Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

September 2013

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Volume LXXII Number 9

Our God Calls Us to Be Holy

Last month we saw God's holiness revealed in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament Israel was bound to the ceremonial law of types and shadows. There was a system of sacrifices set in place by God that the priests and high priest had to perform in order to make atonement for the sins of the people. Along with this Israel was required to be separated physically from the heathen nations around them. This whole system of separation and legal sacrifices was imperfect because it could not make ultimate satisfaction for their sins (Heb. 10:11). These all were instructive types of the fulfillment to come in Christ, the great high priest. Christ came as the mediator of the New Testament to redeem us by his death (Heb. 9:15). "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh [Old Testament type]: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? [New Testament fulfillment]" (Heb. 9:13–14). The Old Testament types of physical separation and legal sacrifices have passed away. The fulfillment in the New Testament through Christ's blood is now in place, so that we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to live unto him. God has put his law in our hearts (Heb. 10:16). We have been given Christ, who redeemed us by his one blood sacrifice. Although we do not see Christ face to face on this earth as the apostles did, we behold him as he is clearly revealed to us in his word and he also dwells in us by the Holy Spirit. "And I

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will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16–17). We emphasize that Christ is clearly revealed to us in Scripture, especially in this post-modern, truth-denying age. Over against post-modernism, we can know truth, for God has revealed it to us in his word, and he has given us his Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth. This Spirit enables us, who are incapable of living holy by our own will, to live holy in this life.

In order to begin living a holy life on this earth we must have a clear understanding of sin and how serious our holy God is in his hatred of sin. There is a plague assaulting the church in this post-modern age; this plague is the refusal to call sin, sin. As children of the holy God who have been sanctified and set apart to serve him, we must call sin what it is: sin. This is the clear message of Scripture, but the post-modernist says: "We can't really be sure what the Bible says about homosexuality or the Sabbath day." If this is true, the antithetical line we are called to walk is now blurred and undefined. If this is true, there is no separation between sin and holiness. When this line is blurred and even removed, it is an absolute disregard of the holiness of God. Hebrews 10:26–27 makes clear the great danger of post-modern thinking: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." We must take great care not to do this in our own lives. With certain sins we might say, "I'm not really sure if this is right or wrong [when in our hearts we know it is wrong], but I'm going to do it anyway." We say this when we have the clear revelation of truth before us. There is a line drawn for us between sin and holiness, and we have been given the Spirit of truth to discern by using Scripture. We cannot walk with one foot across the line in the mire of sin and the other foot grounded firmly in holiness. There is no such thing as a carnal Christian. Scripture is clear in this regard. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Also: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:12–13). Read Psalm 101 and notice the clear and uncompromising language of separation. "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (v. 3). "A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person" (v. 4). "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer" (v. 5). "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (v. 7). "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (v. 8). This is strong language. But so important is our separation from sin, that God clearly revealed it to us in his word.

How do we live in holiness in this life? How can we? We are not capable of doing any good of ourselves, because we are born in sin. Only God through the work of the Holy Spirit in us will lead us to walk a life of holiness. That's why David in Psalm 101, when vowing to live a life of holiness and cutting off the wicked and wicked things from his life, asks, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" David realized he could not live a life of true godliness unless God first worked in his heart to carry out that confession. He realized he was a weak man, prone to sin. So also we are weak and must humble ourselves before God and pray, "Come unto me. Work in me that I may live out this confession to live a sanctified life, for in thy strength alone can I do this." The Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 44 shows how weak we are when it says that "even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience" that is required of us. With our own human frailty in mind, we look forward to the final perfection of our holiness.

As we are called to live separate from sin in this life, we are reminded of the final separation: the vast gulf between elect and reprobate when Christ will come on the clouds of heaven in judgment to take his elect home to dwell with him in eternity, and will cast the reprobate into hell for eternity.

When we get to our eternal home in heaven, we will see God face to face. We will see him as he is in his perfect righteousness and holiness. We will be clothed in robes of his righteousness. White as snow and released from all sin and guilt, we will worship

him in perfection for eternity. With this beautiful view toward eternal life in heaven, perfectly righteous and perfectly holy before the Holy One, we are encouraged toward holy living in this life.

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

Ask Schuyler

When Was Hell Created?

Dear Schuyler:

When was hell created?

The Bible does not answer this question directly. Therefore we need to be sober and circumspect in our answer. Jesus tells us that hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). We know that God created all things in the space of six days. We know too that the devil and his angels fell sometime before the fall of men, and that the devil and his angels were originally good. Many place the creation of angels on the first day of the creation week because they rejoiced at the laying of the earth's foundation (Job 38:6–7). Since the devil and his angels were originally part of the "very good" creation of God (Gen. 1:31) we must place their fall after that pronouncement of "very good."

We also know that reprobation (of both men and angels) is an eternal decree. Therefore God created hell as a place of eternal punishment before he created the angels and men who would later fall in his eternal decree. We conclude this because after the sixth day of creation God's creative work was finished. Beyond those remarks we cannot and should not go.

John Calvin wrote "Some persons grumble that Scripture does not in numerous passages set forth systematically and clearly that fall of the devils, its cause, manner, time and character. But because this has nothing to do with us, it was better not to say anything, or at least to touch upon it lightly, because it did not befit the Holy Spirit to feed our curiosity with empty histories to no effect. And we see that the Lord's purpose was to teach nothing in his sacred oracles except what we should learn to our edification. Therefore, lest we ourselves linger over superfluous matters, let us be content with this brief summary of the nature of devils: they were when first created angels of God, but by degeneration they ruined themselves, and became the instruments of ruin for others" (*Institutes*, Book 1, chapter 14, paragraph 16).

Much more important than these questions of hell is the issue that we not go there. The Bible urges us to believe in Jesus Christ, and assures us that we who believe will not perish. In the way of faith we flee from the wrath to come. And the Bible warns us about that struggle that we have with the devil and his whole dominion. Let us put on the whole armor of God and resist the devil, and let us not permit genuine curiosity to lead us astray from what is truly important (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Peter 5:8–9; Rev. 12:9–11).

Schuyler

Surely the churning of milk
bringeth forth butter,
And the wringing of the nose
bringeth forth blood:
So the forcing of wrath
bringeth forth strife.
—Proverbs 30:33

Called to the Ministry (2)

"Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Such was the tremendous sense of the holiness of God that struck so deeply the soul of Isaiah that it caused him to cry out those Spirit-inspired words recorded in Isaiah 6:5. Something of that deep and abiding sense of the holiness of God is, I believe, what is needed in the soul of every young aspirant to the ministry.

Unlike a vast majority of the youth of our churches who are born and raised in God-fearing covenant homes and taught in our distinctively Reformed Christian Schools, I grew up outside of such a covenantal environment. Dear youth, what a rich heritage you have been given. Are you thankful for and making the most of it?

I was born in a suburb of the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, the younger of two sons, and my family moved to Singapore when I was four. Educated well in the secular education system there until age 18, I was a self-declared "free thinker" throughout my childhood and teen years. I had a great love for math and liked to read books by the philosopher Bertrand Russell, one favorite title being, *Why I Am Not A Christian*. However, little did I know that things were going to take a turn when I was awarded an overseas scholarship to study computer science and left the country in 1987 to pursue that course of education at the University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign. It was there, midway through my junior year in college and through a witness given by an on-campus International outreach Christian group (I would later discover that it was fundamentalist Baptist) that I was led to confess repentance from sin and faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. After finishing my college education in Champaign, I moved to the University of Maryland in College Park and obtained my master's degree in computer science. There I continued my association with an on-campus Christian group that was under the same organization as the one in Champaign.

As a young believer, though I enjoyed fellowship with these groups of believers, I was never entirely satisfied with some of the issues I faced at Bible Study. One issue that troubled me was that though I was taught that God loved everyone in the world and sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for everyone equally on the cross, yet God declares in his word in Romans 9 that "*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*." Why would God hate Esau? What had Esau done for God to hate him? Such questions I asked remained unsatisfactorily answered by all my friends, Bible study leaders, and campus pastors, and would remain that way throughout my remaining stay in the US. I resolved in my heart to get to the bottom of this issue when I returned to Singapore in early 1992.

