ways and in obedience to his word? While he preserves his people in their salvation, he also chastens them in this life to make them ready for the life above. We sang of this yesterday, and we should sing of it again. Sing Psalter 386.

MAY 19 Read 2 Samuel 1

When David hears of the news of Israel's defeat and the death of Saul and Jonathan, he does not immediately make plans to take over the kingdom. He is worried about what may happen to God's people. In his lament for Saul and Jonathan, he shows his concern by asking that the news not be spread. He exalted them for what they had done for God's people. He especially mourns the death of Jonathan as a friend in the Lord. Do we have such friends? Do we seek them out and cherish them as David did? Friends in the Lord are the means God uses to help his people during life on this earth. Sing Psalter 369.

MAY 20 Read 2 Samuel 2

David was not given the kingdom on a silver platter. He had to work for it, and his followers had to see that it was God's will that he become king. Israel, because of its sin, had to go through this terrible time of civil war. God would chastise them for rejecting him as their king. Do we acknowledge God as king in our lives? Do we try to take things into our own hands? If we do, we may surely know that we will be brought through some difficult circumstances. Sing Psalter 266.

MAY 21 Read 2 Samuel 3

David's taking over the kingdom is a time of great strife in Israel. First there is the strife between the house of Saul, led by Ishbosheth, and the house of David. There is also the strife between Ishbosheth and Abner, the captain of Saul's army. Finally, there is the strife between Joab and Abner resulting in Joab's murdering Abner. This strife is all caused by sin. Sin in our lives leads to strife among the people of God. When we live out of love for God and the neighbor, we can escape the strife that is sure to follow. Sing Psalter 103.

MAY 22 Read 2 Samuel 4

The strife continues in Israel, leading to the murder of Ishbosheth. Notice that David does not want the throne unless it is clearly given to him by God. Thus he puts to death the murderers of Ishbosheth. We, too, must wait for God to give us what he has ordained for us. To take matters into our own hands will lead to a sad result. Sing Psalter 110.

MAY 23 Read 2 Samuel 5

David was a type of Christ. This is clearly seen in his taking over of Jerusalem and establishing the kingdom of Israel on Mount Zion. We also see him as the type of the conquering Christ as he defeats Philistia, a picture of the wicked world that often oppresses the church. But we must remember that David is only a type. This we see in his marriage to more than one wife. These multiple marriages would lead to much grief for David. Let us always seek to obey God in all things all of our lives. In this way we will please him and have his blessing on our lives. Sing Psalter 302.

MAY 24 Read 2 Samuel 6

We must obey God in all areas of our lives. We must especially obey God in the area of our worship of him. David had a noble idea. His intentions were good. He cannot be faulted for that. But his execution of those ideas was not just flawed; it was wrong. God had given to Israel strict instructions on how he was to be worshiped. Israel and David did not keep those instructions when they attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem. For this Uzzah was killed when he touched the ark. What about us? Do we obey God in the matter of our worship? Has our worship of Jehovah turned into a worship of convenience? Let us see him in all that we do, and let us worship him in spirit and in truth. Sing Psalter 137.

MAY 25 Read 2 Samuel 7

After moving the ark to Jerusalem, David next wants to build an edifice to house that ark. That building would reflect God's glory; of that there is no doubt. This time he consults God's prophet Nathan about those plans. After an initial acceptance, Nathan receives a message from God that David is not the man to build the temple. He was a type of Christ, but his work was that of a soldier. His son Solomon would be that type of Christ. We, like David, must accept the place in the church of God that he has given to us. Some are ministers, some are elders, some are deacons, and others have different roles in the church. Let us be satisfied with our place in the body of Christ, and let us glorify him in this way. Sing Psalter 367.

MAY 26 Read 2 Samuel 8

David had a new purpose as he went to war against the Philistines. That purpose was to gather materials to

use in the building of the temple. We see this in verse 11. Is the purpose of our occupations to gather money to use in the kingdom of God as it is manifest on this earth? Do we put aside out of our paychecks money for the offerings of the kingdom causes as they are collected each Lord's Day? This we must do, and in this way we will glorify God with our work. Sing Psalter 368.

MAY 27 Read 2 Samuel 9

This is more than a touching story. David was truly concerned about the promise he had made to his friend in Christ, Jonathan. In many societies of the day, the new king would kill anyone related to the past kings so that they could make no claims to the throne. David brings Mephibosheth into his palace and makes sure that he receives all the inheritance that is rightfully his. Do we keep all the promises that we make? Do we show kindness to those whom God has afflicted in some way? In this way we keep the second great commandment that we love our neighbor as ourselves. Sing Psalter 24.

MAY 28 Read 2 Samuel 10

Here we see a continuance of the two aspects of David's character that we examined before. First, David wanted to show kindness to those who had shown kindness to Saul's family when they recovered the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines. Then when the messengers that he sent were despitefully used, he sent Joab and the armies to punish them for their duplicity. When Syria attacked, the army again was used to keep Israel at peace. In our lives we must constantly fight the battle of faith. We do not fight against flesh and blood, as the apostle tells us, but against Satan and his hosts. The battle is spiritual. Let us rest in God as we fight this battle. Sing Psalter 152.

MAY 29 Read 2 Samuel 11

David got too comfortable in his role of king, especially as it related to living in the palace. When it was time to go fight, he neglected his work and soon fell into a grievous sin. As sin breeds sin, he then compounded his troubles by trying to cover up his first transgression in this matter. In this chapter we see the sordid history until we reach the commentary of the last verse. What a sad thing this is! Is it true of us? Sing Psalter 83.

