Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

February 2013

Editorial The Antithesis: A Challenge **Page 2**

Always Faithful God's Adopted Chosen Children **Page 4**

From the Classroom Christianity and Capital Punishment **Page 7**

Devotional Watching Daily at My Gates—February 8–March 10 **Page 11**

Choosing a Vocation Firefighter/Electrician **Page 15**

Consider the Creation God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism: (4) The Reformed Worldview **Page 17**

Church History The Twenty-first Century of His-Story: Salvation by Faith Alone **Page 18**

Federation Board Update Greetings from the Federation Board **Page 21**

Church News **Page 22**

Little Lights Ted the Turtle **Page 23**

www.beaconlights.org

Volume LXXII Number 2

The Antithesis: A Challenge

In previous articles we have examined various aspects of the antithesis. In this concluding article on the subject, we present the antithesis as a challenge in the light of Joshua 24:14–16: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods."

These words are part of Joshua's farewell address to Israel. He had led Israel into Canaan, and under his leadership they had conquered most of the land. For many years Joshua had governed them, but now he is old and ready to die. Before he does, he gives them a parting charge and challenge. He reviews all of God's wonderful works for them, and in the above passage confronts them with an antithetical choice. He does this because he knows that he will no longer be present to lead them, and he also knows the history of Israel's many falls into sin. Thus in response to his challenge, he wants from Israel a promise that in their generations they will serve the Lord.

This challenge comes also to us. Our times and circumstances are obviously much different from those of Joshua and Israel. But the choice is the same, because the antithesis is the same, and the challenge is also the same, for it is a challenge of

EDITOR
Mark Hoeksema
Email: editor@beaconlights.org

CONTENTS COMMITTEE
Ryan Kregel (Associate Editor)
Email: ryankregel@gmail.com
Monica Koole (Contributing Editor Correspondent)
Email: monica@kleynelectric.com
Matt Kortus (Contributing Editor Correspondent)
Email: mgkortus@umich.edu
Laura Kaptein (Business Manager)
Alex Thompson (Promotions)
Lenora Vander Kolk (Secretary)

BUSINESS OFFICE
Beacon Lights
Laura Kaptein
3074 Hudson Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Phone: (616) 292-8029
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BOOK SALES
Laura Kaptein
3074 Hudson Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426
Phone: (616) 292-8029
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

BEACON LIGHTS ON TAPE
A free service to the legally blind. Contact
Brad Vander Veen
11395 Hunters Meadow
Allendale, MI 49401
Phone: (616) 291-0465

CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS
Melinda Bleyenberg
Email: dmbleyenberg@tds.net

EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD
Nate Bodbyl (President)
Brian Feenstra (Vice-President)
Kylie Mulder (Secretary)
David Noorman (Treasurer)
Rachel Kamps (Librarian)
Erika Schipper (Vice-Secretary)
Joe Holstege (Vice-Treasurer)
Dan Van Uffelen (Youth Coordinator)
Rev. Carl Haak (Spiritual Advisor)
Rev. Daniel Holstege (Spiritual Advisor)

PROTESTANT REFORMED SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A function of the YP Fed Board. Funds for this Scholarship should be sent to the treasurer,
Mr. Bennett Meyer
2051 Cherry Run Court
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Phone: (561) 891-0370

Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is $15. Please send all business correspondence, address changes, and subscriptions to the business office.

EDITORIAL POLICY
The articles of *Beacon Lights* do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

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.

All submissions should be sent to the editor and must be written in Microsoft Word format.

If any material of *Beacon Lights* is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the business office.

BEACON LIGHTS ON THE INTERNET
www.beaconlights.org
Cover Photo courtesy of
Liquid Moonlight Studios

faith that comes to those who stand for the thesis. Particularly as covenant young people, you must take this challenge to heart.

Joshua presents to Israel a two-fold choice. On the one hand is Jehovah and his service. This name of God indicates that he is the sovereign God of heaven and earth, who has created all things and by his providence continues to uphold and govern them. This name of God is also his covenant name. It indicates that as the sovereign God, he is the God of his people, whom from eternity he has chosen according to his divine election, and with whom he has established his covenant. When we combine these two ideas, we understand that as the sovereign God, Jehovah causes all things to work together for the good of his covenant people, so that by his sovereign power he realizes and perfects his covenant in everlasting glory. Joshua in the preceding context has just reminded Israel that this truth is evident from their history. He has emphasized that Jehovah has given them the land of the covenant promised to them in Abraham's days. They had not conquered the land by their own efforts, but Jehovah has given them the land of rest by driving out their enemies. Jehovah had been faithful to his covenant with his people.

On the other hand are idol gods. Joshua mentions two kinds of idols. Twice he mentions the gods "on the other side of the flood." The reference is not to the great flood of Noah's day, but to the "stream," that is, the river Euphrates, where the people of God lived in Ur of the Chaldees before God called Abraham to leave and go to Canaan. We know that idol worship was prevalent at that time, usually in the form of household gods, and that it was often mixed with the worship of Jehovah. From the words of Joshua it seems that there was still some of this idolatry present in Israel, if not in reality, then in memory and therefore in possibility. The other kind of idol was the gods of the Amorites. The Amorites were a specific nation that inhabited Canaan, but are often mentioned as representative of all the Canaanites, as they are here. The reference is then to all the heathen gods of the nations that had been driven out of the land that Israel now occupied. The problem was that not all the nations had been completely driven out. There was still the influence of the heathen living next to Israel, and their idol gods were still a temptation and a threat to Israel.

Between these idols gods and Jehovah Israel must choose, according to Joshua. This was a free choice on the part of Israel. Free not in the sense that idols and Jehovah are equal alternatives. Free not in the sense that man out of his free will is able to choose either alternative. But free in the sense that the choice is a matter of the heart and mind. The choice is not a matter of external compulsion; no one is forced against his will to choose one or the other. This is clear from what Joshua says in verse 14, in which he tells Israel what choice they ought to make. But in verse 15 he immediately adds, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah," that is, "If you do not want to serve the true God," then, says he, "Choose the type of idol you want to serve, either household gods or Canaanite gods." As spiritual, rational, and moral beings, Israel faces the choice between obedience and rebellion regarding their relationship with God. Yet this choice is a matter of grace. As man is apart from Christ, his will is free to choose only the evil; he has neither ability nor willingness to choose Jehovah. It is only the grace of God in Christ, powerfully working in the elect sinner that makes the right choice possible.

The choice with which Joshua confronts Israel also faces us today. The choice takes a different form, but it is essentially the same. Jehovah is the same yesterday, today, and forever. But the idols are different, at least for us in the West. Instead of figures constructed from wood and stone, gold and silver, before which men bow down and to whom they give their allegiance and worship, we have the idols of money, success, popularity, power, fun, entertainment, sports, and more. Yet the basic question is still the same: "Whom will you serve?" The alternatives are also the same: Jehovah or idols, God or not God. And there are only two alternatives. Israel in their history had tried synthesis—a combination of Jehovah and idols—but God had taught them by hard experience that such a third option does not exist. The choice is not a both/and, but an either/or proposition.

Young people, take note. Your parents and grandparents have for the most part made their life choice. They have chosen for Jehovah, the thesis, and have rejected idols, the antithesis. This is not to say that such choice is a one-time matter, for it is not. Every one of us must make the choice of the antithesis every day in many ways, for the temptation of idols is always present in today's world. But many of you, young people, are making this choice for

the first time. A fundamental choice this is. Will you choose for Jehovah or for idols? The answer will determine many aspects of your lives—where you go to school, what your career will be, who your friends will be, whom you will marry, whether or not you will succumb to the many temptations the evil one throws at you, and more. What will you do?

Joshua in verse 14 makes clear what Israel's obligation is. The LORD is God alone, not the idols of the heathen; he is the creator and sustainer of all things; he is Israel's salvation, who has given them the land of Canaan, the Old Testament picture of heaven. Israel had the typical salvation of the Old Testament, just as we have the finished reality through Christ. With Israel we are then called to fear Jehovah. This is not the fear of terror, but the fear of respect and awe, a fear that arises out of love. We are also called to serve him in sincerity, that is, not merely outwardly, in sacrifices and other rituals, but from our hearts and with our lives. For Israel this meant specifically the putting away of their idol gods. For us it means that the antithesis arises from our hearts and becomes manifest in our lives. And we must serve God in truth, that is, not according to an idol of our own conception or making about what God wants, but as he has revealed his expectations in the Scriptures.

The fact that Joshua immediately connects fearing God and serving him in sincerity and truth with the putting away of idols is significant. His point is that the one implies the other. This illustrates the point that the thesis and the antithesis do not exist merely side by side, but rather in an oppositional relationship in which the antithesis always seeks to destroy the thesis.