Through much personal time spent reading and studying various Christian books, the Lord led me to embrace the Reformed faith and then to join the First ERC in Singapore as a member in 1995. It wasn't too long after I joined First ERC that the Lord placed a holy desire, even burden, in my heart for the gospel ministry. While I am not able to identify concretely any one circumstance that led to this, I will say that over the course of my personal reading and studies, one thought I had within me was this: "How wonderfully rich and God-glorifying is God's truth of salvation revealed in the Bible, summed and set forth in the Reformed Faith! God is God! Yet how few there were who faithfully taught and proclaimed the truth of this great and glorious God in all its fullness!"

This desire or burden in my heart was what Rev. J. Kortering, who was my pastor during that time, told me was an important aspect of the subjective call to the ministry. I personally felt God's call in my heart. Now there was need to give evidence of its validity objectively. If God was truly calling me to the ministry, then he would also equip me with gifts for the ministry and have this demonstrated to others around me. If God was truly calling me to

the ministry, he would also open the way for me to be called by his church. Who could have imagined, though, the path that our sovereign God would lead me through?

That long and winding road taken to demonstrate this objective side of my call began immediately with taking two years of pre-seminary Greek at a seminary in Singapore during a busy, busy time in my life when I was a young father to two young boys, working as a full-time computing professional, and serving in the church as a deacon. It continued with my family and me leaving for theological studies at the PR Seminary in 2001. It went through a very difficult and trying time for me and my family when I ended up being examined and sustaining that examination at Synod 2005. It eventually culminated in a call to the ministry I received and accepted in early 2006 from the congregation at Edgerton, MN, and which would lead to my ordination and installation there.

While that was a milestone towards the establishing of my personal call to the ministry, it was exactly that: a milestone, and not the end of the call to the ministry. That call that the Lord placed in me continues to be tried, proven, and deepened through doing all of the work of the ministry: preaching and pastoring his precious flock given me by God's own hand to care for. Though I am finished with formal theological studies, the ministry continues to be a place not just for giving instruction, but also for learning and growing in the tasks given to me to perform and in my abilities—growing spiritually. What joy it is to behold God's flock doing well spiritually, and when there is peace, unity, joy and growth in the midst of her! What joy it is to be involved in and to behold a church extension work so blessed by God that it becomes an instituted church! What joy it is to behold God's people, so different from those of my upbringing but sharing the same faith, living out and enjoying their confession of their one and only comfort in life and in death, even under greatly trying circumstances! And what sorrow it is to see others mired in sin and rebellion, forsaking truth and godly admonition, and leaving their confession and the churches which so love and cherish God's truth! It is deeply humbling and at the same time a holy delight to be used by God to minister to his church on earth!

Through it all, that deep sense of the holiness of God remains with me and affects me in all of my labors: in preparing sermons from week to week and going to the pulpit to preach them, in ministering to the sick, the afflicted, the dying and the grieving, in catechism instruction, in leading Bible societies, in giving pastoral counsel, etc.

Through it all, he who is truly continually called of God must also be like Isaiah who, when asked of the Lord, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" placed himself under him and stood ready to obey and do his will. That, to say the least, is not always easy. How we must be ready always and say with Isaiah, "Here am I; send me"! Would a gifted young man consider pursuing the ministry? Let a sense of the majestic holiness of God and his great glory be in his soul. Let humility and readiness to submit to and do his will so abide with and grow in him. Let him ever and always live in the great love of God in Christ Jesus, and in trust and dependence upon him, that he may be assured of God's abiding care for him and his family wherever he is called to preach the gospel. And let him demonstrate his love for the flock by feeding her faithfully with the sincere milk of the word. The God who calls him puts him in remembrance of these things and will see to it that he does.

Rev. Lee is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois.

The slothful man saith,

There is a lion in the way;

A lion is in the streets.

As the door turneth upon his hinges,

So doth the slothful upon his bed.

The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom;

It grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

—Proverbs 26:13–15

Construction Trades

The room, if you could call it a room (it was more of a long hallway), was always dark and had a musty smell. It was only used for storage, so on the rare occasion that it was frequented, it involved either organizing or getting something that was rarely needed. It was our cellar underneath the front porch. What set it apart from all the other rooms in the house, and particularly the basement, was that the walls were left quite untouched from when the house was first built. I remember looking at the strange square thin metal objects with a ¾ inch hole punched in the middle of them sticking out of the concrete walls and wondering what they were there for.

I had other questions that came to me from time to time, which were a little more pertinent to what lay before me in life. What am I going to do for work after I get out of high school? Should I continue in the way of education and go to college? How am I going to provide for a family that God may graciously give to me? Little did I know at the time, but these questions were slowly being answered through God's providential care. He opened some doors, closed others, and also gave direction through the way of examples, instruction, and interests.

Watching my dad fix things around the house gave me a desire to have that same knowledge of how things worked. Hearing my mom encourage me to look into work that required hand/eye coordination gave me pause as to what gifts I had been given (or not given) and how to use them. Working at my first job on a farm in all types of weather shaped a desire in me to continue in a vocation that would allow me to work in God's open creation. This interest in working outdoors was laid aside for a time when I had the chance to work at Steelcase (an office furniture manufacturer) on the second shift, a job that I also enjoyed. I found many of these aspects coming together in the trades involved in construction. Due to a layoff from Steelcase and a job opportunity where my newly-wedded wife was from, I moved to Colorado.

Since moving to Colorado in September of 2001, I have been working for Walrite LLC building and pouring residential foundations. Walrite is a partnership in which we as a group have bound ourselves together as self-employed people to work under one company. After all the monthly expenses are paid out and long-term goals are addressed we split up the remaining profits as our monthly income. The company consists of roughly 9 men (depending on the time of year, i.e. summer help) and an office manager.

Our company is made up entirely of men from our congregation here in Loveland. This is truly a joy and blessing. That was made quite plain to me a few years back when we had the opportunity to complete the basement and other concrete work on the new addition to our church. I am thankful to work with others of like faith who share the same work ethic and desire to work as pleasers of God and not of man. Having a God-centered work ethic as a whole is important to the running of the company as we must rely on each other to fulfill our responsibilities to complete a job in a timely and profitable way.

The requirements of this work are best seen when we look at the various duties we have on any given day. The day usually starts with all members meeting at our shop and going over the schedule of the day and noting what needs to be scheduled for the coming day(s) such as inspections, concrete pumps, and concrete. The manager of the company, Craig Poortinga, has bid on many upcoming jobs, put them on the schedule, and coordinated material to be delivered to the jobsite at the appropriate time.

With the day's tasks laid before them, the company then splits into two groups: those who will take panels off a wall, move the forms over to another job, set them up, and pour another foundation; and those who will go and strip a footing, build and pour another footing, and get that job prepared to build and pour at a later date. Other responsibilities include maintaining tools and vehicles, recording what materials were used for each job, billing, and

purchasing necessities for the general running of the business. There exists a need for good communication with the builders/customers, honesty, clear thinking and decision-making, and knowledge of how best to work with the others of the company to get the job done right and efficiently.

There are unique realities of working in this type of trade. The hours worked can vary depending on what the economy is doing at any given time. When we are very busy, there is the pressure of getting a certain amount of work done every day. With this comes the pressure to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the builders and to use them in the best possible way. Then there can come times when we don't have so much work and there are still the needs of our families and the church. The bids for work and calls to schedule foundations don't come in. Even the work on equipment (which costs money) dries up and there is simply nothing left to do. I have experienced both ends of the spectrum in my eleven years of working with Walrite and am thankful that God is in control over all. Besides the fluctuations of the market come the changing conditions we work in every season and even from job to job. Sometimes we have to work side by side with some very ungodly, crass people who do not take rebuke too kindly. All of these realities set the environment in which we work and can be taken with a positive or a negative point of view.

I have only scratched the surface of what we do in this trade, but I can say that there are many benefits I see to the job God has given me. Some are rather trivial, like the long hot shower after a lengthy and cold day outside in the snow or rain; or the cool drink of water on a hot summer day. Even the pleasure derived from a job completed in an efficient and timely manner would fall under the trivial pleasures of the work. Other joys have a more lasting value, like growing in understanding of how people interact in different ways as the pieces of the puzzle come together in the building of a house. Or seeing ideas develop and come to fruition to better the process of what our company does. Even seeing and feeling God's might on display in a coming violent storm that could never be experienced from inside an office leaves a lasting impression.