MAY 30 Read 2 Samuel 12

Part two of yesterday's story is told today. We were left with the scathing commentary, "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." Nathan was directed to go to David and to expose him in his sin. Nathan does this with a short story and a short sentence. "Thou art the man." Notice that in our Bibles the word art is in Italics. The accusation is even shorter: "Thou, the man." David is immediately filled with remorse. But the deed is done, and the punishment must be administered. The baby dies, and David must forever bear the consequences of his sin. Sin has wages, as Paul tells us in Romans. Those wages are costly. Only by God's grace have those wages been paid by the death of Christ. Let us hear the words of Jesus: "Go and sin no more." Sing Psalter 140.

MAY 31 Read 2 Samuel 13

As Nathan had said at God's behest, David's house was rocked by strife and scandal. We may not like to read these words, but they are the sentence of God against disobedience of his law. David could not stop the cycle, and as we see in the end of the chapter, he was even part of it. His love of his rebellious son, Absalom, would lead to more troubles. We must seek to walk in obedience to God's law, to teach our children that law, and demand that they obey God in all things. To do anything else will lead to the troubles that were found in David's house. Sing Psalter 69.

JUNE 1 Read 2 Samuel 14

The phrase "beauty is only skin deep" describes Absalom well. First, he killed his brother Amnon. Then he used devious means to worm his way back to Jerusalem so that he could inhabit the palace once more. We know how this story will end. Joab is no help to David either. Instead of rebuking Absalom and treating him as one that is excommunicated should be treated, he works for him against David and the cause of God. All of this is in God's counsel. But none of the participants in this episode is guiltless. The church must walk in the ways of Jehovah and exalt him over self. Sing Psalter 217.

JUNE 2 Read 2 Samuel 15

Absalom's treachery continues in this chapter. When David learns of his plans, David gives orders for those loyal to him to prepare to leave the city. We may wonder about this decision. David knows that the trouble that has come upon him is because of his sin many years ago. In order to preserve peace in Jerusalem, he made the decision to leave. Sometimes for the good of God's church, we must make decisions that make no sense in the world's eyes. But we do them for the good of Zion, that God's name may be glorified. May we always seek Zion's good and God's glory in our lives. Sing Psalter 216.

JUNE 3 Read 2 Samuel 16

Troubles continue for David. Ziba misrepresents Mephibosheth, and Ahithophel turns traitor. Satan always seeks ways to tempt God's people to sin. We must fight against his wiles daily just as David did. Instead of throwing up his hands in despair, David is Christ-like as he continues to do what is good for God's people. He slowly but surely makes his way away from the comforts of home. May we take on the mind of Christ as we live in this world of sin and trouble. Sing Psalter 13.

JUNE 4 Read 2 Samuel 17

As David continued on his journey away from comfort, God's ways were being worked out in Jerusalem. Through the means of Hushai's counsel, Absalom was delayed in going after David. Ahithophel was discredited, and like the traitor in Jesus's band, hung himself. God also provided for David through those who brought him food and other supplies. Through this we learn that God may lead us through difficult ways in this life, but he always cares for his people. May we thank him for his care, knowing that our lives here in this valley of the shadow of death prepare us for the green pastures of heaven. Sing Psalter 300.

JUNE 5 Read 2 Samuel 18

In this chapter we see two sides of David. First, we see David, the general, as he prepares his men for the battle against Absalom and his troops. He knows what must be done in order to gain the victory over his rebellious son. But we also see David's love for his erring son as the news is brought to him about Absalom's death. David's grief is understandable, but not well-advised, even as we consider the circumstances surrounding that death and the reaction that would come upon David's men. David is only a type of Christ and does not walk perfectly in this life. Sing Psalter 7.

JUNE 6 Read 2 Samuel 19

It took rough-mannered Joab to bring David to his senses as he continued in his grief. Then David had to deal with the jealousy between the men of Judah and the other tribes. Jealousy has no place in God's church unless it is being jealous for God's glory. We must seek to put any amount of jealousy away from us, no matter how petty it may seem. The love for the neighbor must reflect the love God had for us. Let us seek the good of all in Jerusalem, even to the putting away of our own good. Sing Psalter 369.

JUNE 7 Read 2 Samuel 20

David's troubles did not go away. His next problem was the rebellion of Sheba. There are many Shebas in God's church. Many say that they have no part with Christ, and show that by both their words and deeds. Just as David was forced to deal with Sheba, so must we deal with those who turn away from God and the truth. We cannot just stand idly by. We must remove those who do this so that the church remains true. Let us continue the battle of faith within and without the walls of the church of which we are a member. Sing Psalter 12.

JUNE 8 Read 2 Samuel 21

God afflicted the land of Israel due to sin committed in the matter of the Gibeonites. David had to remove the reproach from the land before the famine might be abated. While we might wonder at the manner at which justice was done, we must see that God is a God of right and Saul had not done right to Gibeon. David also shows his respect for the anointed of Jehovah once more when he gives to Saul and his family a proper burial. The chapter closes with David at war with Philistia once more. Satan and his hosts will never quit fighting against Christ and his church. We must be ready to fight the battle of faith in our lives. And we must fight that battle! Sing Psalter 309.

JUNE 9 Read 2 Samuel 22

There is a difference of opinion about when the song recorded in this chapter was composed. It does not matter to us. We can sing this song with David as we too are beset by enemies. God is our rock and salvation in all kinds of trouble. We can call upon him at any time; he will hear us and deliver us out of our trouble. May we go to him in prayer and with song as we live our lives on this earth. Singing is a blessed gift that God has given to his church to go to him and thank him for all that he has done for us. Sing Psalter 35.

JUNE 10 Read 2 Samuel 23

As David came near to the end of his life on this earth, he paused to give thanks to God for the goodness he has shown to him. He also tells that it was God who made all his exploits possible in this life. Just as David acknowledged that God was his rock, so must we give credit to God for allowing us to remain faithful to him. We are founded on the solid rock of the covenant and of the love that God has shown to us. This is the only reason for our salvation; it is not of anything that we have done. Just as we have ministers and elders to help us fight the host of Satan, so did David have his mighty men who were committed to the cause of God and his church. Sing Psalter 36.