At the end of verse 15 Joshua answers his own challenge. He does not wait for anyone else's decision, but takes a strong stand. He says in effect, "It makes no difference what anyone else does; I will stand alone if need be, but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." He says this not because he is insensitive to the thoughts of others, but because he does not answer to anyone but God. There is a lesson here, young people, and the application to you is so obvious that I need not spell it out. Joshua stands sharply and unequivocally for the thesis regardless of what anyone else does.

Joshua also takes a covenant stand. He does not refer only to himself, but includes his house, that is, his covenant generations. As the head of his house, he determines that his entire household in their generations will serve Jehovah.

Joshua's individual response to his challenge is echoed collectively by the people of Israel in the strongest possible language. They say, "God forbid! It is not even a possibility that we will serve idol gods." They understood clearly that serving other gods would mean forsaking Jehovah. Surely not all Israel made this response, for within the nation was the two-fold seed of election and reprobation. And in Israel's subsequent history a large portion of the nation did exactly what they say here they will not do. Often we also stumble and fall, for we are so weak and imperfect; we do not live the antithesis as we should. Yet these words are the response of faith on the part of God's people, the elect seed of Israel.

By faith we also give the answer of Joshua and Israel, understanding and believing the truth of the antithesis. When the challenge comes to you, "Choose you this day whom you will serve," what will your answer be? By the power of grace and living out of the principle of the thesis, may it always be, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."

Always Faithful — Catherine Kooiker

God's Adopted Chosen Children

As children of God we do not always think of the fact that we are adopted children. Oftentimes we do not fully realize what is involved in the word *adopted*. Adoption has come to mean a lot more to me and my family. My husband and I adopted our two sons as infants from the Grand

Rapids area. In this article, when I refer to the adoption of our sons, keep in mind that we did a domestic adoption and not an international adoption, which is much different. Earthly adoption is always a good reminder of our spiritual adoption. As you read this article, keep in mind our adoption as children of God and the fact that we are all adopted. This truth is spoken of in Romans 8:15–17: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

My husband and I were unable to have children. This was a very hard affliction. After much thought and prayer, we pursued domestic adoption. We are so humbled to have been chosen by God to raise two of his children. We were blessed with two boys over the years. We adopted both of them as infants.

The adoption process is such a rollercoaster ride, although I would not take it back for a minute. I did not have to go through labor, but I had to deal with a rollercoaster of emotions. First, we did open adoptions with our boys. The birth mother who was considering us to parent her child would call us in to meet with her. I felt as if I was being judged for every move I made. What should I wear? What should I say to her? What if I say something she doesn't like? Will I be good enough to be the mother of her child? All of these questions flooded my mind. I soon forgot that God is in control. I had to remind myself that if it was in God's plan, then we would be chosen to parent her child. Even after we were chosen, we had the uncertainty of whether the birth mother would change her mind when the child was delivered. And even after we took our sons home, we had to wait for different court dates that would finally give us legal custody of our sons. When these court dates arrived, it was a great relief, but before they arrived it was always in the back of our minds—we couldn't dwell on this. We did not withhold our bonding because these dates had not yet arrived. Rather, we knew that God was in control and we had to believe and hold on to that whatever comes to pass is in God's plan and for our good. Knowing that God was in control gave us the ability to rest in peace.

Many people would tell us not to get too attached to our son because you never know if the birth mother would change her mind. It was impossible! We fell in love with our boys the moment they were placed in our arms. We took one of our sons home from the hospital. That was so hard because we knew while we were being blessed at the same time the birth mother's heart was being ripped apart.

Oftentimes birth mothers are looked at badly. Yes, many of the children who are up for adoption are born to single birthmothers, and oftentimes the child was conceived out of wedlock. However, these birthmothers are often sorry for their sin, and they just want the best for their child. I give birthmothers a lot of credit. I witnessed firsthand the love a birthmother has for her child. I witnessed the grief a birthmother has to go through. Many others in her situation would have taken the easy way out and had an abortion. I am not suggesting or promoting that our young people who fall into sin and become pregnant give up their child for adoption. I am not doing that at all. However, I want everybody to look at a birthmother's situation. Usually, a birthmother comes from an unsupportive family and church family, if they have a church family at all. Usually, a birthmother's family is not willing to help raise the child, but encourages adoption or worse, abortion. Oftentimes the birth mother is left alone and usually without money and cannot fathom how she going to be able to raise this child. The Protestant Reformed Churches do not believe in giving a child up for adoption. On the contrary, we believe that the father or mother of the child has to step up and that his/her family and church family must be supportive as well. We do not believe that it is right to give up a child for adoption. But it is another matter to receive a child who is going to be placed for adoption anyway. In addition, we cannot forget that adoption is part of God's plan in the lives of these children. God caused our boys' birth mothers to choose us. They knew that we were Christians and that we were going to raise their children in that way. We made it known that we attend church faithfully, that we discipline our children, and that we would send their sons to a Christian school. God moved them to choose our portfolio over anybody else's. In a marvelous way God uses some birth mothers and adoption as a means to fulfill his will. What we were impressed with is that adoption of a child is God's work and not our work. We are so thankful that God was using us to bring these two children into his covenant. By placing these boys into our

home and under our upbringing, that is what God was doing. We are so humbled that God would use us for that purpose.

I want also to point out that no child is a mistake. Oftentimes adoptive children are referred to in that way. The birthmother will sometimes say, "I made a mistake." He or she may have sinned, but it was not a mistake on God's part. God does not make mistakes. He is sovereign, even over sin, even the sins of his people. Every child who is conceived is supposed to be conceived. Every covenant child is a blessing, not a mistake.

We have kept an open adoption with our boys' birth mothers. We usually see them once or twice yearly. This is good both for our boys and for the birth mothers. This will answer some of the questions that the boys may have as they get older. At the same time, it reassures the birth mothers that they made a good decision for their children. My husband and I are considered our boys' mom and dad from all aspects. We are the ones who nurture, love, and care for them. We tell the boys that their birthmothers gave them to us because of the love they have in their hearts for them. We also tell our boys that they grew in our hearts and not in mom's tummy.

The birthmothers gave their children to us because of their love for them. This means giving part of them to us so that we can love their children and nurture them. So Jesus Christ died on the cross and gave himself for us so that we might be adopted sons and daughters of God: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5). God has predestinated us unto adoption by Jesus Christ. God has planned this even before time that we should be adopted in Jesus Christ. The Lord has a perfect plan for both of our boys and part of his perfect plan was to place these boys in our home.

The truth of spiritual adoption has been impressed upon me through the earthly adoption of our sons. The whole idea is so much more real. The love I had for my boys from the very beginning is unbelievable, even to me. I know how much I love my boys, and then I think of how much Christ loves me. Then to think that Christ's love is perfect, unfailing, and unconditional. What an awesome thought! "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). Adoption shows the great love of God in making us his children. We don't naturally have a place in God's family and have no claim on his fatherhood. It is purely his love, undeserved grace, that gives us a place in his family and makes us heirs of everything that he has. And then to think that God takes those who are naturally his enemies and makes them His sons and daughters—that is even more amazing!

The Protestant Reformed Form for the Administration of Baptism states: "For when we are baptized in the name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us that he doth make an eternal covenant of grace with us, and adopts us for his children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." We are not naturally born sons of God, but predestined to be the children of God. We in ourselves are not naturally born sons of God, but it is only through Jesus Christ that we are born again and are adopted sons of God. How often are we reminded of this truth, but do not think upon it.

This truth is also taught in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 13, Question and Answer 33: "Why is Christ alone called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God? Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children adopted of God, by grace, for his sake." Lord's Day 13, Question and Answer 34: "Wherefore callest thou him our Lord? Because he hath redeemed us, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with his precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made us His own property." I think these questions and answers speak so clearly to the fact that we are not the natural sons of God, but he has made us his own sons and daughters. He even sent his son to die for us in order to accomplish our adoption. Our adoption papers are written in the blood of the Son of God.

Let's look at this truth from an earthly adoption standpoint. God has a plan for each of our lives and has determined that before time. He has chosen his own before time. God has had a plan for our boys from before time. God's plan included being adopted by us. God chose them just for us, not for anybody else who wanted to adopt. God chose them to be placed in our home. God chose them to be placed in a Christian home. Part of God's plan is for them to be raised by God-fearing parents and in Christian schools. God has blessed them with this,

and as parents we have a high calling to raise them according to God's word.

I think it is easy to forget that our children are not our own but are God's children, whether they are natural born or adopted. God places his children with us for a short time on this earth until he calls each of his children to himself. As a parent, I cannot imagine how heart-wrenching it is when God calls one of his children. We love our children so deeply and would die for them. This has to be comparable to the feeling that the birth mother often has. She loves her child so deeply and wants to give him or her a better life. Of course, this is all under God's control. God is almighty and governs all things. Even though as parents our ultimate purpose is to raise them to be God's children, I can't imagine how hard it is to give "your" child to God when he calls for his child to live with him. At the same time, our only peace in the death of our children is that they are God's children.