I would be remiss in not listing some of the difficulties that come along with this trade. It can and often is very physically demanding. The aluminum forms that we have weigh around 100 lbs. apiece, and they don't seem to get any lighter as I get older. Along with this is the fact that our company has a certain customer base. When all those customers are busy trying to build houses, you become very busy and have the obligation to meet the customer's need. If these customers are not busy, you need to go and find other customers, or even other types of work to continue to pay the bills (I also see this as a blessing in disguise, for when work is slow, you quickly are reminded of how dependent you are on God for the work he provides, and can then be thankful even when you are overly busy).

To sum it all up is to say that no matter what profession God sets before you to do, you'll find that he gives you grace to see the joys in your labors, and gives you strength to patiently bear with the afflictions and work them for your profit. As young people, look to your parents and trusted adults for advice as to what strengths and weaknesses you have while making decisions for which job you will pursue. Our prayer as working adults and parents is that God grant to the youth of his church knowledge and wisdom as they seek to know how best to serve him in their labors here upon this earth.

This past Friday a few of us were eating our lunches in a completed foundation we had done last month. As we were eating, one noticed and commented to another how he had missed breaking a few of the wall ties when they had stripped off the panels. These wall ties are those same "strange square thin metal objects with a ¾ inch hole punched in the middle of them" that I wondered about as a child. My childhood question has been answered.

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

The north wind driveth away rain:

So doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

—Proverbs 25:23

Living as Lights in the World

Ephesians 5:8

I began this speech by commending the young adults who attended the retreat for their exemplary behavior, for their ability to get along with each other, and especially for their love for the Word of God. I told them that they had shown themselves to be what Ephesians 5:8 talked about: "light in the Lord."

The description of believers as "light in the Lord" is an amazing description. It's a description only used of God himself and of our Lord Jesus Christ and of believers. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, and Jesus is the light of the world, but believers are also light. That is incredible!

In his speech Pastor Kleyn compared believers to a fluorescent light bulb, a very beautiful illustration, but this description goes beyond that. A light bulb, no matter how brightly it shines, cannot be called "light." It only holds the light, but believers are light, light in the Lord.

They are light because they are children of light. That's another amazing statement. If believers are light, then the light is their father. Just as we have our personal characteristics from our parents, so spiritually we are light because the light fathered us.

That is where we must begin when we talk about our calling to be lights in the world. The word of God does not start by saying, "Do this: walk as children of light." It starts by telling us who we are and what we are. We must know that it is our calling to walk as children of light, but there is no help and encouragement in that. To be told only what we must do is only discouraging.

The help and encouragement come from knowing and remembering what we are. As light in the Lord we *can* walk as children of light. As light in the Lord we *may* walk as children of light. As light in the Lord it is our privilege to walk as children of light. As light in the Lord we *will* walk as children of light.

Notice, too, that we are light *in the Lord*. Only in connection with him, our Lord Jesus, are we light, and faith is our connection with him. By faith we are so closely joined to him that we become light, and having become light, we walk as children of light.

Chapters 4–6 of Ephesians tell us what it means to walk as children of light in the church, in marriage, in the family, in our work, among unbelievers, but we do that because of what we are in Him.

Parents sometimes say something like Ephesians 5:8 to their children, perhaps when they send them off to something like a Young Adult's Retreat. They say, "Remember who you are. Remember that you are part of our family. Remember that you are part of our church. Remember that you are a Christian. Let that determine your behavior." If we love our parents and their words mean anything to us, then our behavior is ruled by what we are as covenant young people and as church members. The word of God does that here, only takes it to a much higher level, when it says, "Walk as children of light."

The warnings that follow are there for a reason. We sometimes hide our light. We don't always walk as children of light. We don't always understand what it means to live as children of light. But if we really understood, really knew and believed, really kept in the mind and were conscious of what God has made us in Christ, we wouldn't need those warnings. It would be enough for us to be told what we are in him.

Because of our weakness and sinfulness, however, we do need those warning, as well as the reminder of what we are by grace, and the number of warnings is striking. We should not ignore them. In fact, we would do well to write them down and post them like a sign wherever there's the danger that instead of walking as children of light, we slip and fall. We could tape a copy to the dashboard of the car and put another copy in our phones with a reminder that pops up regularly. We must walk as children of light, but we must be careful where we walk, and with whom.

Notice the very first warning in verse 3: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." What could be more appropriate for the

times in which we live and with all the temptations to which we are exposed on television, on the internet and in an increasingly permissive society. The warning was necessary when Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, and it is a hundred times more important today.

Our world is a world that "blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhoreth." The stock market, the lottery, the availability of credit, the media, all fuel a covetousness that is destroying our society and the lives of our fellow citizens and that often wreaks havoc in the lives of God's people. It's covetousness that leaves us no time for church and for spiritual things, even for family. It's covetousness that very often takes mothers out of the home and away from their children. It's covetousness that keeps us deeply in debt, though the word of God says, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Read that first warning again.

Verses 11 and 12 take the warning a step farther: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." Think of all those things, so readily available today, that are described by the word of God as too shameful to speak of, and you will see the need for these warnings.

Verse 11 is especially significant. Though written two thousand years ago and in a society that was quite different from ours, Paul writes as though he had just walked into the room while the television set was on, or as though he was sitting in front of a computer and checking on what some member of the church had been looking at or listening to.

He doesn't only warn against looking and listening, but against letting those things become our friends because we are constantly in "fellowship" with them. We are warned against allowing ourselves to become addicted to these things, to filth and pornography, to adultery and fornication, to covetousness and greed through constant exposure to them.

We should think of the whole entertainment industry when we read these words and ask whether we are making the unfruitful works of darkness our friends. Think of sports or the music to which we listen. At its best it is "unfruitful," to say nothing of the works of darkness, but the question raised by God's word does not just concern the fruitfulness of those things, but whether those are things that are worth all the time, that take almost all of our attention, that capture our interest, that are our friends and fellows.

Then comes verse 6: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Don't ever think that the unfruitful works of darkness, especially uncleanness and covetousness, are harmless—that we can play around with them and dabble in them and not do so to our own spiritual disadvantage and hurt. People go to hell as a result of these things; that's what the word of God means.

Our calling to walk as children of light does not just mean that we heed the warning signs that are posted by God himself. Our calling is wonderful and beautiful. Verse 8 is positive and encouraging and the similar passage, Matthew 5:14–16, is the same: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

That believers are the light of the world does not mean that they are called to make this world a little less dark or that they are called to try and change the world for good. It means that in all the world they are the only light there is. There is no other light anywhere. Think of that: Now that Jesus has gone away, you are the only light there is in the world.

Notice, too, that walking as children of light means we do good works. It's as simple as that. Walking as children of light means that we do our daily business and do it in obedience to the word of God—to the best of our ability and out of love for Jesus, our Savior.

Good works are not something only a few people can do or have opportunity to do. We do not have to be ministers or Christian school teachers to do good works. A mother who does her work faithfully in the home is doing some of the best works a Christian can do. A man who does his work cheerfully and honestly, whatever his work may be, is doing good works of which God himself approves and walking as a child of the light.

Doing good works means that we are the best we can be as fathers, mothers, laborers, husbands, wives, unmarried persons, widows, widowers, sons, daughters, young people, old people, teachers, students, elders, pastors, deacons, members of the church—and all for God's sake and for our Savior's

sake. Then we are not only walking as children of light, but our light shines before men, and even those who do not believe can see who our Father is.

That isn't easy. Walking as children of light means that we lose friends, lose jobs, suffer ridicule and even persecution. We must be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10). We must be fully armored and ready for battle (Eph. 6:11–17). But walking as children of light we have the promise that we will see the rising of the Light in the last day and will walk in that kingdom that has no need of sun or moon or stars, where God himself is the light of his people forever.

My dear young people, remember what you are by grace. Remember what God has done for you in Christ: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

"Walk as children of light."

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Book Review — Dr. Julian Kennedy

Out of the Saltshaker

Out of the Saltshaker, by Rebecca Manley Pippert. Leicester, England: Inter- Varsity Press, 2004. Paperback, 291 pp. ISBN 0-85111-646-9.

I thought I would read this as background to the British Reformed Fellowship conference to be held at Bangor, Northern Ireland in late July of 2012, which was on the theme "Ye shall be my witnesses," because I knew this to be an influential book on personal evangelism.

The title is based on the biblical fact that believers are salt, and the author sees the local church as the saltshaker: we need to be out in the world witnessing, to reach outside of our comfortable ghetto in the church to others.

The book is a real mixture. There are a lot of worthwhile points of which believers need to take note, but the underlying theology is also a mix of truth (God is sovereign) and error (he loves all men; Christ died for all men; God's deepest desire is that no one perish; and you can become regenerated by asking Christ into your heart).