JUNE 11 Read 2 Samuel 24

As David's life comes to a close, once more Israel is chastised for some sin in its life. God uses David's weakness to chastise them. David becomes proud and desires to number the people. Even wicked Joab understands that this is not a good thing, but David is determined and has the work begun. As the work is being done, David repents. God gives to him a choice in a chastisement. David chooses pestilence under God's hand. As we see from David's reasoning, this was a wise choice. Because Israel had sinned, they, too, must be chastised. As the chastisement ends, God shows them that the way of escape is through the sacrifice of Christ. May we see that the only way of deliverance from our sin is through Christ our redeemer. Sing Psalter 170.

Why, O Lord...?!
Afflictions and Trials: A Christian Look at Life's Adversities

If I asked you which of the following three items—carrot, egg, or coffee bean—which one best describes you, how would you respond? You would probably wonder what I was talking about, right? Fair enough. But what if I added a second question: how you would handle the boiling waters of life? Read the following parable and ask yourself which one you are. Are you the carrot, egg, or coffee bean?

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as if when one problem was solved a new one arose. Her mother took her to the kitchen. She filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In the first she placed carrots, in the second she placed eggs, and in the last she placed ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil, without saying a word. In about twenty minutes she turned off the burners. She fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. She pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then she ladled the coffee out and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Tell me, what do you see?" "Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied. She brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did, and noted that they were soft. The mother then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, the daughter discovered a hard-boiled egg. Finally, she asked her to sip the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. The daughter then asked, "What does it mean, mother?" Her mother explained that all of these objects faced the same adversity, boiling water, but each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting. However, after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak. The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But after sitting in through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water they had changed the water. "Which are you?" she asked her daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?" So, I ask each of you reading this, which one are you? If it's not the one you desire, by God's good grace he will help you change.

What is an affliction?

So, how are you doing today? How are you feeling? Do you have an illness or sickness that you just can't seem to get over? Maybe you recently lost a loved one and can't seem to understand why that person was taken from you. Maybe you have a loved one lying in the hospital and you feel so helpless because all you can do is sit there and watch him sleep, and you hope and pray to God that he will recover. Maybe you go to school every day knowing that you're going to get picked on or made fun of again. The loss of a job, home or loved one. Financial hardships. Marital troubles. Constant stress at work and/or at home. These are all examples of afflictions people may go through at some point in their lives. Does your life seem to be a constant set of unpleasant and disappointing and even painful circumstances and outcomes? Are you beginning to wonder, "If God really does love me, then why does all this keep happening to me?" Maybe you're even starting to doubt whether you really are a child of God. After all, God is a God of love, isn't he? And the God of love wouldn't let this kind of stuff happen to his beloved children, right?

Let me first say that the very fact that you are wondering or worried about truly being a child of God is likely evidence that you are one of his chil-

dren. The non-believer does not even worry about whether or not he is a child of God. I will get into this more a little bit later on. Next, let me say that you are certainly not alone. Many others have felt or are feeling the way you do right now. There were a number of people from the Bible who went through and suffered trials and afflictions, some like yours and some a bit more severe. For example, Paul went through numerous adversities and trials in his life. While leaving Damascus (just after his conversion), the Jews were waiting for him and watching the city gates, intending to kill him. He was stoned and left for dead in Lystra. He was imprisoned with Silas in Philippi (Acts 16). In Jerusalem, Paul was seized by the mob near the temple, but was rescued by Roman soldiers and then kept in prison for two years in Caesarea. He was also shipwrecked near the island of Melita (Acts 27, 28), and also spent two years in Rome under house arrest. David was hunted by and forced to flee from King Saul numerous times. David lived with the sin of adultery with Bathsheba and also the sin of the murder of her husband Uriah. We read how Jeremiah was cast into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, and had no water, but just sank in the filthy mire (Jer. 38). We also read of Job and the many trials he faced. In Job 1:13–19 we read how his servants were slain by the Sabeans, his sheep and servants were burned, his camels were stolen, and his servants slain by the Chaldeans, and also how a great wind brought down the house which all his children were in, and not one of them survived. According to chapter 2 Job was smitten with sore boils from the soles of his feet to his head. After all that and throughout much of the rest of the book of Job he was not even understood or supported by his wife and friends. Rather, they actually tried to get Job to curse God for all that had happened to him. In Genesis 37 we read what Joseph's brethren did to him. They conspired against him to slay him (v. 18), but instead stripped off his coat and cast him into a pit (vv. 23, 24). They then took him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver (v. 28). Later Joseph was brought down to Egypt and bought from the Ishmaelites by Potiphar (39:1). While living in his master's house, Joseph was tempted by his master's wife to lie with her (vv. 7, 12), and then accused by her of being sent to mock her (vv. 14–18). Joseph was then cast into prison by his master (v. 20). Or consider Stephen, "a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost" (Acts 6:5), and how he was accused of blasphemy and then stoned to death (Acts 6, 7). These are but a few of the accounts we read of in Scripture of the afflictions that God's people endured.

All of the above mentioned events were afflictions and trials that God's people went through. I believe that it's safe to say that most of God's people whom we know have not experienced such afflictions, but it certainly cannot be said that there are not believers today who do not still experience such traumatizing afflictions. We just may not happen to run into those people every day. It is also certainly not accurate to say that our afflictions are not bad or even a "big deal." I can personally tell you that some of the trials and difficulties in life can seem a bit overwhelming and almost as though you are drowning and it's utterly hopeless. It can be extremely frustrating when you get laid off from a job that you've been at for many years and then find only a few jobs here and there that just don't pan out. Then you find one that does look quite promising, but you are forced to quit because you just can't do it for health reasons, because it is taking such a toll on you physically, along with your being sick. All the while you can't seem to find out what's exactly wrong with your health, even after you've been to doctor after doctor. Meanwhile, you have bills to pay and are unsure where the money will come from to pay for those bills, and you are really too proud and stubborn to ask for assistance.