Adoption is just another path that God has chosen for some of his children. Adoption is another way that God calls his children from all the ends of this earth. There is so much beauty in adoption; not only how a parent longs for a child, longs to care for a child, longs to love a child, longs to see a child's smile every day, longs for the words "mommy" and "daddy," but how a child longs for parents, for stability, for love, and for the words "I love you." As children of God, we long for love and stability as well. We are given this through Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, who took on all our sins that we may be made holy in the sight of God. We have to make sure that we long for, desire, and show that love to our heavenly Father. God took us, long-lost sinners, to be his own. God has placed these boys whom we did not know into our home to be our children, but above all his children.

Ephesians 1:5–6: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

You're a chosen child
You're ours, but not by birth
But just the same, we feel
You're the greatest child on earth
You're a chosen child
Sent down from God above
Chosen to fill our home
With laughter and with love
You're a chosen child
You've given us so much pleasure
Chosen above the rest
A precious, priceless treasure.

—Unknown

Catherine is member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

From the Classroom

Stephen Mulder

Christianity and Capital Punishment

Capital punishment is the execution of a civilian by the state for some crime that the civilian has committed. Normally capital punishment is the punishment given to someone who has broken the sixth commandment, as found in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17: "Thou shalt not kill." The purpose of this commandment is "the preservation of the life and health of the body, and so of the safety both of ourselves and of others."[1]

Capital punishment is a very controversial subject in human society today. There are several reasons for this. First, society tends to establish its teaching on emotions and feelings rather than basing and

1 Quoted from Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1852), 583.

grounding its beliefs firmly on the rock of truth. In addition, the world has a mistaken idea about justice. The very first definition of justice that the *Encarta Dictionary: English (North America)* has is this: "1. fairness; fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made." However, for reasons that will be explained in this paper, this is an erroneous definition. But the chief and main reason for this antagonistic feeling for capital punishment is because the world has forsaken God and his word; they are no longer considered guidelines for the making of laws.

Therefore Christians, in opposition to the world, must know whether or not capital punishment is something to be upheld by them. They must know what is their duty concerning justice and capital punishment! This is what will be looked at in this paper.

First, let us understand what is a proper definition of justice, because a proper understanding of justice will affect our ideas about capital punishment. Plato was very close when he stated in his *Republic* that justice was doing one's duty.[2] However, Charles Hodge's definition hits closer to the mark: "The word justice or righteousness…means rightness, that which satisfies the demands of rectitude or law…."[3] Further, giving an example of how a judge should act, Hodge describes God as judge, "He is impartial and uniform in their execution [the execution of laws, SM]. As a judge he renders unto every man according to his works. He neither condemns the innocent nor clears the guilty, neither does he ever punish with undue severity."[4] Therefore, according to this author justice is that which fulfils the demands of the law. It is not being fair or reasonable. It is doing what the law requires of us and if it is not kept, it is the proper execution of punishment by the judge.

Since God himself is perfectly righteous, that means that whatever he orders is just. Obeying him means that we are acting according to justice. As will be shown in the next several paragraphs God orders us in his word to use and practice capital punishment. This means that when capital punishment is practiced properly, we act justly.

Let us now move onto a topic that deals more directly with capital punishment, that is, proving that capital punishment is a biblical concept. The first promotion of capital punishment in the Bible is in Genesis 9:6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." John Calvin expresses the idea of this verse in his commentary by stating, "… but since they bear the image of God engraven on them, he deems himself violated in their person."[5] Matthew Henry in his commentary further explains the idea: "When God requires the life of a man from him who took it away unjustly, the murderer cannot render that, and therefore must render his own in lieu of it."[6] The combined idea of these commentaries is that since man is created in the image of God, his life is a very precious thing. Thus if someone commits murder, the murderer cannot give that life back, so his life is required out of justice. This idea makes capital punishment just!

Another passage that promotes capital punishment is Romans 13:4, "For he [the magistrate, SM] is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." This verse clearly promotes capital punishment. The magistrate does not bear the sword in vain against those who do evil. He may and must use it to punish criminals. Notice also that the magistrate acts in the place of God to execute temporal judgement. That is why he is called the minister of God. Thus there are texts that actively promote and command the use of this punishment. The Christian who adheres to the concept of *Sola Scriptura* (using the Bible as the only rule of faith) must therefore promote this method of punishment.

Nevertheless, there are various objections to the concept of capital punishment. An objection that is often raised is along the idea of Romans 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." The reasoning behind this protestation is that since vengeance is of the Lord, capital punishment is not proper for the

2 Plato, *Republic Book IV (http://www.wisdomhomeschooling.com/online/Politics/Republic4.htm).*

3 Quoted from Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, (Baker Book House Company, 1988), 153.

4 Ibid, 153–154.

5 Quoted from John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Volume I Genesis,* (Baker Books, 2003), 295.

6 Quoted from Matthew Henry Commentary on Genesis, (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.Gen.x.html) accessed May 28, 2012.

follower of Christ to practice. In answer to that, it must be shown what the position of the magistrate is. It has already been shown in Romans 13:4 that he is the minister of God. Being the minister of God, he acts in the place of God. God has placed him in this position by his providential hand. It is his duty to make sure that proper justice is done and meted out. It must also be noted here that this position differs radically from the locus of the individual. An individual may not avenge himself because he is not in an area of authority and has not been placed by God in authority. Since he is not in authority, God has not given him the right and responsibility to deliver justice to the wicked. That alone is the charge of the authorities. It is the duty of the individual to love his neighbor. Therefore the biblical answer to this objection is that the magistrate acts on earth in the position of God. God delivers just punishment to evildoers, both in this life and eternally. Therefore the magistrate may deliver just punishment to evildoers.

Another objection that is on somewhat the same foundation as the last objection, is this: Christ has commanded us not to reward evil for evil, as Matthew 5:38–39 states: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Our response to this is that this text speaks of the individual acting by himself, to punish whoever has done evil to him. The individual may not execute judgement. That is the responsibility of the courts and the magistrates. There are several reasons for saying this. First, Christ in a large portion of his sermon on the mount has been refuting erroneous misunderstandings of the law. Thus when Christ says things like, "ye have heard that it has been said of them of old time," he is refuting the misconceptions of the law. Second, the Jews were misinterpreting texts such as Leviticus 24:17: "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." They thought this spoke of personal vengeance. Therefore, Christ is not destroying the just law of retribution. He is rebuking the Jews for their acts of private vengeance. Also it must be remembered that God is a just God; he would not destroy justice. If he did, then there would be no need for Christ to have made satisfaction for all the sins of the elect on the cross.

A common question that comes up when capital punishment is discussed in accordance with the Bible is why Cain was not killed for killing Abel. John Calvin probably has the best answer when he writes on Genesis 4:15: "…nothing was granted to Cain for the sake of favouring him; but for the sake of opposing, in future, cruelty and unjust violence. And therefore Moses now says that a mark was set upon Cain, which should strike terror into all; because they might see, as in a mirror, the tremendous judgement of God against bloody men."[7] And further, speaking concerning Genesis 4:24: "God had intended that Cain should be a horrible example to warn others against the commission of murder; and for this end had marked him a shameful stigma. Yet lest anyone should imitate his crime, he declared whosoever killed him should be punished with sevenfold severity."[8] Thus, capital punishment was not used on Cain, but a mark was given him. This mark was an example to man of the horrible punishment that would await him who followed Cain's example.

Yet another objection to this principle is that the possibility of error is very large when capital punishment is used and there is no way to correct the mistake after the person has been killed. To answer that, God still demands that capital punishment be used. Let us turn to a pre-meditated miscarriage of capital punishment found in the Bible. In 1 Kings 21 there is the story of how Ahab desired the vineyard of Naboth. Jezebel ordered Naboth to be tried according to the testimony of false witnesses who said he blasphemed God and the king. For this blasphemy Naboth was put to death and Ahab gained possession of the vineyard. The point behind this passage is that although there are still blunders (and sometimes even deliberate blunders), God still commands the use of this just punishment. This still makes it a terrible thing when the wrong person is killed, but that should not persuade us from using what God has commanded us to use! Reverend Herman Hoeksema puts it this way: "And no sentimental reasons, or false humanitarian motives, can ever excuse for disobeying the command of God."[9]

It still is a horrible thing when the wrong person is killed. That is why the magistrate must always be certain when condemning someone to capital pun-

7 John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Volume I Genesis,* (Baker Books 2003), 214

8 Ibid, 222

9 Quoted from Herman Hoeksema, *Love Thy Neighbour For God's Sake* (B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 52.

ishment. It is his calling to make sure the sentence is just. God severely punished Jezebel and Ahab for their unjust act. Ahab himself was killed in battle by the Syrians (that itself was a punishment from God), but 2 Kings 9:24–26 tells us how Jehu killed Jehoram, Ahab's son: "And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him; Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD." Later, Jezebel was thrown from her palace window and devoured by dogs. This clearly shows that God does not allow unjust actions to go unpunished.