In chapter one Pippert rightly makes clear that our manner should not be offensive, and that we should not be hesitant for fear of offending. But she fails to mention that the message always is an offence, because it basically states that all human beings are sinners and are living wrongly. She says we need to show sincere interest for those we hope to influence, use questions to get to know them and what they believe, and establish a caring relationship. We need to be authentic. God can and should be a natural part of any discussion, and we should not be afraid to be transparent and even share our failings. Sharing the gospel entails sharing our lives (1 Thess. 2:8). In support of this Pippert shows how our Lord Jesus related to others, exposing his vulnerability, e.g., when thirsty and when in the garden. She shows that she understands a bit of Christology by saying that the Lord was both radical in his identification with the world and radically different from it.

She is absolutely mistaken in alleging that Jesus loved the Pharisees, but she is correct in saying he was absolutely intolerant of false religion and in saying that he is the only one in the universe who can control us without destroying us. She rightly says that the only ultimately important things are God and people, but mistakenly thinks there is some of God's image left in fallen mankind, and goes as far as saying something of Christ is in all men. She also correctly exposes the Pharisees for their hypocritical separateness from the people as opposed to Christ's being a friend of sinners.

One of the rallying calls that evangelicals use in this sphere is the call to "share Christ's love" with unbelievers There is no doubt we are called to love our brethren (Matt. 25:40), to do good to all (Gal.6:10) and to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44). But our love cannot accurately reflect Christ's love, which

ultimately is only toward his elect and is rejected and trampled on by the reprobate. In a later chapter she speaks of the primary means of pleasing God being through proper relationships, and in this she speaks truth (Jer. 22:16, 1 John 4:21), although there is much more to it, such as our personal devotion to God and public worship.

In another chapter she acknowledges the antithesis and speaks of Christ's clear denunciation of sin, but writes that it is the work of the Spirit to convict, and that he resides in us. She speaks graphically of his ministry of the towel and the whip! Fear God alone.

Having said this, she states rightly the need for diligent and persistent prayer for those God brings across our path and goes as far as saying learning to care for others requires sound theology But then to her shame she quotes from Mother Teresa talking about the Roman Catholic mass and seeing Christ in every poor beggar!

In a chapter entitled "Practicing the presence of Christ" she states that "to let people inside our lives is a frightening, but essential ingredient in evangelism," which I believe concurs with Paul's teaching in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 and 2 Timothy 3:10. She also rightly says we will be judged by our faithfulness and obedience rather than by our success. The reason for the book's title comes to the fore where she asks how we can be the salt of the earth if we never get out of the saltshaker—the fellowship of Christians. In commenting about conversation she rightly says that the truth of faith may be above reason but it is not contrary to it. She also says witnessing is telling others what God has done for us (as Paul did in Acts 26:9–23). She also mentions that evangelism is a process; it generally takes time and various circumstances to bring a person to conversion. She rightly mentions the warning of not casting pearls before swine (Matt. 10:14), and that we need to tailor our ecclesiastical vocabulary!

I think she is right in saying God has uniquely placed and gifted us to reach certain people. Can we arouse their curiosity so they will want to hear, as Christ did with the woman at the well? Generally we need to show love and care to "earn a hearing" for the gospel. She is dead right when she says that our workplace and personal interests should be our target zone for the gospel. She is also dead right saying sin is choosing self-rule rather than being ruled by God. But she is dead wrong when she encourages new converts to find a church where they feel comfortable! In presenting the gospel she calls God's love of mankind the central truth, rather than the glory or holiness of God, but correctly lists preaching, prayer, worship, and living witness as the means by which the Spirit works.

Pippert contradicts herself on the subject of regeneration and conversion She states that transformation is the work of the sovereign Spirit and that conversion is beyond our ability to control, but she sees conversion as being the human ability of repenting and believing that precedes it. She does not believe any of the five points of Calvinism and takes Revelation 3:20, as so many do, out of context, implying our ability to influence regeneration, whereas we know we are wholly passive in what is exclusively God's work. Even more dangerous and misleading is her encouraging converts to thank God for entering their lives after "praying the prayer."

Here is a quotation: "One of the primary ways we block God's Spirit is through being judgmental and critical of others." Try telling that to Stephen (Acts 7) or to Christ in his denunciation of the Pharisees. However, she is right in saying we must ask God to find a way to break through the spiritual deception and self-deception of people, and that as God's people we are called to be a close family that welcomes others into our midst. Hospitality is one means. Churches and Bible study groups should think of activities to which they could invite their friends.

Pippert disobeys the clear prohibition of Scripture every time she "preaches," but she captures the essence of true worship when she says our worship life should direct people to experience the transcendent God and should be God-centered. She challenges churches to have an evangelism strategy in which every member sees evangelism as a way of life and ministers taking the lead by example. Finally, near the very end of the book she misinterprets Christ's nickname of Simon Peter when he called him a rock rather than a stone! Her use of the Bridge Illustration is commendable, but it needs to be adapted to purge out its Arminianism. Overall the book is a worthwhile read for the tidbits of truth relating to our evangelism, but it is such a shame that the underlying theology is faulty.

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Watching Daily At My Gates

September 8 ***Read Isaiah 42***

In the first part of this chapter we see a description of Christ. The Messiah will come and bring deliverance to his people who are often despised and downtrodden by the world. We see this in verse 3. This Messiah will be a complete deliverer. As we saw in the preceding chapter, this portion of Isaiah's prophecy is written for the Jews in captivity. A man, Cyrus, would be raised up by God to deliver his people. However, Cyrus is not a complete deliverer; he cannot deliver God's people from their sins. The last part of the chapter describes the church's joy at Messiah's coming. It also has a word of judgment for those who know about the Messiah but do not receive him. Are we ready for his coming? Sing Psalter 302.

September 9 ***Read Isaiah 43***

God's people of all ages are often found in affliction. God's people in Babylon are only one group representative of the church of all ages. In their affliction Isaiah comes with a word of great comfort. Our God, unlike the gods of the heathen, will deliver us. He has made us, has sustained us, and has the ability to deliver the church from any sort of affliction. Most of us reading this do not know of the physical affliction that the church has gone through. Yet Satan uses the wicked of this world to afflict us in many ways. We have the comfort that our God is faithful and will keep us even until the end. Sing Psalter 329.

September 10 ***Read Isaiah 44***

Verse two overflows with the love and care God has for his people. First, he identifies himself as their creator and helper. Many seek idol gods for such help. As is pointed out later in this chapter, those gods are unable to be helpers, as they are made of created materials. Second, he uses those beautiful words, "Fear not." These are the words of a father to his beloved children. Even as earthly fathers seek to subdue their children's fears, God can subdue our fears, and he does it with two little words. Finally, the word Jesuran is a pet name that God has for his people. It is a name of love that he has for those whom he will deliver from the world's affliction throughout all of time. What a beautiful verse this is for us! Sing Psalter 184.

September 11 ***Read Isaiah 45***

Those who question the sovereignty of God should read this chapter over many times. First, once again we are made aware of King Cyrus who would come to power in the future. It would be this king who would allow the Jews to return to their homeland, to reconstruct their heritage, and to be prepared for the birth of the Savior. Second, those who doubt God's sovereignty should reread verse 7. Is there anything Almighty God cannot or does not do? There is nothing. He will care for his people using the working out of history as he has planned it in his counsel. This is our God; he will be with us forever and ever. Sing Psalter 133.

September 12 ***Read Isaiah 46***

As the prophecy of Babylon's destruction continues, God's people are warned neither to fear Babylon's gods nor to take them with them as they return to their homeland. God through his prophet tells the church of all ages that idolatry is a worthless act with no help for man and is demeaning to God. Do we make idols out of the things of the Babylon in which we live? Just as Babylon was not Judah's home, this earth is not our home. Our God will come and deliver us from this Babylon and bring us into the new Jerusalem where he reigns for ever. Let us fear him and walk in his way, as he is no idol, but the living God. Sing Psalter 308.

September 13 ***Read Isaiah 47***

Remembering that the theme of this book is "redeemed through judgment," we see God's judgment upon Babylon for their treatment of his people. Even though by his sovereign counsel Babylon had been used by God to punish his people, they still were responsible for the atrocities they had carried out upon them. In his mercy God would deliver his people from captivity. With that same mercy he would send a deliverer for all of his people. Even yet today we await deliverance from the bondage of this Egypt. We wait for another redemption through judgment. Sing Psalter 379.