It helps us to hear of other Christians going through difficulties and "rough patches" and various afflictions in life, because we then see that we truly are not alone, and there are others who have suffered and are suffering like us. They are the "cloud of witnesses" whom God places in our life's pathway and who can and do help encourage us, whether through their present actions or words or their past personal experiences.

An affliction can be defined a number of ways. It can be physical or emotional or spiritual pain or discomfort that we constantly find ourselves struggling to get over. It can be any one of the previously mentioned trials that God's people went through. It can be a sudden shock that a loved one has been badly injured and will be hospitalized for a while, so that we are not sure if he or she will ever be the same. It can be daily living with the fear that someone is after you, whether it is real, as it was for David, or mentally, as part of an illness. Affliction can be having too little

and not knowing how you are going to continue to get by, and where the money will come from for the bills that need to be paid, or it can be having too much, so that people look at you as though all you care about is money, or all they want you for is your money, and they are constantly borrowing money from you. An affliction can also be having too many demands, whether at work or at home, or even the feeling of not being needed. It can also be the daily thought of knowing that other people just don't understand what you are going through (whether it be health issues or something else), and they even tell you that they don't believe you, and it is likely all in your head and so forth. These people can even be your own family and friends, which tends to make it that much more difficult to live with. Some afflictions can be and feel rather large and can almost turn your life upside down, or they may seem much less significant, so that we feel others would say it's nothing to make such a big deal about. Either way it is very unpleasant.

Who sends afflictions?

It is important to see that even though it is God who sends afflictions, he is not the one who tempts us with them. God sends afflictions in our life but it is Satan who uses them to try and tempt us and cause us to fall into sin. We read in the James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." God does allow Satan to tempt us through those afflictions, but he will, as 1 Corinthians 10:13 states, "not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." We all know that Satan hates the church, so it should be no surprise to us that Satan uses afflictions to try and destroy the Church and "get at" God. When we go through afflictions of various natures, how often do we not (as mentioned earlier) question why God would allow this, how long it will last, why it is not someone else, and so on? When we do question the way we do, we are sinning against God; Satan knows that and he loves it when we do. Satan will then try to get us to use other means to get through our trial, whether it be drugs, alcohol, busyness, gambling, or any other god or person or activity that will help us to alleviate the affliction soon or immediately. It is not to say that we should not go to a psychiatrist or psychologist for help, but we should first see whether it is the right thing to do or not (and we can do that by going to God in prayer). Satan may even tell us—and may even use another person to do so—that if we truly are a good Christian, then we should not be suffering at all. He may even say, "Maybe God doesn't love you as much as he say he does." We may likely be at a very low and weak point in life when Satan comes to us like that, but we should be like the school crossing guard and throw up the STOP sign and dive into God's Word and come to him in fervent prayer.

Why are we afflicted?

Why are we afflicted? Why does God send those afflictions? A simple answer may be that we just don't know why God sends afflictions. However, I will try to elaborate on a few reasons why God does send them. One reason is that God uses trials and afflictions in our life to chasten us, as is mentioned in Deuteronomy 8, where we read: "…that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (v. 3). Then in verse 5 we read, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his own son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." The chapter goes on to say how the people should keep God's commandments, walk in his ways, and not forget all that he had done to deliver them out of the wilderness.

God also uses trials and adversities to refine and purify us. We know that from reading these words: "…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" (Zech. 13:9). We also read of purifying in Malachi 3:2, 3 which speaks of the purifying of the sons of Levi. God also uses afflictions and trials to try our faith, as is mentioned in James 1:3, 12: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." In 1 Peter 1:7 we read, "That the trial of your faith…might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

We should take notice of how God uses trials and afflictions to draw us closer to him. A great example of that is Job. As totally depraved sinners, we are inclined to act against God and turn our backs on him because we do not think we deserve such an affliction (or someone deserves it more). Remember all that Job went through? It is key for us to be reminded of how through all his suffering Job *remained faithful*, even through the criticism and harshness of

those who seemed to care about him so much. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:22). In Job 13:15, 16 he mentions, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him…He also shall be my salvation."

Like us, Job never knew exactly why God was allowing all this to happen to him, but, as unsure as he was, Job never cursed God out of anger or frustration. In Chapters 38 and 39, God answered Job and told him that since he didn't understand why all of this was happening to him, it just meant that he did not have the correct knowledge to understand. God emphasized how he is and always was in control of all things and that Job should find comfort in that. That is evident from what we read in Job 42:10, where God "turned the captivity of Job…also God gave Job twice as much as he had before." Just as God was in complete control in creation and all other events in history, so also is he in complete control through our afflictions and sufferings. Just as God is completely sovereign, so is he good and merciful. Afflictions can be good, for they can help teach us God's statutes (Psalm 119:71), and that God is faithful even through afflictions (Psalm 119:75).

We may even be inclined to ask if afflictions are because of a specific sin. Remember the account of Jesus' passing by the man who was blind from birth, and the people asked Jesus who sinned to make the man to be that way? Did Jesus say that the man sinned? No. His parents sinned? No. Rather, Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:1–3). So just because you go through a difficult trial in life does not mean that it is a result of a specific sin. We likely won't ever know why, but that is okay. We just need to put our trust in God and have faith in him that he will help us through it and use it for our good and for the good of others who love him (Romans 8:28).