It must also be stated that the executioner is not responsible when the wrong person is put to death. The responsibility ultimately lies with the magistrate who ordered his death. "Nor is the hangman, who executes the deed, responsible to God for it. Even when he personally should judge that in a certain case justice miscarried, and that the person whom he is called to deprive of his life was not guilty of murder, not he, but the judge, the magistrate, is responsible before God for the execution of capital punishment."[10]

One last objection to the concept of capital punishment is that the murderer is deprived of his most basic human right, that is, the right to life. This objection, however, does not stand logically, for it is a non sequitur. If the murderer is so concerned about his own life and the preservation of it, he should have thought twice about killing a fellow human being, who has just as much right to life as the murderer.

In closing, capital punishment is a biblical and just concept. Christians must promote it if they have any desire of following the Bible. Humanitarian and supposed biblical objections do not stand with the whole teaching of Scripture. Murderers must be punished justly!

10 Ibid.

Bibliography

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2008)

John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Volume I Genesis*, (Baker Books, 2003)

Herman Hoeksema, *Love Thy Neighbour For God's Sake: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism* (B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955)

Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1852)

King James Version Bible

Plato, *Republic* (http://www.wisdomhomeschooling.com/online/Politics/Republic4.htm)

Matthew Henry, *Commentary on Genesis* http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.Gen.x.html) accessed May 28, 2012

Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Baker Book House Company, 1988)

Stephen is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and wrote this essay for a philosophy class.

How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?

When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

Yet a little sleep,

A little slumber,

A little folding of the hands to sleep:

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth,

And thy want as an armed man.

—Proverbs 6:9–11

Watching Daily At My Gates

February 8 ***Read Psalm 32***

This psalm and its companion, Psalm 51, recount David's journey back to blessedness after his sin concerning Bathsheba and Uriah. Notice the first word of each of the first two verses. We have encountered that word before, in Psalm 1, and it is also the first word of the each of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. That word can be translated "happy." True happiness can only be found when the sinner knows his sin, is forgiven of that sin, and can walk in a way of gratitude. Does that sound familiar? That is the structure of our beloved Heidelberg Catechism. God gives to us that happiness by showing to us the way of forgiveness. Sing Psalter 83.

February 9 ***Read Psalm 33***

While there is no title affixed to this psalm, it appears that it is a continuation of the previous psalm; therefore, it too is a psalm of David. It is a psalm of praise at the beginning, and at the end it is a psalm of trust. Those who have been forgiven of sins must both praise and trust God. They must praise him in gratitude for the way of forgiveness afforded to them through the cross of Christ. Our singing must consist of that thought. Second, we must trust in him who cares for us in all aspects of our lives. He will care for us not only spiritually, but he will care for us physically as well. Let us trust and praise the one who made heaven and earth. Sing Psalter 85.

February 10 ***Read Psalm 34***

David writes this psalm while in trouble or having escaped from trouble. Notice the number of times the words "the Lord" or as it is also known, "Jehovah" are used. Jehovah is the name of God that refers to the covenant friendship that he has within himself but has also extended to his people. David and we can call upon that friendship for help in times of despair and distress. Notice that in verse 11 that friendship also extends to children. Our children are comprehended in that covenant of fellowship and friendship. What a blessing this is for them and for the parents who have been blessed with children! Sing Psalter 90.

February 11 ***Read Psalm 35***

Do our tongues speak of God's righteousness and praise all day and every day? This was David's confession even after he poured out his heart to God because of the afflictions that he had endured at the hand of many enemies. David realized that in these afflictions God was righteous. We too are afflicted. It may not be the physical afflictions at the hand of earthly enemies, but we are afflicted by many things and even by men. In those afflictions we should speak of our heavenly Father and his great righteousness. All kinds of men must hear his praise issue from our mouths. Let us do this in all the ways that God leads us. Sing Psalter 92.

February 12 ***Read Psalm 36***

Do we pray for all of God's people that he has placed in this world? This is what we see in verse 10. David not only sees wickedness around him, but he also sees God's goodness towards his people. David saw that many of those people were afflicted and needed God's help. This is our calling; we must include in our prayers petitions for those who need God. When God's people disapprove of the wickedness around them, they will incur the wrath of those who are performing that wickedness. Prayer is the way that we can make known our needs unto God. Let us pray and let us pray for others. Sing Psalter 94.

February 13 ***Read Psalm 37***

In this psalm we see a description of the righteous man contrasted with the wicked man. As you read it or reread it, look for those contrasts. They are not put there so that we can gloat over the fate of the wicked. Rather, they are there so that we can see how God cares for us even in troubles that seem to affect only those who love God. Not only can we see the contrast in the lives of these two different kinds of people, but we also see their ends. The end for God's people is a peace that only his people can have. It is a peace given only by grace. Let us rest in that peace knowing that our Redeemer lives and will return for us. Sing Psalter 100.

February 14 ***Read Psalm 38***

This is one of the penitential psalms; that is, a psalm permeated with the idea of sin and forgiveness. David was not always on the mountaintop of faith. Sometimes he fell into the mire of sin and guilt. Think, for example, of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. We too are not always on the lofty mountaintop. We too are fouled

with the mud of sin and folly. We, like David, can find forgiveness in God through Christ. As David confessed in verse 14, we find our hope in God and we can pray with David, "Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation." Sing Psalter 102.

February 15 *Read Psalm 39*

While Bible scholars are not agreed at the occasion of this psalm, it seems to be one written at some time of David's distress, either personal or from the outside. There are several verses that we might commit to memory for our profit. Read through the Psalm again and see which one you might learn. I like the first part of verse 12. May God ever hear our prayers when we are in distress. Sing Psalter 105.

February 16 *Read Psalm 40*

Here we have a psalm penned after some kind of deliverance. We have a psalm of trust, and we have a psalm with messianic notes within it. Can you find all three? Do we delight to do God's will? That answer is easy until God's will is a hard way for us to follow. But then we must remember it is God's will and not ours. Think of our Savior. As he sweated in the garden, he had to pray "…nevertheless, thy will be done." Is this our prayer? Is Jehovah's law in our hearts all of the time? Do we rely on that law to help us in a time of trouble? May we sing a new song each day because God's mercies are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness! Sing Psalter 111.

February 17 *Read Psalm 41*

This psalm, as evidenced by the last verse, forms a close to the first of the five "books" found within the psalms. Here David is sick. It appears that this sickness comes from the emotional distress caused by one of his familiar friends turning against him. Therefore this psalm has a messianic character, as the friend is a prophecy of the treachery of Judas Iscariot. Even in his distress David turns to God, as we see in the final three verses of the Psalm. We too must learn from this when we become sick from either physical or emotional causes. Sing Psalter 113.

February 18 *Read Psalm 42*

This seems to be a psalm of David written as he had been chased from the land of God's dwelling place. Like a deer seeking water, David wishes to return to God's house and worship him there. Do we have similar feelings when we are absent from God's house on Sunday? God will send to us these feelings. Do we ignore them and spend his day in our own pleasures? Read through the psalm again and see the depths of David's desire for God's house, and then examine your desire. Is it as strong? Sing Psalter 416.

February 19 *Read Psalm 43*

From the words of verses two and five, this seems to be a continuation of the previous psalm. The writer is still plagued by some affliction and seeks God's help. Notice his prayer in verse three. No matter what trouble we may have, the only solution is to pray for God to lead us out of that trouble. How does he do that? Through his word that draws us to his holy sanctuary. Neglecting the means of grace is serious; it is so serious that that sin will lead us deeper into affliction. Look for the Sabbath, people of God, and seek for the rest that is found there. Sing Psalter 120.

February 20 *Read Psalm 44*

Bible scholars do not seem able to pin down the writer or occasion for this psalm. We do not need to waste our energies doing so. It is obviously applicable for the church of all ages. The church has been and will be scattered by enemies of all kinds. Look at the nuggets of comfort found in the psalm. God is our king, and we can boast in him. We pray that he will send out his light and salvation, Christ, to rescue us. We can know that God will arise and deliver us, not because of what we have done, but for his tender mercies' sake. This psalm deserves reading often in our lives. Sing Psalter 121.

February 21 *Read Psalm 45*

While the author of this psalm may be unknown, the subject and theme is not. Christ is that subject, and love between Christ and his church is the theme. Notice all the phrases rich with symbolism that describe our groom, Christ. Do we seek him? Can we seek him? The answer to the second question is not in our own strength or desire. What is our answer to the first question? Do we seek the perfect groom, or are there others who have taken Christ's place in our lives? Sing Psalter 125.