September 14 ***Read Isaiah 48***

After addressing Babylon concerning Israel's release from captivity, God now addresses his people. He

tells them of the joy that will be theirs because of their release. He reminds them that he does this so that his name, not theirs, would be glorified. Israel is reminded of the reason for their captivity and admonished that the way of true peace is in the keeping of God's law. Do we seek "peace like a river?" There is only one way of that peace, and that way is God's way. May we ever seek it. Sing Psalter 128.

September 15 *Read Isaiah 49*

In this chapter we find the promise of the gospel. In the previous chapters we have seen the prophecy that Judah would be released from Babylon's captivity. To many this release would not seem all that glorious. Only a few will be delivered. Judah will only have a shadow of its old self. Yet that release is a picture of the redemption that will encompass all of God's people. Those people will be redeemed from every tribe and tongue. God cannot forget his people any more than a mother can forget her baby. The covenant God would send Messiah to deliver his beloved. For what more could we ask? Sing Psalter 182.

September 16 *Read Isaiah 50*

That Judah deserved to be in captivity is the theme of the first few verses of this chapter. They had decided that God was powerless to help them. This is a picture of all of us. We do not deserve redemption from our sins. We act as if God is nothing. Yet even as God delivered Judah of old from Babylon, so he has delivered us from the Babylon of sin. We do not deserve Christ. We do nothing to merit Christ. That is what makes salvation such a beautiful gift. God, out of his own loving-kindness, has given to his people a gift more valuable than any earthly possession. He has given to us life. Sing Psalter 187.

September 17 *Read Isaiah 51*

This chapter has many words of comfort, but it has a command to which we should all pay heed in verse 1. Scripture uses the idea of the rock in many places. God is called our rock in several psalms. Christ is the rock as recorded in Exodus and referred to in 1 Corinthians 10. The wise man is called to build his house upon a rock. The church is called to look unto Abraham out of whom God called his covenant people. A builder uses rock to build strong buildings. The church is laid upon a sure cornerstone. Our rock has been prepared by our covenant God. We should remember that rock and use what we have been given to remain steadfast in our faith. Sing Psalter 392.

September 18 *Read Isaiah 52*

A messenger can bring good news. In verse seven we see that a messenger is sent to the church to tell them that they have been delivered from captivity. For Israel it was the captivity of Babylon. For all of God's people and especially today, that messenger brings the good news of redemption from the captivity of sin. We need to listen to the messengers that God has sent to us. As Paul teaches in his letter to the Romans, that messenger is the preacher sent to give to us the gospel news. Do we receive him well? Do we listen intently to the message of salvation? As we attend church each Sunday, let us receive the messenger and his message with the joy that befits those who have been saved. Sing Psalter 368.

September 19 *Read Isaiah 53*

Isaiah 53 shows to us the human nature that the redeemer had to assume. In this human nature the redeemer suffered many afflictions. He suffered those afflictions for the redemption of his people given to him by the Father. After his intense suffering he was received into glory by his Father. All of this was for us, his sheep. Read this chapter once more today to see what our savior did for us. Sing Psalter 47.

September 20 *Read Isaiah 54*

After portraying the suffering of Christ, the prophet shows how his glory becomes the glory of the church. After Christ's ascension into heaven, his work is to provide for his church. The chapter describes how the Gentiles will also be brought into that glorious body. As the apostles and others did their work, the prophecy found in this chapter came to pass. There is also a reference to the work of teaching the covenant seed by the church and their parents. As we await Christ's return, let us be busy in our activities in his glorious body. Sing Psalter 183.

September 21 *Read Isaiah 55*

Here is another familiar chapter of Isaiah. Most of us know the opening line, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth," as well as the words of verse 6. Notice that many of the phrases are commands. They are not offers. God comes to his people through the prophet and announces the way of salvation. Are we seeking the Lord today? Did we seek him yesterday? Are we making plans to seek him tomorrow? In the way of obedience to these commands we will come into the joy of our Lord in the heavenly peaceable kingdom. Sing Psalter 273.

September 22 *Read Isaiah 56*

Once again the pronouncement of the gathering of the Gentiles is prophesied. Certain characteristics are given of those who will be called by God to his church. One of those characteristics is that the people of God are to be Sabbath keepers. Each week we must examine our Sabbath keeping. Is it in keeping with the commandments given in God's word? Did we "frequent" the house of God, as enjoined by the Heidelberg Catechism? Sometimes it is easy to "take a Sunday off." There is no place in Scripture that allows for this. The first phrase of

the fourth commandment is, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." We must keep the commandments of God and keep the Sabbath. Sing Psalter 222.

September 23 *Read Isaiah 57*

In the last part of the preceding chapter, Isaiah decries those who turn away from God and seek after idols. He continues with this thought in this chapter. God sent many nations against Israel and Judah because they walked in idolatry. Eventually he destroyed both nations. Some of those idolaters cried for peace. In this prophecy, and especially in the last verse, God announces that there is no peace for those who walk in wickedness. What does this say to us? There is no peace to be found in our sinful ways. The only way of peace is through Christ in the keeping of God's way for us. Sing Psalter 159.

September 24 *Read Isaiah 58*

Israel protested against God's treatment towards them for their sins. They would point to the feasts, fasts, and other forms of worship that they performed as evidence of their godliness But God accused them of going through the motions in worship and not worshiping him from the heart. He also reminds them that the commandments have two tables. They were not keeping the second and therefore not keeping any of the law. They were treating their neighbors very despicably. Do we walk out of church and then not love our neighbor? Is our faith dead, because as James said, it is impossible to show a living faith without doing the works of faith in our lives. Let us love God, but let us show our love for God by the love of our neighbor. Sing Psalter 24.

September 25 *Read Isaiah 59*

In this Old Testament chapter we see a contrast between sin and grace. In the first part of the chapter Isaiah enumerates many kinds of sins that Israel had committed. If we go through that checklist, what would it say about us? In the first verse it says that God is able to save even a people that has committed such atrocities. In the second half of the chapter a redeemer is described who will buy his people even though they do not deserve it. Our God is a gracious God. Do we thank him for such a great, undeserved deliverance daily? Sing Psalter 106.

September 26 *Read Isaiah 60*

In the last verse of the previous chapter we have a statement of the glorious covenant that God has established with his people. In the next few chapters we have an exposition of the beauty of the church founded in that covenant. We read in this chapter that the light of the Redeemer will shine forth out of that church unto the Gentile nations. Some from those Gentile nations will be drawn to that light, and the covenant will be established with them and their seed. Here we find the promise that is for us. Are we thankful for it? Do we show that light to those around us? That is our part in the covenant as God has established it for his people. Sing Psalter 71.

September 27 *Read Isaiah 61*

When you read the first verses of this chapter, were your minds drawn to a synagogue in Nazareth as the Teacher there expounded upon them? Do you remember the people's reaction to that exposition? What is our reaction to these words? Do we embrace the Christ, who was sent to save his people from out of all kinds of people? Do we wear the robes of righteousness and salvation in a proper manner? We have been given a great gift in our salvation. We must not despise Christ as those in Nazareth did on that Sabbath morning many years ago. We must embrace his teachings as only those who have been redeemed by grace can. Sing Psalter 79.

September 28 *Read Isaiah 62*

Isaiah believes the words that he has been given to speak by Jehovah. He believes that through judgment upon the wicked God will save his people. He also understands that it will not come in his lifetime. As we see in the first part of the chapter, he is determined to proclaim God's word to his people, many of whom have no delight in that word. The servants of the Lord were often oppressed during the old dispensation. In the new dispensation nothing has changed. We should be thankful that God has given to us such dedicated individuals who will bring God's word to us even when it means affliction for them. Let us pray for our office bearers daily, and let us esteem them highly. Sing Psalter 91.

September 29 *Read Isaiah 63*

When we remember that the theme of this beautiful book is "redeemed through judgment," we can understand the next two chapters. Edom was a sworn enemy of Israel. Esau hated Jacob from birth and sought to kill him. The reprobate hate the church of God and will do all in their power to eradicate it. This chapter, like some of the psalms, is imprecatory in nature. We should not shy away from these words, but we should read them and know that our God will redeem us by judging his enemies. Sing Psalter 379.