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:10 says that he is what he is by the grace of God, and that "his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." What do you think the Psalms would be like if David had not suffered the afflictions he did? A few of the Psalms that David wrote were likely written while he was fleeing from King Saul. I don't know if we can know for sure if that's when he wrote some of them (some believe it was the 6th, 7th, and 11th Psalms), but it certainly makes sense. David is fleeing for his life, and while he is hiding he sits down and fervently asks God to help and save him from his enemies. Then you have the multiple Psalms David wrote while pouring out his heart to God for help and guidance and comfort through all he was experiencing in his life. Did David come to God as he did, "hoping" that God would help him? Did he come to God even though he thought he could get through things on his own? No and No! David knew that he could not do it on his own; he also knew that God could, and that he would if it was his will. Listen to these words David wrote in Psalm 34:4: "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." Or the well-known 23rd Psalm; "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want…thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (vv. 1, 4). David knew where to find comfort and where to place his trust, and so should we.

Is there really comfort?

David found comfort and knew where to put his trust, as we read in the Psalms (11:1; 16:1; 17:6; 18:2, 3; 25:1, 2; 40:1; 62:1, 2, and many more). Paul found comfort and understood that it was for much better reasons that he suffered (Phil. 1:12; 3:7–14; Acts 16:25–34. Job also found comfort and confidence in God (Job 1:20–22; 42:1–6). The Bible is full of passages that help us find the comfort we need in difficult times. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9), and "…he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities…with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

God will give us strength and renew it (Isaiah 40:29–31; 41:10), shall wipe away all our tears (Isaiah 25:8; Rev. 21:4), has mercy upon his afflicted (Isaiah 49:13), and saves his own out of their distresses (Psalm 9:9, 10; 46:1–3). As Jesus said to Martha in John 11:25, he is the resurrection and the life. He is the rock of our salvation and nothing can separate us from God's love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:28–39). Also, there is nothing that is impossible with God (Matt. 19:26); we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, and "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:13, 19). We can also find comfort in knowing that affliction is not really as bad as we think (2 Cor. 4:7–10), and that it works for us something far better than what we can possibly imagine (2 Cor. 4:17).

It is also important to point out here that all who live a "godly life" *will* suffer persecution (whether it be a spiritual or emotional affliction and/or physi-

cal torture). Peter makes crystal clear that growing Christians are going to experience a number of trials, tribulations, afflictions, and difficulties (1 Peter 4:12). We sing in Psalter 91 (Psalm 34), "Afflictions on the good must fall, But God will bring them safe thro' all; From harmful stroke he will defend, And sure and full deliv'rance send" (stanza 3). Also, afflictions are for our good, as we sing: "Affliction has been for my profit, That I to thy statutes might hold" (Psalter 329:4, Psalm119).

There is much comfort and beauty in the Psalms and we have the great blessing to sing them each Lord's Day. In the Psalter we sing of how our gracious and sovereign heavenly Father knows our afflictions and woes (#80:6). He hears, delivers and saves us (#88:2; 175:1; 248:4; 293:2–3; 300:13). He is our rock, refuge and source of strength (#16:4; 34:1, 9; 71:1; 161:1, 5, 8; 191:1; 203:1, 4). He is faithful to his own (#312:6; 400:2–5). He guides our way with his word (#334:1). He is in control and will not let us fall (#345). We are called to rest in and have patience in him (#96:1), to call upon him, and cast our burdens upon him (#149:5). We sing of his love and care for us in Psalter #202, his goodness in #201, his enduring mercy in Psalters 376–378 (taken from Psalm 136). His protective power is sung of in #127, and in #126 we sing of "God a Very Present Help" (both numbers taken from Psalm 46). "Thro' pain and trouble Thou hast led, And humbled all our pride…O let the Lord, our gracious God, Forever blessed be, Who has not turned my prayer from him, Nor yet his grace from me…Who safely holds our soul in life, And steadfast makes our ways" (Psalter 174:2, 4).

God knows all we go through, hears all our cries, and never turns his back on us. He will always be there for us, even if it may not seem like it at the moment. He will deliver us from our affliction when he sees fit, for he knows best. It may not just be for our own good, but also for the good of someone else that he allows us to go through an affliction or hardship, even though we fervently ask him to take it away. Take the apostle Paul as an example of that. Paul suffered through many trials and hardships in his life and even asked God many times that they be removed from him, but the Lord answered Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). God was telling Paul that he needed a certain thorn in his flesh, and God was also saying that he shows his power through our weakness, as was pointed out to us in a sermon we had a short while ago. Rev. Eriks also pointed out in that sermon that God prunes us through the thorns in our flesh; whether that be sickness, loss of a loved one, a wayward child, financial hardships, marital troubles, or whatever else it may be. Whether we want to admit it or not, thorns are a blessing because through them God's grace comes to us. That was exactly what the Lord told Paul and what he tells us also today. God may also use thorns to cause us to "bleed for Christ" to turn from our non-God-centered ways, and to focus on him, who is the supplier of all our grace and needs. How did Paul respond to the Lord? "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). We ourselves are weak in our sins, but we are made strong in Christ through his glory, for through afflictions and troubles we see how much we need him and how good he truly is. Just as the hart thirsts for water, so may we thirst and hunger for God and his word (Psalm 42).

Help and hindrance

Even if we personally are not going through an affliction or trial in life, I'm sure that we all know someone who is. So is there something we can do to help those who are going through an affliction or hardship in life? Yes, there certainly is, but before we get into that, let us first see what we should *not* do.