February 22 *Read Psalm 46*

It is fitting that I write these words the day before Reformation Day 2012. It is fitting because it seems that this psalm was Martin Luther's favorite. The author and circumstances of the writing of this psalm are unknown, but it can fit in any time period and at any stage of the church's life. David could have said it. The Old Testament church in its later history may have thought of God, its refuge. This psalm should be dear to our hearts. How often do we not need a refuge from the storm of life? How often do we need to hear the words, "Be still and know"? Read this psalm often, people of God, and profit from it, as many before you have done. Sing Psalter 128.

February 23 *Read Psalm 47*

The circumstances of this psalm are unknown. It is obviously a psalm of praise. Some think that it was penned at the time the ark was brought to Jerusalem. Others look at it as a prophetic psalm pointing to Christ's ascen-

sion into heaven. God's people are called to praise him. He is to be praised because he is the God of limitless majesty. This is the reason given in the first part of the psalm. In the second we see him ruling as the supreme and sovereign king over all the earth. God is our king; let us praise him now and look for the day when we will praise him in glory. Sing Psalter 129.

February 24 *Read Psalm 48*

In this psalm, obviously meant to be sung, rings triumphant praise for God. God is to be praised for all that he has done for his people. He is to be praised because he is the majestic one, ruling over all the earth. But this psalm also identifies his people. His people are likened unto Mt. Zion, that mountain upon which Jerusalem was built. The church is called to examine its history and see the victories God has wrought in them and for them. God has given to his people this refuge. Because he is there, there is no refuge to be found anywhere else. Read the last verse again. Do we need any other reason to trust in our God, who is worthy of all praise? Sing Psalter 133.

February 25 *Read Psalm 49*

After reading this psalm, we can see several things. First, the writer has suffered some distress at the hands of another. Like the subjects in the book of James, this oppressor seems to be rich. Second, the writer works at showing that the end of the wicked rich is much different from that of the oppressed righteous. He spends considerable time showing that all the rich has is for naught at the moment he closes his eyes in death. Third, comfort is found in the psalm for the child of God. This is found in verse 15. It begins with that key little word "but." Read that verse again and know that God is the redeemer whom we need to prepare us for the life to come. Sing Psalter 135.

February 26 *Read Psalm 50*

Like the previous psalm, this one is also a psalm of instruction. We can see two main themes. First—and this one is important—there are two ways of carrying out our religious life. We can do it outwardly but not take into our souls the real meaning of loving God. This was Israel as they brought sacrifice after sacrifice, but their hearts were not right with God. This could be us attending church Sunday after Sunday, but making it only an outward appearance and not one from the heart. Second, as is found in the New Testament, we can use our songs of praise to God to instruct those around us. May we sing and make melody in our hearts for God's glory and the good of those who hear us sing. Sing Psalter 137.

February 27 *Read Psalm 51*

The context of this psalm is easy to deduce. The title attests to it, and the psalm's words do as well. This is a penitential psalm; it is one from which all Christians can gain instruction. The sinner must repent of his sin. In the way of that repentance comes a peace that can not be found from any catharsis on this earth. God gives to his people that peace. Finding forgiveness, it behooves the forgiven sinner to thank God in words and in actions. This is the intent of the often-forgotten last part of this wonderful psalm. Sing Psalter140.

February 28 *Read Psalm 52*

David in fleeing from Saul occasions the murder of the priests at the hands of Doeg. David laments their deaths and speaks his mind about Doeg's treachery. But yet we see God's hand in this as well. Those priests were descendants of Eli. God had marked them for this event himself because of Eli's weaknesses concerning his sons. Does this excuse Doeg? It does not; all men are responsible for the evils that they commit. As David ends this psalm, he gives thanks to God for the mercies shown to him and promises to look to God for his help, as we must as well. Sing Psalter 145.

March 1 *Read Psalm 53*

This psalm is very similar to Psalm 14. There are many theories why this is so. But one thing is certain: if God repeats himself, we must listen. Is the psalmist talking about an enemy or about his own people? Either or both can be true. The word "fool" is not usually used for the people of God, but there are times when we act foolishly. The hope is found in the final voice. Whether help is needed against an enemy or to remove sin from our lives, salvation comes only from Jehovah. May that last verse be a constant part of our prayers. Sing Psalter 146.

March 2 *Read Psalm 54*

From the title we learn that David wrote this after being betrayed by the Ziphim, or people from the town of Ziph. These people were his relatives. They were from the tribe of Judah, but they had not embraced David as one chosen by God. This prayer is one we can take upon our lips and hearts when we are in trouble. Jehovah is our help; he will save us in times of trouble. Our response to this salvation should be one of praise, as we see in the last part of the psalm. Let us pray and let us praise him from whom all blessings flow. Sing Psalter 147.

March 3 *Read Psalm 55*

As you read through this psalm, which verses did you choose to be most comforting? There are several that the Christian may take to heart to sustain him when he is under affliction. Obviously David wrote this when under duress from some enemy. From the thoughts in verses

12–14, it appears that Ahithophel is spoken of, and that this was written concerning Absalom's rebellion. David tells us to pray often in verse 17. Is this our habit? Do we bring all of our cares and troubles to God in prayer? Verse 22 provides a comfort that can only come from Christ who bears our burdens. He calls his weary ones to himself and takes their burdens from them. Let us do this daily in the way of prayer and supplication. Sing Psalter 150.

March 4 *Read Psalm 56*

Have you noticed that when David was in deepest affliction, he takes up his harp and pen and writes beautiful music that ascribes praise to God and trust in him? This psalm, according to the title, was written when he was in Gath the first time. When he realizes his foolishness in being there and the hopelessness of his situation because of his solution to his trouble, then he prays the beautiful words of verses 3 and 10. Do we take these words upon our lips? As we lie on our beds at night, do we think of God when we cannot sleep because of the worry that has descended upon us? Both Psalms 55 and 56 give to the child of God great comfort and great hope in affliction. Sing Psalter 151.

March 5 *Read Psalm 57*

As we can see from the title, David pens this psalm as he is fleeing from Saul. It seems that he is trapped in the cave at Engedi with no hope of escape. David does what we must all do when in trouble: we must turn to our God. God is our refuge and strength; he will deliver us from any troubles in which we may find ourselves. We also see the confidence that David has in God as he breaks forth in beautiful words of praise. Are our hearts fixed on God? Will we praise him with our whole being all the days of our lives? Sing Psalter 155.

March 6 *Read Psalm 58*

Here we have one of the imprecatory psalms of David. An imprecatory psalm is one in which God's vengeance is called down upon the wicked. David has felt the stings of the wicked in many forms. In the psalms he uses many pictures to show God's wrath coming upon those wicked. Why did David use such a tactic? Why may we read and pray such prayers? The answer is found in the last few verses. One reason is for our comfort as we battle Satan and his hosts. The second is that God's name may be glorified by his acts of vengeance upon those who hurt his people. Sing Psalter 156.

March 7 *Read Psalm 59*

We can divide this psalm into three parts. The first is David's announcement of enemies who would do him harm. The second is his prayer to God for vengeance upon such enemies whom he sees as harming God's church. Finally, we see David rejoicing in God, who will care for him. This Psalm is both messianic and imprecatory in nature. God's church has seen enemies since Cain killed Abel. We must pray for help in fighting against those enemies, and then we must give thanks for God's goodness in such help. Sing Psalter 157.

March 8 *Read Psalm 60*

This psalm seems to have been written after David had become king. Israel has gone through a period of departure from God and has had to be brought back to the truth, whose banner they must wave and carry into battle. After winning many battles, they look to solidify their kingdom with a victory over Edom, that type of the reprobate. David and Israel have learned to trust in God for help because man cannot provide help of his own doing. May we carry the banner of truth in our battles against Satan and sin, and may we call upon God alone for help in fighting those battles. Sing Psalter 158.

March 9 *Read Psalm 61*

Here we find the formula for the Christian in distress. The first thing that must be done is turning to God in prayer. We know that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." These prayers for deliverance must be repeated. We cannot pray once and then hope that God will help us. We must bring our needs to the throne of grace often. We must "pray without ceasing." The basis of our prayers must be the work of God himself. David brings to remembrance past mercies of God bestowed upon him. Of course, the greatest of those mercies is the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. Assured of an answer, we can look forward to lifting our voices to God in thanksgiving. Let us pray and let us sing. Sing Psalter 159.

March 10 *Read Psalm 62*

Twice in this psalm the child of God is exhorted to wait upon him. This is not easy for us, especially in the busy world in which we live. We expect instant answers to our questions. We want instant solutions to our problems. David had many questions and problems; he had to learn to wait on God for the answers and the solutions. When we wait patiently, we find that we can trust Jehovah. He will deliver us from all troubles. The last verse can be applied two ways. First, we can be patient because God will render to the wicked according to their ways. Second, we must be diligent in seeking him because he will render to us according to our ways. Sing Psalter 161.