September 30 *Read Isaiah 64*

This chapter, which seems to be a continuation of the previous one, calls upon God for deliverance in times of trouble. As a prayer it contains a confession of sin. This is found in verse six. The church of itself does not deserve deliverance. We are totally depraved by nature and are deserving of eternal judgment. Yet God, who is our maker, has determined our salvation. For this we can pray and in the hope of the answer to that prayer can look forward until Christ returns again. Let us be

found watching and praying. Sing Psalter 386.

October 1 *Read Isaiah 65*

While Isaiah may not have completely understood all that he prophesied, he doubtless knew that it would come to pass. The final chapters of the book look ahead past Judah's release from captivity. They look past the coming of Christ, and they even look past the gathering of the Gentiles into the church. These chapters look to Christ's final coming when all of the church will be gathered into the new heavens and the new earth. These chapters give to us the reason we must read the whole of Scripture. We are comprehended in this glorious prophecy. We too are to be redeemed through judgment. Thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of salvation! Sing Psalter 299.

October 2 *Read Isaiah 66*

As we finish this prophecy, let us remember to whom it is addressed. First, it is addressed to Judah, who had strayed from God and had fallen into idol worship. Second, it is addressed to those who returned from captivity, who, although they stayed away from idolatry, went through the motions of worship. Finally, it is addressed to the church of the new dispensation, to us, who must not walk in those sins. It shows to us the way of salvation by grace alone. Our Redeemer is found in this book. We must give to him the glory due to his name as the Son of God. Sing Psalter 198.

October 3 *Read Jeremiah 1*

While Isaiah did not see the affliction brought upon Judah by God, Jeremiah did. He prophesied during the time of kings who had direct conflict with Judah. We also know that Jeremiah was present at the day of Judah's captivity. We see in this chapter that God called Jeremiah to the office of prophet, that God made him able for the office, and that God showed to him his calling by the two visions found in this chapter. But God did not leave his prophet defenseless; God promised to be with him throughout his difficult work. God is with us as well, and he will care for us until our death or until the return of Christ. Sing Psalter 158.

October 4 *Read Jeremiah 2*

Jeremiah 2 was probably spoken early in Jeremiah's ministry during the early years of Josiah's reign. Judah was at peace, but spiritually they were falling fast. God through Jeremiah reminds them of their history, how they had turned away from God their maker and turned to idols. The church must know its history, must see its faults, and must turn away from them and follow the living God of heaven and earth. Sing Psalter 308.

October 5 *Read Jeremiah 3*

In this part of his sermon to Judah, God calls his people to repentance. He reminds them of the grace that he has shown to them. He also points out what had happened to the ten tribes when they refused to repent. Judah had all of those examples and was heading down the same path. Do we heed the call to repentance as it is sounded forth from our pulpits each Sabbath? The call to repent is not just for Judah; it is for all of the church, as evidenced by the preaching of John the Baptist and others. Repentance is not an option or offer; it is a command. Sing Psalter 140.

October 6 *Read Jeremiah 4*

The words of this chapter become more pointed towards the people of God. Jeremiah implores the people to return unto God and not face the calamities that have been shown unto him. Jeremiah is not just an announcer. He lived this message. He too saw the judgment and wished for deliverance. But he saw that deliverance would only come by way of obedience. Just as Saul was removed because of a lack of obedience, so would Judah be taken away from the pleasant land. Do we walk in the way of obedience to God and his commands? In that way is the way of peace, a peace found only in the way of Christ. Sing Psalter 215.

October 7 *Read Jeremiah 5*

Even as Jeremiah saw Judah going farther and farther into apostasy even as Israel had done, God gave to him hope for those people whom he had elected. Twice in this chapter the phrase "will not make a full end" is used. Corporately Judah deserved complete destruction, but for the sake of the elect and for the glory of his name, God would show mercy towards his people. This was the hope of the elect found in Judah even when all about them was wickedness. This is our hope as we wait for Christ to deliver us from this sinful world. Sing Psalter 337.

October 8 *Read Jeremiah 6*

In the midst of Jeremiah's proclamation of judgment upon Judah comes the beautiful admonition found in verse 16. Fathers, do you seek the old paths for your children? Children and young people, do you listen to your fathers? Those old paths are the good way. They are the ways that lead to eternal bliss. None of us should be like Judah and boldly announce that we do not like those old paths and will not walk in them. If we do, we deserve Judah's fate. Sing Psalter 342.

Tom Cammenga

A Prayer for Sight

Great God of creation and father of mine,
I humbly beseech Thee to answer my cry.
Thou who ever hast holden all things in Thy hand,
And rules o'er all the workings of man.

Give seeing I pray to these eyes that are blind,
By Thy grace bring light from the darkness of night.
For Thou knowest my frame, my Creator and King,
From dust Thou didst shape me Thy glory to bring.

Made in Thy image Thy likeness displayed,
To show forth Thy greatness and marvelous grace.
A sinner redeemed by the blood of Thy son,
The apple of Thine eye, Thy dear precious one.

Yet bruised and afflicted and tossed to and fro,
The tempests and storms o'erwhelming my soul.
In weakness and sin I don't see beyond me,
To the God in whose arms I always shall be.

I fail to look past these troubles and trials,
To see Thy great faithfulness all of the while.
I see only now, with the hurt and the pain,
The storm clouds, the lightning, the thundering rain.

And yet of all those who walk through this shadowy vale,
It is I that have reason to rejoice midst the gale.
For Thou dost preserve me and hold me in grace,
To fight the good fight and run swift the race.

Help me, oh God, to look beyond all this sorrow,
To see Thy great goodness today and tomorrow.
To rejoice and be glad and to show forth Thy praise,
By the hope that is in me through all of my days.

Thy glory I seek, of Thy power I'll sing,
And sound forth Thy wisdom in all of these things.
In weakness made strong and in strength made to see,
That this strength is not mine but Thine within me. Amen

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Want to Be Wise?

Have you ever read a book twice? Maybe three times? I remember in school rereading certain textbooks because I couldn't grasp everything they had to offer with only one reading. I've also found books that I read years earlier and reread them just for the enjoyment. But no matter how profound or enjoyable a book is, there comes a time when you have received all the knowledge and enjoyment that book has to offer.

With the Bible it is different. You can read and reread the Bible repeatedly and every time come away with something new and profound that you didn't see before. In fact, the more you read and study the Bible, the more you enjoy it and the more profound truths you discover in it. This is because the Bible is not a human but a divine book. Although the Bible was written by various men over many centuries, its author is God. The holy writers of the Bible were inspired by God to write his word. Because of its divine origin the Bible is a great deep that no one can plumb. Rev. Herman Hoeksema, one of the founding ministers of the Protestant Reformed Churches and a great theologian, said at the end of his life that he had only scratched the surface of all that was contained in Scripture.

Because the Bible is God's word, it is able to make us wise unto salvation. This is what Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14–15: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

What great wisdom is contained in Scripture! In the Bible God reveals the great realities of life. He reveals who he is and what his character is, as well as his will for our lives. And then there is our sin and hopelessly lost condition. But there is more. He also reveals the salvation that he provides in Jesus Christ, and how we can attain that salvation by faith. All that we need to know for our salvation is revealed in Scripture. Is there anything more important than this?

There is no other book like it. This book alone is inspired of God. This book alone is the revelation of God to show us the way to salvation. Other books will show you how to succeed in the business or political world. There are books designed to improve your athletic skills. There are the self-help books that suggest ways to improve one's marriage or deal with anger and handle stress. These kinds of books contain only earthly wisdom to help you succeed in earthly things. But the wisdom of the Bible is much higher. It guides you to eternal life and joy with God through Jesus Christ.

But to have this great wisdom you must be a student of the Bible. You must attend the worship of the church regularly on the Sabbath day to hear the wisdom of God preached. You must study the Bible and reflect on it daily. You must follow the instruction of the Bible as it directs you to come to the throne of God's grace in prayer. When this is done with the desire of a true faith to enjoy the salvation of God, one becomes wise unto salvation under the great blessing of God.

How much time do you spend with the Bible?

I suggest that for one week you keep track of how much time you spend with the word of God. Count the time you spend in church hearing the preaching. Count the time you spend with your family reading and discussing the Bible. Count the time you spend in personal Bible study. And count the time you spend studying or discussing the Bible with your friends. Make sure you include the time spent in Young People's Society.

You may be surprised how little time you actually spend with God's word.

Now compare this to the time you spend in recreation—sports, hanging out, surfing the internet and whatever. That may make the time you spend with the Bible seem even less.