There definitely are things that we should not say to someone who is going through a great trial in life. Even mentioning such things as that one must have a problem with their prayer life, that one should search his heart because God is likely pointing to a great sin in his life, that he just needs to let Jesus lead him and then he won't have troubles anymore, or if he only had enough faith then all would change—all these are more hindering than comforting. Statements like these that seem to be full of comfort can actually do more harm than good, for they can come out as more of a comparison or criticism, as Edith Schaeffer points out in her book, *Affliction: A Compassionate Look at the Reality of Pain and Suffering*. I do not agree with everything she says in the book, but she does make some very good points. She mentions that "Why don't you pray?" is a question that can be an insult to someone who is already spending

sleepless hours in prayer. She also says that "If only you had enough faith, everything would change!" is a judgment that only God can make. Another judgmental statement she warns against is, "There must be something wrong with your life." She adds, "This is another cruel sentence on the part of a human being who is no position to make such bold statements." Saying, "If you only had the Holy Spirit…" is also a judgmental statement that is like saying that someone has not been born again.

We must be ever so careful when it comes to judging another person, and that is especially true regarding the trials and afflictions of life; for we are quick to judge someone when he is going through a trial in life, also regarding the reason for the affliction. Some people even say that we are not to judge at all. After all, Matthew 7:1 says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." However, when these people use this passage, as well as John 8:11, John 13:34, and similar passages, they fail to interpret these passages correctly. As Rev. Doug Kuiper points out in his pamphlet, "Judging: The Christian's Duty," God does in fact command us to judge. We must, however, not judge hypocritically. That is to say, we must first look at ourselves and must first consider the beam that is in our own eye before we worry about the sliver that is in our brother's eye, as we read in Matthew 7:1–5. This is the context we must use (and many fail to use), and not forget when it tells us not to judge. We must use Scripture to base our judgment of others' teachings and practices, as well as their lives and actions. "Because we do not know the hearts of others," Rev. Kuiper adds, "we must not judge secret motives (1 Cor. 4:5). God will judge these." As we read in Proverbs 17:3, "…but the LORD trieth the hearts." Because with regards to afflictions it can almost become a habit for us to judge someone as to why they are going through such a trial in life, we must stop ourselves and see first if we are doing so in righteousness, as is mentioned in Leviticus 19:15. It is not easy to judge righteously, but we must continue to strive to judge that way, as it is the way God calls us to judge. For a better and more thorough understanding of proper judging, I strongly encourage you to read Rev. Kuiper's pamphlet on this subject.

In addition to our judging righteously of others, we are to esteem one another, as we read in Philippians 2:3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory (pride); but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." And we are to do it with a positive attitude, as we see in verse 14: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." We are also called in 1 Peter 4:9 to "use hospitality one to another without grudging."

We are called to help and care for each other as the Lord cares for us. We are called to comfort one another, for we read in God's word; "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Is. 40:1). True, it is not easy to comfort someone. However, this does not mean that we should think we just should not do it because it's not easy to do. It is difficult for us to experience comfort if we have not gone through an affliction or sorrow or trial in which comfort was needed. Second, "we have to recognize our need for comfort before we will let ourselves be comforted", says Schaeffer. Also, we are not sure how to comfort someone else if we have never experienced comfort ourselves. You could use the example of driving a car: if you have never driven one or learned how to drive a car yourself, how are you to teach someone else (aside from guessing or asking someone else)? If you feel that you might be a bit inadequate in the whole area of comforting, then you should seek the dear heavenly Father to help you and to provide you with the courage and knowledge you need to comfort that wounded soul. If it is his will, he will supply your tongue with the words needed to speak to someone in need.

People who have suffered or are suffering with a specific pain, can better comfort someone else who is suffering with that same pain (i.e. cancer, loss of a loved one, loved one lying in the hospital, personal health problems, marital issues, etc.). Even then we will not necessarily have the same understanding as the person we are trying to comfort, simply because we are not identical. So we can only do our best to comfort, and by God's grace we will be able to.

As mentioned earlier, we are to use hospitality to each other willingly. What is hospitality? It is picking up the phone and talking to someone for a few minutes to see how he is doing, even if we don't have a lot of time to talk (a quick chat can mean a world of comfort). It is helping out the person next to you, whether it is the one in the next hospital bed who needs some assistance because the nurse doesn't seem to hear their bell, or your next door neighbor who needs help with something and you are the only one nearby. There are numerous other examples of how hospitality can be shown. In other

ways of showing hospitality we are called to "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law" (Gal. 6:2); also, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves… For even Christ pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:1–3); and "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12). In Hebrews 13:3 we are called to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

So it can be a phone call, card, letter, poem, visit, meal, or another kind personal act. These are all things we can do for someone who needs to be comforted. The best kind of comfort is found in God and in his word, for we are to seek him and his strength (Psalm 105:4) and to "seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Even just being there for someone can be a great way to comfort them. I can recall when I was a hospice volunteer I would go and visit with those who were alone and had no one else around. Even with the training that we had for being a hospice volunteer, I was never certain of what I would do when I was with my patient. I just needed to ask them what *they* wanted to do, and all I ever did was just sit there and listen to them tell me all about their beloved spouse who passed away and their children (if they had any). Basically, just being there and listening to them and showing them that I cared was quite sufficient for them, and they were always very appreciative of the visits. This is not to "toot my own horn," but rather to show that small things *do* matter. I admit that it wasn't always easy for me to do, but it did help make me a bit stronger and helped me see how little effort there actually can be in comforting someone, and the ways that God can use to comfort those in need. When I think of how much comfort they got from my visits, how much more comfort don't we get when we come to God, the great comforter, in prayer! "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), and as the LORD told Jeremiah, we are to call upon his name and pray unto him, and he will hearken unto us (Jer. 29:12).

There are also many great books and pamphlets and other fine literature that can help during times of difficulty. Many of the books that I have read and would recommend are ones that I have already mentioned in previous articles, so I will not mention them again here. We all have different things that help us get through difficult trials in life, and for many it's a good quality book in which God will use a specific sentence or phrase to make us stop and reflect during that troubling time.