Firefighter/Electrician

At 15 years old, and a sophomore in high school, I had no idea of what career I wanted to steer my learning towards, or what type of work I was interested in down the road. All of those decisions seemed trivial at the time, and my career seemed so far away. Yet now, almost 30 years later, it seems like it all happened in the blink of an eye.

I attended Beaverdam Christian School for K–9, and then attended Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville for my high school years. In the spring of my sophomore year, as was standard practice for all sophomores, I met with the career counselor. As he asked me what I was interested in, I wasn't sure. I thought maybe college, but a job would be okay, too. He then mentioned classes that were available at the Ottawa Area Vocational Center, and that sounded like fun. He read through the list of classes available, and electrical class intrigued me. There were two openings available and I would be the third applicant. After discussing with and getting permission from my parents, I applied. A few weeks later, through a selection process, I was awarded one of the spots in the electrical program.

It was definitely a different environment for someone who had attended only Christian schools to be exposed to a class of students from many different backgrounds. I enjoyed the class and quickly learned that I enjoyed doing electrical work. Each day I would spend the mornings at school and the afternoons at electrical class. In November of my senior year, we had a "test" day where we could demonstrate our skills to area contractors who were there to judge us. As I installed what I was asked to do in our little demonstration house, the contractor there asked if he could hire me. There was a program in place that would allow me to attend classes in the morning and then instead of electrical class, I would work on a job site to gain additional skills. This lasted 6 weeks, and brought me to the first of the year. About this time the contractor called back, asking if I could work for him again for another six weeks. The program didn't allow for that, but if the school would permit me to skip electrical class for the remainder of the year, the contractor could hire me. And they did. For the remainder of my senior year, I attended classes in the morning and then worked in the afternoons. After graduation, it just quickly translated into a full-time job.

I give you all of this background information to demonstrate that we are not in control of the direction of our lives. God uses everything around us gently to guide us in the way we should go. In the first summer of high school, I was still thinking of attending some type of college or trade school, and I even applied to some and was accepted to one. But this was 1983, and the construction field was just coming out of a slump, and there was work to do. I was eager to work, enjoyed the income, and didn't really want to leave home and head back to school. So, instead of school, I opted to continue working.

It was in those first few years while working on job sites with other tradesmen that the coffee time discussion occasionally turned to firefighting. There were two and sometimes three guys there who were on the fire department, and I was fascinated by the stories they told. With my curiosity piqued, and how quickly I get excited about new things, I started looking into joining the fire department.

After applying to be a firefighter, I expected to be accepted quickly to the department, and start putting out fires. Didn't quite happen like that. The fire chief at that time wanted each member of the department to be married, live in the city, and be somewhat settled down before he would allow them to join. For me, being single, that meant I would have to wait. Fast forward three years to 1988, and shortly after we are married I get a phone call asking if I still am interested. So off to firefighting school I go, two nights a week for eleven weeks. After the completion of that class, the state changed the curriculum and doubled the class time for those who wanted a Firefighter 1 license. I stayed in class for another 11 weeks and finished out the class. Still not sure exactly what I was getting into, I was now ready to fight fire.

In the first few years of being a firefighter, our department responded to about three calls a month. A busy year was forty. Then the city requested that we all become medically trained and start responding to medical emergencies as well. This now was completely different for us. We were working directly with patients, and entering their homes, sometimes surrounded by a chaotic or stressful situation. We have to be careful to leave that behind us and not take the stress of that home with us. Our call volume increased as well. We now respond to over 400 calls per year. This too adds stress at home. There are missed meals, sometimes missed events, and even lack of sleep when called out in the middle of the night.

As the years progressed, I moved from the role of firefighter into a leadership role. In 1995 I was promoted to lieutenant, in 2001 I was promoted to deputy fire chief for the city of Hudsonville, and in 2003 I became a certified instructor for the State of Michigan Fire Service. I was still working each day as an electrician as well. In 1992 I had left K&L Electric and started a partnership called Grand Electric in Zeeland. In 2001 I left there to work by myself and devote more time to the Fire Department. Things have changed some in the past 11 years; I now have a couple of employees; I work a few days a week as an electrician and spend a day or two working for the fire department.

Each step along the way brings rewards and challenges. With leadership there are expectations, and there are many classes that an officer is expected to take. Many of these two-day classes are offered only on Saturdays and Sundays, and that didn't work for me. I had to find a different way to make it happen. I enrolled in a daytime class in the winter when construction was slow, and did many of my classes during the weekdays. Just this past February, I finally finished Fire Officer III with a set of classes that were offered on a Friday night and Saturday. For me I made it work, and maybe that is the word of advice that I can offer is to be patient. It took a long time to get everything completed, but sometimes that is okay.

Working as a firefighter brings me into many situations. We normally see people when they are having a bad day. From fires to illness to car crashes to trying to revive someone to no avail, I have been there. What motivates me? What gives me the desire to do this work? The answer has changed over time. In the beginning it was the lure of excitement, the thrill of the job; as time goes on, it is a heart of compassion that wants to help others. It is the ability to use the gifts that God has given me to lead others, to teach new firefighters, to help those in need, all while showing an attitude of thankfulness to God.

My advice to the young reader who finds himself where I was some 30 years ago? Be patient. Wait on God. Pray each day for direction. Wherever you are called to labor, whatever is your station in life, embrace it with thanksgiving. Work each day in gratitude to God. Show others that you belong to him. Along the way, make sure your decisions are guided by the word of God. Question those things that arise in your lives and present themselves as opportunities. Should I work here? May I work here if Sundays are mandatory? Is this a good environment for me? Am I serving myself here and my interests? Am I fulfilling my calling as a father, mother, husband, or wife? Am I trying to turn stones into bread? Too often we make excuses to compromise our beliefs. We feel that no one understands the circumstance we are in, or that we don't have any other options. Keep in mind that God loves each one of us, cares for us, even when we make mistakes, and his promise is that he will never leave us or forsake us.

Would I encourage a young person to consider a career in the fire service? Maybe. All of my service has been on a part-time basis in which we are considered paid on call. The only Sunday work is when there is a call and occasionally that does occur. If someone is considering a full time career in the fire service, it would be advisable to check out fully what all of the requirements would be. Some departments require union membership; some have training or meetings on Sunday. Make sure that your goals and practices are in accordance with living an antithetical life. Whatever vocation you choose, do it carefully, work diligently, and live each day for the glory of God.

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

God in His Mighty Power Created No Possibility for Evolutionism

(4) The Reformed Worldview

We of the Reformed, biblical worldview, only by the grace of God, have been enabled to see how creation so clearly shouts that it is God's alone. Having that worldview, we examine all things through the lens of Scripture. Through this lens we see that creation preaches the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). It shouts at us so that we see very clearly the hand of God. As Romans 1:20 says, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Everything we see in creation and all that happens around us makes sense with our Reformed, biblical worldview. There can be no other way! There is not even the possibility for evolutionism. There is either God or there is nothing. We have no existence apart from God. Obviously there cannot be nothing, because here we stand today. It is God, and God *alone*. All glory to him!

With a Reformed, biblical worldview we confess a literal six day creation as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. This view is becoming a rarity as time goes by. This view of a literal six day creation stems from a view of the whole canon of scripture as infallible and perspicuous.

God inspired many of his servants to write about the creation. Scripture's emphasis on the revelation of God's glory in creation is something we must hold in high regard and consider often. In addition to the creation account in Genesis, Scripture is filled with many references to creation. God gave Moses the law as recorded in Exodus 20. The fourth commandment quoted below is very clear on God's creative work in *days*, not billions of years by way of evolution.

> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8–11)

Isaiah 45:12 plainly states, "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." Emphasized in the phrase "even my hands," is God's own work in creation without the help of anything else, be it another god, or a process such as evolution. God himself created all things *out of nothing*. Nothing *physical* existed before the creation that God used to form the created universe of Genesis 1 and 2. Romans 4:17 clearly states this: "God…calleth those things which be not as though they were." There was no chaotic, uncreated state of matter before the creation act that God used to form the orderly universe, because nothing existed except God. God, who alone is eternal, created time and the universe as we know it within eternity to carry out his plan, that he alone might be glorified. This plan was with him before time in all eternity. God created all things *out of* his eternal counsel. He gave what was already in his eternal counsel *existence*. Herman Hoeksema brings out this idea in depth in volume 1 of *Reformed Dogmatics*:

> The idea expressed by the term *to create* is most probably that of separation, of cutting off, and in this way giving separate being and form. Out of his eternal counsel, God separated the things and

> all creation by an act of his almighty will and gave them existence, not in themselves, but existence that is essentially distinct from his own being. He separated and defined the several creatures also in relation to one another so that each creature is distinct from all other creatures, even though the creatures together express the harmony and the unity of God's thoughts (p 243).