How should we evaluate this?

Those who do not take the time to study and

reflect on the Bible (shall we say, neglect the Bible) rob themselves of the opportunity to become wise in the most important realities of life! What have you gained if you become wise in all sorts of earthly pursuits, but lack wisdom in the most important thing in life—your salvation?

This brings us to Young People's Society, which begins another season soon.

We should not limit our Bible study to our own private devotions. It's important that we study God's word with each other in the fellowship of the saints. To become wise unto salvation we must study and discuss the Bible with fellow Christians. For our faith to grow we must share our insights into God's word with others and also learn from their insights. We must also make ourselves accountable to each other and encourage each other from God's word.

This is implied in such passages as 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another," And Hebrews 10:24–25: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

We will see the great need for this if we remember that the church is the body of Christ. In the human body each part is wonderfully gifted in its own unique way. But no body part can exist and live independently from the other body parts. The nose, eyes, ears, feet, and hands all need each other. That's also the way it is in the body of Christ. Every member has wonderful gifts and with those gifts has valuable insight into God's word. If we will all flourish together as the body of Christ, we must share with each other what we know from the Bible, learn from each other, and encourage one another.

With this in mind let's commit ourselves to attend our Young People's Societies regularly. We need not limit our study of God's word together to Young People's Society. But our societies are a very valuable way to discipline ourselves to study God's word together.

And let's not be content simply to attend the meetings. Let's make the most of this valuable opportunity by preparing and coming ready to discuss God's word together.

Let's also in our discussion encourage one another in a godly life.

Then together we will grow in the greatest wisdom of all!

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Christian Living — Mary-jo Moelker

Making Scripture-based Decisions

"It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are" (Quotations about Decisions).

As Christian young people, we have been taught from our youth what our values are. The values we hold as Christians, such as the teachings of the Bible, are reflected in the decisions that we make. The decisions that young people make reflect to the world the values they believe and hold to, and their actions serve to represent the whole of their community. When making life decisions, it is important for Christian young people to not only look to their parents and friends for guidance, but they must also look to God's word.

As young children, all the important decisions in our lives were made for us by our parents or others around us, but as we grow older, the responsibility to make the right decisions for our lives falls to us. There are many decisions to make. Some are significant, such as college and career choices, and others are not so important in the grand scheme of things, such as where you go on vacation or how often you hang out with your friends. At the time, all of these things seem important to us though. Christian young people must look carefully in God's word for guid-

ance in decisions such as those dealing with future careers and goals, marriage, church, and all other necessary decisions.

As Christian young people leave high school and go to college, they must be careful that they make the right decisions for their future career and goals. When considering job possibilities, Christian young people should prayerfully consider what gifts they have been given from God and how they can use them to help others. 1 Corinthians 10:31 states that, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The decisions that are made about future work possibilities and the goals we hope to accomplish should be focused on the biggest goal of serving God in all we do. When a career is chosen, young people should not only enjoy what they will be doing, but they must also see how God will be glorified in it. If we have been given a special gift to reach out to people or in some way help others, then we have the responsibility to use that gift to help others. Spending time in the word and in prayer leads Christian young people to make God-glorifying decisions.

Young people are also faced with decisions about dating and marriage. They must decide whether or not they will date someone, or if it is more serious, whether or not they will get married. This is a huge decision to make, and before it is made, a young person must look to God's word for guidance. God's word speaks a lot about this topic and much can be learned by reading it. The seriousness of marriage and how it is a picture of Christ's love for the church is clearly shown in Scripture. It is necessary for a Christian to know and understand this. One of the places where we read about marriage and Christ's love for the church is in Ephesians 5:21-33. This passage is important, and there are many others that teach about marriage in the Bible that should also be considered. All Christian marriages should reflect that relationship of Christ and the church that the Bible teaches us, but it is a difficult thing to do, and anyone entering a relationship should prayerfully consider it. Understanding what the Bible teaches about marriage will help guide the Christian in that decision.

Another very important area where we need guidance from the word is in church-related decisions. As Christian young people grow older and learn more about the doctrines of the church, they must realize that they will someday be the leaders of the church. Someday they will be teaching their children about the precious doctrines that the church teaches. In Acts 20:28 we read, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." It is important for young people to commit themselves to the church, to profess their faith, serve in the church, and use their gifts to benefit the church. In order to make this decision, the young person must first experience the working of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The reading and studying of the word is necessary for this to happen. Christian young people should be eager to be involved in Bible studies, service, leadership, and other activities.

Sometimes we can miss it or forget it, but all the guidance that we need for our lives is given in the Bible. Whenever we have struggles and have to make hard or even seemingly easy decisions, we should always turn to the word of God and hear what God has to say about how we are to live our lives. The book of Proverbs is filled with wise advice, as are the parables of Christ, but these two places are just some of the many places that give us guidance. If by our reading of Scripture we understand how we are to lives our lives to God's glory, then all the decisions that we had previously struggled to make will seem less difficult in light of God's word and his will for our lives.

It can be easy for young people to feel overwhelmed by the decisions they have to make, but we have a place that we can always turn to. This place is the word of God. Scripture gives guidance on how to make decisions about future careers and goals, marriage, church, and any other issues that may come along. We do not need to spend time worrying about how to make decisions when through Scripture we know God's will for our life. Time spent in the reading of the word and in prayer is necessary for Christian young people to lead them to make the right decisions for God's glory.

Works Cited

"Quotations about Decisions." n.d. *Quote Garden*. Web. 20 March 2013.

This paper was written for Senior English class at Covenant Christian High School.

Unthankfulness—A Root Sin

Introduction

2 Samuel 24 records David's sin of numbering the people. David's act of numbering the people was a grievous sin. The awful consequences of his sin certainly underscore how grievous a sin it was. David's sin was grievous because at bottom it was the sin than which there is none greater for the child of God: the sin of ingratitude. David was not thankful and was not living thankfully before God. He was not living thankfully before God for his salvation. And not living thankfully for his salvation, he was not living thankfully regarding earthly, material things.

This is the warning that this incident serves to drive home to us. It is a warning against ingratitude, and it is a call to live before God thankfully. It is a call to old and young alike to live a life of thankful devotion to God.

David's Sin

David clearly sinned at this time. David later made confession of his sin. Months later, as Joab returned from numbering the people, we read in 2 Samuel 24:10, "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." When the angel of death approached Jerusalem, we read in 2 Samuel 24:17, "And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house."

What was David's sin?

David's sin was not that he numbered the people. That is, it was not sin in itself that David conducted a census of the people. That is what it means that David numbered the people. He sent Joab, the captain of his army, throughout the tribes of Israel conducting a census, and determining how many fighting men were available to fight in his army. That was not wrong in itself. We know that on at least two previous occasions the Lord himself had directed Moses to number the people. One of those times was shortly before the children of Israel came into the land of Canaan. It is from that event that the fourth book of the Old Testament derives its name: Numbers. It was not sin in itself that David numbered the people.

Neither was the real seriousness of David's sin that he numbered the people without being commanded by God to number the people, as some suppose. David's sin, according to them, was the sin of presumption. Now it is true that David had no express command from God: "Number the people." And apart from such a command, David never should have numbered the people. But there is more here than presumption on David's part.

David's main sin in numbering the people was pride of heart. It was not that he numbered the people, but it was why he numbered the people. There was nothing wrong in itself that David numbered the people; what was wrong was his reason, his motive for numbering the people. Clearly David was motivated by pride.

1 Chronicles 21 contains a parallel account of David's sin of numbering the people. The context in 1 Chronicles helps us to understand that pride was the root of David's sin. The several chapters before 1 Chronicles 21 record the mighty victories of David. Through the captains of his hosts, under David's leadership, all his enemies were subdued. The kingdom of Israel was established in his hand. Flushed with success, David fell into the sin of pride. He must have said within himself: "I am David, the great king. Israel is the great empire that I have established by my ingenuity and by my might." In that connection it is significant that David did not and could not give Joab a good answer to his question in 2 Samuel 24:3b, "Why doth my Lord the king delight in this thing?" In fact, he did not answer him at all.

We ought to note several things about David's sin.

First, we ought to notice God's sovereignty over David in his sin. The first verse of 2 Samuel 24 informs us that the Lord moved David to number the people. God is absolutely sovereign. God is sovereign over sin, even the sins of his people. God moved David to number the people. Neither is this contradicted by the notice in 1 Chronicles 21 that Satan stood up and provoked David to number the people. Satan too is subject to the sovereign power of God. All that he does, he does in submission to the rule of our sovereign heavenly Father. This is an important part of the instruction of this history and this belongs to the comfort of God's people in every age.