Things to remember

We have seen that affliction can come in various shapes and sizes and that not everyone's affliction is the same. It can last a short amount of time or a long period of time. It can be brought upon us because God is chastening us, he is trying our faith, or he has another useful purpose in mind. The fact is that we never know—nor need to know—why we are going through such an affliction, but that it is for our good (Rom. 8:28). We do know that not everyone will understand what we are going through with our affliction, but God does, and he will deliver us in *his* time.

We are to come to him with all our needs and pour out our hearts to him in prayer. We are to "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." Also, "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:4, 6). We are to have patience and wait on his will, and as we see in Romans 15, other people's trials should increase our patience with them, rather than make us have hard hearts toward them.

We have seen that Satan will try to deceive us and tell us that we do not need God because we can do it on our own by other means, but God tells us to rely on him and come to him in time of need. We can come to God, for "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver is tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6). If God says that he will be there for us, then he will be there for us. It is also important that we not get angry at God for our afflictions, for then we are sinning against God; this greatly displeases him, and it also greatly pleases Satan.

God also calls us to be there for each other and help each other in times of need. We are not to judge others (wrongly) or compare ourselves or our afflictions with someone else. We need to ask God for open eyes to see our own hearts and sins before we start to look at someone else's. Whatever we do or do not do to someone else, we do or do not do it to God (Matt. 25:40, 45).

It is also important to remember that you are not alone in your trial or affliction. Christ Jesus knows all we go through, and there is nothing that is impossible for him; he will see you through it. Also, it

is important not to give up, for it takes time to get through such a difficult hardship. May we be as Abraham (Gen. 17:4 regarding the promise of being the father of many nations), as we read what Paul mentions of him in Romans 4:20, 21: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was also able to perform." This reminds me of the beautiful words of a poem by Helen Steiner Rice, based on Matthew 11:28.

Whatever your problems, whatever your cross,
Whatever your burden, whatever your loss,
You've got to believe me, you are not alone,
For all of the troubles and trials you have known
Are faced at this minute by others like you.
Who also cry out, "Oh God, What Shall I do?"
Just find comfort in knowing, this is God's way of saying,
"Come to Me" and never cease praying,
For whatever your problem or whatever your sorrow
God holds the key to a brighter tomorrow!

We should also know that it is okay to weep, and that as Christians we should not think for a minute that it is not okay to weep. We read of countless instances in the Bible of God's people weeping and crying out to God to help and save them. In today's thinking crying is considered a form of weakness, for someone may cry when he gets hurt or when he does not get what he wants. But the crying or pouring out of the soul of which the Bible speaks are other words for praying. We read how Jesus "cried out with a loud voice…My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). The psalmist used such wording multiple times throughout the Psalms. "LORD, I cry unto thee" (141:1); "I cried unto the LORD with my voice…I poured out my complaint before him" (142:1, 2); "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD" (130:1). When we cry and pour out our hearts to God as the psalmist did, we are praying to God a fervent prayer. Cry out to God, and he will hear you.

May you find the comfort and rest you need as you continue to go through whatever trial or affliction God has placed before you. May you come to him for all your needs and cast all your burdens upon him. He is our Good Shepherd who is everywhere present. Through him we are more than conquerers. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:18).

Dan is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

There be four things which are little upon the earth,
But they are exceeding wise:
The ants are a people not strong,
Yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
The conies are but a feeble folk,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks;
The locusts have no king,
Yet go they forth all of them by bands;
The spider taketh hold with her hands,
And is in kings' palaces.
—Proverbs 30:24–28

BAPTISMS

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body…" I Corinthians 12:13

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Allie Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Hekstra—Byron Center, MI
Reuben George & Gideon Richard, twin sons of Mr. and Mrs. Dan Kuiper—Crete, IL
Addisyn Rileigh, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Vance Hayes—First, MI
Libby & Lyla, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Jared Dykstra—Georgetown, MI
Cole Anthony, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Feenstra—Grace, MI
Owen Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Ferguson—Edmonton, AB, Canada
Ellia Maie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Rau—Faith, MI
Jedd Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Zandstra—Faith, MI
Jason Tyler, son of Rev. & Mrs. Andrew Lanning—Faith, MI
Olivia Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Gritters—Hudsonville, MI
Jenna Claire, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Van Der Zwaag—Hull, IA
Caitlyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Vlietstra—Kalamazoo, MI
Kialynn Reese, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Van Dyk—Peace, IL
Abbie Lynn, daughter of Bob and Jenna Alsum—Randolph, WI
Isaiah, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Oosterhouse—Randolph, WI
Brayden Timothy, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Hendricks—Redlands, CA
Quinton James, son of Rev. & Mrs. Brian Huizinga—Redlands, CA
Ross Henry & Paige Janine, twin son and daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Todd Ferguson—Redlands, CA
Braleigh Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Darrin Brummel—Sioux Falls, SD
Clara Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff DeVries—Southwest, MI
Carter Eric, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Lubbers—Southwest, MI
Dylan Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clint Karsemeyer—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." I Timothy 6:12

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

Tyler Elzinga—Byron Center, MI
Seth Kamps—Crete, IL
Brandon DeKryger—Georgetown, MI
Joel Schut—Georgetown, MI
Jeremy Mulder—Randolph, WI

MARRIAGES

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Sam Watterson and Miss Anga Dyck—Ballymena, N Ireland
Mr. Ryan Kregel and Miss Melissa Elzinga—Grandville, MI
Mr. Ben Feenstra and Miss Lauren Warner—Redlands, CA

FIND THE UNDERLINED WORDS IN THE PUZZLE BELOW:

"Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:11–14).