Creation is one of the means God is made known to us, as the Belgic Confession states:

> We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith (Romans 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse (Belgic Confession, Article 2a).

As if his revelation in creation is not enough to convince a man to glorify God, he also "more clearly" makes himself known to us in his word:

> Secondly, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation (Belgic Confession, Article 2b).

To his glory. This is the reason we were placed on this earth: that we might observe all the things God has done and is doing, and glorify him. If you add anything to God's act of creation, such as millions of years of evolution, you are taking away from his power, glory, and holiness. When you lose a literal interpretation of Genesis, the foundation of all of Scripture is lost!

Both sides have the evidence—Scriptural and scientific—of creation. In the end, your worldview shapes how you interpret Scripture and the evidence found in creation. Evolutionists have all the proper tools at their disposal to see God's hand alone in the creation of the universe. They have all the knowledge they need, only they lack wisdom to interpret that knowledge, and fail to give glory to God. In this they are willingly ignorant (2 Peter 3:5).

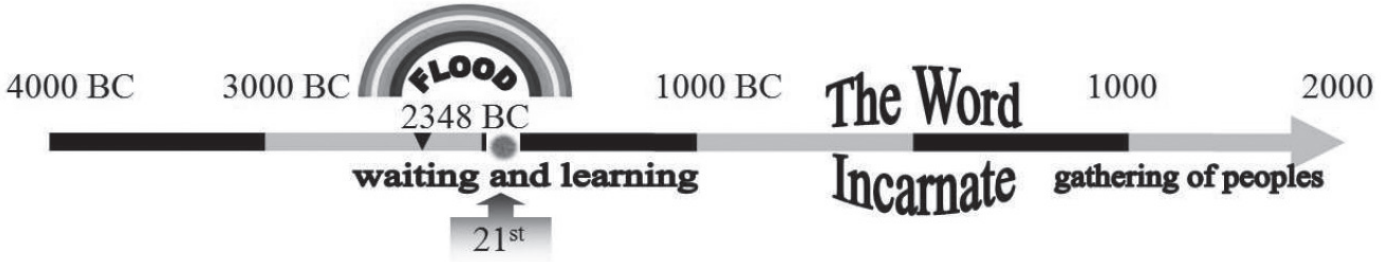
Theistic evolution is a third stance many take in the creation/evolution debate. Theistic evolution is not even a possibility. It is not biblical nor does it make sense in any way. This is not God. To think even for a minute that God would use something like evolution over millions of years to create is ridiculous. Those in the camp of theistic evolution may think they have a biblical worldview. In reality, they throw God's revelation by the wayside in favor of "scientific fact." More on this next time, Lord willing.

Ryan is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan and associate editor of Beacon Lights.

Church History — John Huizenga

The Twenty-first Century of His-Story:
Salvation by Faith Alone

The twenty-first century since creation brings us halfway to the fulfillment of God's promise of the Savior who would crush the head of the serpent and deliver the elect from the bondage of sin. God has used 2000 years of history and eleven chapters of the Bible to paint the background and broad sketch of Christ on the canvas of history. Now God uses eleven chapters to cover a mere one hundred years of history. He begins to paint some details of the portrait. At this half-way point, God establishes his covenant with Abraham, and we have an explosion of truths regarding the salvation God is preparing for his church. Of all the beautiful truths that God reveals in and through Abraham, the truth of faith stands on the forefront. Jehovah's salvation will be applied to God's people in the way



of faith alone; it will not be earned or merited by our efforts or good works. Given the great power of sin to drag man down so quickly and seemingly reduce the church to only a few souls in a short time, this truth of faith is a great source of hope and comfort to the church as she lives in this world.

Abraham was born at the beginning of this century, only a few years after his grandfather Nahor died at the relatively young age of 148. Nahor was the sixth generation after Shem. Of those generations, Shem's son Arphaxad, grandson Selah, and great grandson Eber, along with Shem himself, continued to live during Abraham's first one hundred years of life. The aged patriarch Noah died two years after Abraham was born, at the age of 950 years. The shorter lifespan of men is striking in that Nahor died before his father, his grandfather, and six great grandparents, including Noah. What is happening? The curse of death now looms much closer to each man born into this world. This dramatic trend of shorter lives would strike terror and defiance in the hearts of the ungodly, but turn the hearts of the church in faith to the promised Savior.

By now the descendents of Ham had established the kingdom of Egypt and would soon begin building the pyramids. Descendents of Ham and Japheth may have crossed the land bridge into the Americas, or as suggested by the ancient historian Josephus, "there were some also who passed over the sea in ships." The Japhethites by now began to establish kingdoms in China and Japan, and the Indo-German tribes began to form. Descendents of Shem, on the other hand, did not explore as far but remained in the regions of Asia. Here God would prepare the stage for the glorious unveiling of the promised Messiah.

The church again was growing very small. Where godly families did exist, the masses of the ungodly around them were departing from the knowledge of the one true God, and were rapidly developing in idolatry and having a powerful influence on godly homes. Even in Abraham's home town, and within his own family circles, man was busy reducing God to human ideas and making images and idols. Here and there godly men such as Melchizedec or Job could be found with their families, but the fear of Jehovah seemed to be dying away quickly as the old patriarchs Noah and Shem grew old and died. When Noah found himself alone in the world, God called him to build the ark and preach judgment upon the ungodly world. Through the flood God demonstrated his sovereign control and power over Satan and his influence among the ungodly. This time, however, God scattered the ungodly into the world to form the various nations and peoples from which he would later gather his church. Instead of facing the ungodly each day, Abraham was called to leave his homeland and live as a pilgrim and stranger in the land of Canaan. The church had become very small, but God would now demonstrate the sovereign power of his grace to gather and preserve his church as a people separated from the world, yet living in this world.

The church needed to understand that God's plan of salvation involves the gathering of countless throngs of people, and that it will take a long time. Faith is necessary for a people living and waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises. God had commanded man to fill the earth. Generation after generation must be born, and the numbers must swell into the billions. Each one of the elect, chosen from all eternity, must be born in his or her time of history and live in this world in a spiritual antithesis for the time appointed by God. Life in this sin cursed world, for however short or long a span, is necessary to prepare each child of God for life eternal and give a taste of what it means to belong to the body of Christ. All this life takes time. The salvation God has in store will not be fully realized until every last child has been prepared, and the church must learn to wait upon God and know that God will accomplish what he has promised. God walked with Abraham

in covenant fellowship to teach his church what it means to live by faith in this world.

In Abraham we find the whole spectrum of spiritual life experiences that every child of God can expect to face. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29) God called him out of Ur and Haran to reveal the truth of the antithesis and our calling to live as pilgrims and strangers in this world. Canaan was a picture of heaven: perfect covenant fellowship with God. Salvation would not be fully enjoyed in this life and world, but will involve a radical move and change. Abraham and all the patriarchs were called to live among the Canaanites, but to remain spiritually separate from them. We see how God graciously sustained his covenant friend when he stumbled and fell in unbelief when he left Canaan and went to Egypt. God led Abraham through the painful experience of watching the chastisement of his dear nephew Lot, as well as the blessed meeting with Melchizedek after delivering Lot from his enemy. He demonstrated his faith when he refused to strive with Lot over the best land. He refused to take a gift from the wicked king of Sodom, but did receive gifts and a blessing from Melchizedek, the godly king of Salem. God had promised him a child, and God strengthened his faith by reassuring him of his promises and establishing a covenant bond of friendship with him. When Abraham saw the great dangers and threats to his spiritual life with God and the promises of God, God provided perfect consolation and comfort in the covenant relation that he established. The wonder and power of God's grace is revealed in the wonder of Isaac's birth. God revealed the comforting truth that he will provide everything necessary for salvation when he provided the ram instead of Isaac for the offering.

To be sure, the church already knew about faith. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice, Enoch was translated, and Noah prepared an ark (Heb. 11:4–7). The church always has had a "certain knowledge whereby [we] hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in his word" (Lord's Day 7), but now as God readies the church for the promised Savior, he will assure her that all the benefits of salvation found in Christ alone are received by faith alone. The salvation that God has in store for the church is not something that God's people need to earn or merit, or even be persuaded to make a decision to accept. This faith that opens our eyes to see God's salvation for us and assures us that it belongs to us is worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as we hear the word of God (Acts 16:14, Matt. 16:17). It is in the life of this man Abraham that God develops and illustrates this beautiful truth of faith. God will have his church to know and have an assured confidence first and foremost that this wonderful salvation he has promised and the merits of Christ belong to her and to each member individually by a true faith.

In these chapters of Genesis, God records for us how he taught Abraham the beauty of faith. Instead of relying on his own earthly wisdom to solve what he perceived to be problems of drought, the desires and ambitions of wicked men, and having children, he learned to trust that God would provide. As God spoke to him and the Holy Spirit applied that word to his heart, Abraham's faith grew and deepened. The trials that God sent served to strengthen that faith and bind him ever more tightly to God. And through that bond of faith God revealed to Abraham and the church more clearly his plan and certain elements of the salvation he had prepared. The gathering of God's people will be an enormous multitude and it will take time, so God's people need to learn to wait and live in hope.

Abraham learned that the old man of sin would cling to him all his earthly life and battle against the new man in Christ who walked by faith. Faith would grow weak, and he would experience the troubles of sin. Relying on his own wisdom and works in an attempt to "help" God fulfill the promise of a son, Abraham took Hagar, who gave birth to Ishmael. By the time this century of history came to a close, Ishmael was a young boy of five years old. The child no doubt brought some joy and delight to Abraham's life, but it was only an earthly joy. God would soon reveal his purpose and plan to give him and his wife Sarah a child when this looked impossible from a human perspective. Salvation would be a wonder of grace worked by the power of God alone. To that truth the church must cling by faith.

John is a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa and the former editor of Beacon Lights.

Greetings from the Federation Board

The Federation Board of Young People is going into another busy year and would like to keep you informed on what the Fed Board is, who serves on it, and what we have been working on as of late.

The Federation Board works on behalf of our young people to serve three main purposes. The first is to enable the PR Young People's societies to work in close unity with one another. The second is to guide the societies so that they can develop in faith and doctrine through the means of a Federation paper—the *Beacon Lights*, which has a staff of its own. The third purpose is to give unified expression to our specific Protestant Reformed character. This character is founded upon the holy and inspired word, for which we are so thankful to God that he has given it to us and to our children so that we can dwell together and experience the unity of Christ. The members of the Federation Board are elected by the convention delegates to serve two year terms. This term includes supervising the *Beacon Lights* and bringing together the different young people's societies. The Fed Board is also in charge of planning the Easter and Thanksgiving mass meetings, as well the pre-convention singspiration. Finally, the Board oversees the convention each year. In addition to selecting the host church, the board helps guide them through the process.

The elected board consists of 10 people. The President is Nate Bodbyl. The Vice President is Brian Feenstra. The Secretary is Kylie Mulder. The Vice Secretary is Erika Schipper. The Treasurer is Dave Noorman. The Vice Treasurer is Joe Holstege. The Librarian is Rachel Kamps. The Spiritual Advisors are Rev. Dan Holstege and Rev. Carl Haak. Dan Van Uffelen is the Youth Coordinator.

Recently, the Federation Board has approved a new funding policy for the hosting churches of the convention, which will help ease the financial challenges that hosting a convention entails. The Federation Board finances are stable. Financial reports are available from the treasurer upon request.

You may have also noticed some changes to the *Beacon Lights* over the last several months, as we have had a transition of staff and a different look to the magazine. We are very thankful the *Beacon Lights* continues to be a source of godly writings for the young people and to others.

In closing, the Federation Board asks that you remember us in your prayers as we strive to serve God in our offices. We are thankful for the responsibilities he has given to us and pray for wisdom

Back (left to right): Rev. Carl Haak, Rev. Dan Holstege, Mr. Dan Van Uffelen, Monica Kooke, Nate Bodbyl, Dave Noorman, Brian Feenstra, Joe Holstege.
Front (left to right): Erika Schipper, Rachel Kamps, Kylie Mulder.

in our work. It is our prayer that he will bless this work and that his name will be glorified through it. Pray for our young people as well that God will preserve them as they grow in their faith and love for him. Young people, pray for one another. May you continue to grow in your knowledge and love for the truth, as you are the future of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

On Behalf of the Federation Board,
Nate Bodbyl, President

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

Church News — Melinda Bleyenberg

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and to your children…." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Isla Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Shawn Kamminga—Faith, MI
Gavin David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Rau—Faith, MI
Samantha Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Horvat—Georgetown, MI
Andrea Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin Visser—Georgetown, MI
Harvey James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Kuiper—Georgetown, MI
Kaleb William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Joostens—Grandville, MI
Morgan Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick Kamps—Grandville, MI
Penelope Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike VanderKolk—Grandville, MI
Ellie Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Bodbyl—Hudsonville, MI
Willem George, son of Mr. & Mrs. George Kamps—Hudsonville, MI
Tarrin Fay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Kortering—Hudsonville, MI
Lydia Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Westra—Hull, IA
Daniel Eric, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Tolsma—Loveland, CO
James Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Calvin denHartog—Lynden, WA
Blake Evan, son of Rev. & Mrs. Clayton Spronk—Peace, IL
Isaac Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Medema—Peace, IL
Ross Nathaniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael DeJong—Peace, IL

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 6:13

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

Tess Hoekstra, Emma Hoekstra, Andrew Bos, Andy Hanko, Kurt Hanko, Braden Copple, Martin Feenstra, Nathan VanDenTop—Grace, MI
Bethany Kalsbeek, David Kalsbeek, Tyler Langerak—Hope, MI
Nick Vroom, Ed VanDyke, Anna VanDyke, Dylan Vroom—Randolph, WI
Rachel Buiter, Paul Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Lexi Kamps, Tyler Kamps—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

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

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Derek Koedam and Miss Brittany Teunissen—Doon, IA
Mr. Joel VanOostenbrugge and Miss Jessica Bosman—Grace, MI
Mr. Jon Schwarz and Miss Aryn Kikkert—Wingham, CAN

NOTICE

Nearly one thousand people have already ordered a copy of the *2012 Denominational Directory*. There are still some left. If you would like a copy, call Laura Huizinga at (616) 453-6858, or send a $12.00 check, made out to Hope Young People's Society, to the following address:

Laura Huizinga
4668 Fenwood SW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49534

Tell us your name and your church and we will get the directory to you as soon as possible.

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

Ted the Turtle

Jared picked up the baby turtle and ran into the house.

"Mom, look what I found!" he said breathlessly.

Jared's mother inspected the turtle. It was about the size of Jared's hand. "Hm, I wonder if it's a box turtle."

"Can I keep it as a pet, Mom? Ple-e-ase?"

She smiled. "Maybe we can try, since it's just a baby. We have an old aquarium in the attic."

Jared gingerly put the turtle in a box for safe-keeping and ran to bring the aquarium down. He put mud, grass, and sticks inside. He filled a small bowl with water and imbedded it into the mud.

"Looks like a great turtle home, Jared," said his mother.

Jared carefully lifted the turtle by the edges of its shell and set it inside the aquarium.

"What's his name?" asked Mom.

Jared had been thinking about that. "Ted. Ted the Turtle," he said. He stroked the turtle's shell as it scrambled to the edge of the aquarium. It tried to climb the glass wall.

"Hey there, Ted," said Jared, "you don't have to try to get out. It's nice and safe in here." He carefully put Ted back in the middle of the aquarium, but Ted scrambled to the edge again. Jared and his mother went to the computer to look up information about turtles. Ted kept trying to get out.

Jared's mother sighed. "I don't think Ted likes his new home."

"But why?" asked Jared. "I gave him all the grass and water he needs, and I'll find all the food for him that he could ever want!"

"Yes, but he doesn't care about that. He just wants to be free. We better let him go, or he'll die trying to get out. He's been trying all afternoon." Mom put her hand on Jared's shoulder. "I guess he's still a wild turtle."

Jared knew his mother was right. He felt a tear form inside the corner of his eye. He had been so excited to have a new pet, but he didn't want Ted to die. He picked up the turtle one last time and brought him outside. Mom followed.

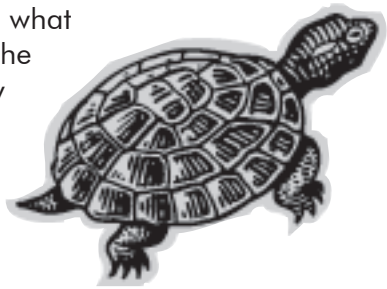
"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

"Ted reminds me of the wicked world," Jared's mother said. "You made a good home for Ted to live in, and God makes good commandments for people to live in. But the wicked are like wild creatures. They don't want to live in God's commandments. We're like that in our old man too, but—"

Jared's eyes widened. "But God doesn't let us go, like I let Ted go, does he?"

"No, he doesn't let us go," Mom added. "God has made us to be new creatures in Christ. Then we do want to obey his commandments. We never obey perfectly because of our old natures, but we still want to."



Jared thought about what his mother had said as he watched the turtle slowly toddle away and disappear into a patch of tall grass. It was true. He sinned so much—but he wanted to obey. He truly did. He loved God. God had given him that love.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:2-4).

From the passage quoted in the story, find all the words consisting of four letters or more in the puzzle on the previous page.

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

BEACON LIGHTS
3074 Hudson Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426-1518

PERIODICAL
Postage paid at
Jenison, Michigan
(UPSS046-840)