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V	I	T	S	E	L	A	B	K	H	C	O
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Connie Meyer

A Royal House (4)

Battle lines were being drawn in more ways than one. Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, had thrown in her lot with the French Huguenots. So had the highest military commander of France, Admiral Coligny. Ministers were coming into France who had been trained in the doctrines of the sovereignty of God under men such as Calvin and Beza. Sometimes these ministers came in openly and served their churches freely. Mostly they came in secretly and served in churches unknown to any but those belonging to them. But however it was accomplished, the Reformed faith was growing in France—in numbers and in knowledge.

Such growth was not to be tolerated by the Catholic crown in France. Charles IX was on the throne after his older brother had suddenly died of a fever at sixteen. Charles was only ten. That did not matter to the Queen Mother, who ruled through her young sons. Nor did that matter to the men of the court who held great power in France. Their goal: the Huguenot party needed to be stopped. But that battle could not be won spiritually. The bold and unswerving stand of the Queen of Navarre was only one example of such a futile attempt. But a flesh and blood battle…that might be in their power to win.

Hundreds of Protestants in Paris had already been imprisoned and burnt at the stake for confessing the Reformed faith. Jeanne, Queen of Navarre, was visiting Paris at the demand of her husband, but it was a dangerous city for her as well. She received word of secret plans to end her life. She needed to get back to Navarre quickly. But how? She wrote to Louis de Bourbon, her husband's brother, for protection. He was a man of military skill and valor, and he had already revealed himself to be a leader and protector of the Huguenots. He sent a company of men to escort her out of Paris. Her escape was narrow and the rest of her journey was perilous as well. She was pursued, but arrived safely back at the castle of Pau, nonetheless. After her arrival, though, she found she needed to give orders to defend her Huguenot countrymen. Her husband, Antoine, had not only defected from the Reformed faith, he had also sent a man to lead a band of soldiers throughout Navarre to harass the Huguenots there. The citizens of Navarre were very glad to see their queen return.

Flesh and blood battles continued to rage on other fronts as well. Though the issues were not always strictly religious, civil religious wars began to break out in other areas of France between the Huguenot and Catholic parties. Jeanne's husband, now fighting on the Catholic side, was wounded in the first of these battles. He died of his injuries in November of 1562.

Jeanne sorrowed over his death. Even though he had left the Reformed faith two years ago, he had been her husband and she had loved him. She needed to raise twelve-year-old Henry alone now, along with three-year-old Catherine. And she needed to do it in these perilous times, being surrounded by wars and rumors of wars.

But at the same time, she had the helm of Navarre in her hand alone now, too. She was free to make this little country to be a haven for Huguenots and a beacon for the spread of the Reformed faith. She paid the way for twenty ministers from Geneva to come to Navarre to teach the people the truth of justification by faith alone and the sovereignty of God in all things. Jeanne could not have known how much these truths would help these people in the dangerous times that lay ahead.

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

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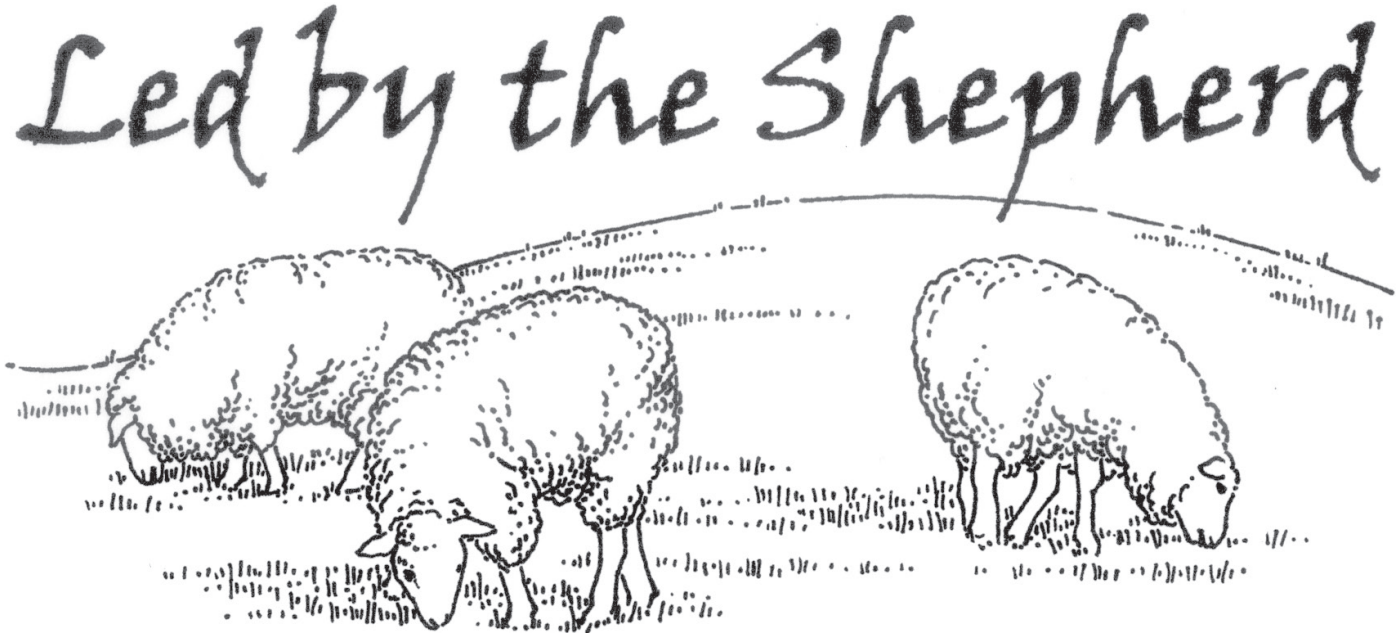

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Check out the convention website www.prcconvention.com to see what fun things are being planned and to get ideas for the "Garden Party" banquet!

Registration forms are also available online.