Second, the account makes plain that David's sin was the sin of Israel, of the people in general. It was not only David who was living in pride, but it was the nation generally. Nor did Israel only sin in David, its king and head. True as that is, it is also true that Israel participated in David's sin. That is indicated by what we read in 2 Samuel 24:1 that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." The Lord's anger was kindled against Israel first, not against David. Because the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, he moved David to number the people. That all Israel was guilty of sin at this time is also indicated by the fact that God's judgment fell upon the whole nation.

Third, it is worth noticing that David was adamant in insisting on numbering the people. The fact that he obstinately rejected the counsel of his servants indicates the extent to which his sin gripped him. He didn't just fall into this sin, but this sin had a grip on him.

We learn several things from David's fall here. First, we learn that there are two equally dangerous threats against the believer personally and against the church. One is the threat from without, the threat of the enemies who hate God, the cause of God, and the people of God. David had battled those enemies. But they do not constitute the only threat against which God's people must be on their guard.

Another threat, equally dangerous, is the threat from within. This is the threat that arises out of the sinful nature of the saints themselves, and particularly the sin of pride. We suppose ourselves to be important, we suppose our accomplishments to be great, and we suppose God's cause to be dependent on us. This is a real danger!

Second, it is sobering to take note of the fact that David committed this sin as an older, mature believer. David fell into this sin towards the end of his life, towards the close of his earthly pilgrimage. This is the last chapter of 2 Samuel. The first part of 1 Kings 1 records David's death. That is sobering! That ought to give us reason to pause! Youth has its sins, especially the passions of youth. David knew something of that too, but old age also has its temptations, and perhaps it is especially old age that is imperiled by the sin of pride.

David's sin was the sin of pride. But David's pride was rooted in unthankfulness. David was not living out of thankfulness. He was not living out of the consciousness that what he was and what he had, he was and had from God. And he was not living out of the consciousness that although God had exalted him and given him abundance, he deserved none of it. He was not living out of a sense of his utter unworthiness. He was not living out of grace.

And how about you and how about me? Who can deny that we live in days of unparalleled prosperity? I know that some of our families are struggling as a result of the downturn in the economy. But all things considered, we live in prosperous times. We enjoy peace in our land, and although we have legitimate concerns in this regard, we still enjoy the protection of the state. Most of our working men are able to find work, by means of which they are able to supply the needs of their families, contribute to the causes of the kingdom, and have some left over to support the poor. We live in nice homes that provide much more than merely a roof over our heads and protection from the elements. We are able to establish and maintain our Christian schools. We are able freely to gather on the Lord's day for the public worship of God.

Do we live thankfully? Do we really live out of the sense of our utter unworthiness? Do we really live out of grace? Are we conscious of the dangers of prosperity, the dangers of success, the dangers of abundance of earthly things? Are we swallowed up by these things? And are we putting our trust in these things rather than in God, the giver of all things?

God's Judgment

God's judgment over David and over Israel was severe. God judged David even though David repented of his sin. He did repent, as verse 10 indicates: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and

now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." And again in verse 17, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly."

David's repentance was genuine. It was repentance that showed itself in true sorrow and in open, heartfelt confession. It was repentance that pleaded with God for forgiveness.

That repentance was worked by God. God moved David to number the people. And God also smote David's heart.

God judged David even though David repented. Still, David had to bear the consequences of his sin: what you sow, you reap. Through the judgment of God, David must be corrected. The judgment of God will serve the good purpose of teaching David the seriousness of his sin, and will serve as a constant reminder to David to flee from this sin in the future.

God's judgment was a pestilence that wasted the countryside of Israel. Through the prophet Gad, God gave David three choices: "Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me"(2 Sam. 24:12–13. David's response (v. 14) was that he cast himself into the hands of God: "And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." What David had not been doing, he now did. He cast himself upon the Lord, to live consciously out of the hand of the Lord.

God's judgment was severe. A pestilence, a plague of some sort killed in one day seventy thousand of David's chosen men: "So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men"(v. 15). That was a severe judgment, but a fitting judgment. David had boasted in his heart of the greatness of his kingdom. In one fell swoop God reduced David's kingdom, taking away seventy thousand chosen men.

This judgment must serve as a warning to us. God judges the proud. God judges the unthankful. He judges them often in this life already, as he judged Israel and David. And if they go on not heeding the judgments of God, he judges them in the life to come.

God's Mercy

But as always, so also at this time, in judgment God remembers mercy. That mercy of God on David and Israel is plain. It is plain, first, from the sending of the judgment. God does not allow David to go on in his sin, but by his judgment over the sin, he brings David to repentance. That is mercy!

This mercy of God in his judgment over David and Israel is plain from the opening verse of 2 Samuel 24: "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel." LORD in all capital letters in the Authorized Version is "Jehovah" in the Hebrew. That is the covenant name of God, who is always faithful in the covenant. In his faithfulness he always preserves his covenant people. God's anger here is not the destructive anger of the Lord against the reprobate wicked that consumes and destroys them. It is the anger of the God of the everlasting covenant, which always manifests itself as chastisement and always aims at his people's correction.

The mercy of God in his judgment is also seen in the fact that Israel was not consumed by the judgment of God. To be sure, seventy thousand men were smitten. But Israel was not utterly destroyed, as they deserved. Therein is the revelation of God's mercy.

That mercy of God is in his Son, Jesus Christ. That was typified in the whole incident of the sacrifice made by David on the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite, 2 Samuel 24:16ff. I will not explain this in detail, but please read this passage. What is significant is that later, on this very spot, David's son Solomon built the temple. At the heart of all of the worship of the temple were the sacrifices, which pointed ahead to the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This is the reason that God's people must be a thankful people. This is the reason that we are a thankful people. In Jesus Christ we have the sacrifice of our sins. In Jesus Christ we have our salvation and the salvation of our children. And that is the very thing that teaches us that what we are and what we have, we are and we have by grace and by grace alone.

This is the text of Prof. Cammenga's speech at the Young People's 2012 Thanksgiving Mass Meeting. Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament at the Theological School of the PRC.

Joel Langerak

Dangers of Worldly Living

In today's society the modern way of life makes everywhere a place full of sin and corruption. The devil is everywhere, preying on the weak in faith and devouring them. Living the life of a Christian in these wicked times can be extremely difficult. It seems that the children of God, especially young people, are alone in this world sometimes, without the aid of anyone to help them overcome these temptations the devil poses. Biblical living is a challenge for young people due to the effects of the devil's power.

In my eyes, young people are very susceptible to temptations of worldliness. This is due in part to the fact that they are beginning to live more independently, away from the watch of their parents. They have jobs away from the home, which can inhibit them from meals with their family and family devotions. Young people spend more time away with friends or at work than at their homes where their parents can protect them from the harmful dangers of sin. This poses a challenge because this is just what the devil desires. He wants us by ourselves or with friends so he can tempt us more easily without parents getting in the way.

Young people do not even need to be away from home anymore to be tempted with worldly pleasures. With the readiness and availability of the internet and television, and the amount of time that young people spend in those activities, temptations come in swarms. The world promotes the kind of living dangerous for a Christian. On television, they make light of the seriousness of the use and overdosing of drugs and alcohol. On the internet they play worldly music that appeals to the grossness of the human nature. They mock the sin of adultery in ways that tempt Christian young people. Sins like these are everywhere around us, threatening the faith of even the most sincere of God's believers.

When a young person falls into sin, a real problem can occur. If a person drinks too much alcohol while underage, his conscience will nag at him at first, telling him that what he did was wrong. The person at this point can put the sin away, or try it again. The work of the devil also nags at the man, telling him that what he did was pleasing and cool, wanting him to commit the sin again. The more the young person commits the sin, the less his conscience will affect him. He will begin to justify the sin of drunkenness in his mind, while the devil is greedily feeding on his rebellion against the word of God. The person will try to convince himself that he is not falling into sin. The devil is speaking to him here, telling him to continue the sin. The person can then become addicted to the alcohol so badly that he cannot stop drinking. Without faith in God, he will perish in the lust of the flesh.

This is where God's gift of faith plays an important role in the person's life. If the person who has fallen into any grievous sin has faith, he must show it. He must pray to God for mercy on him, for he is a sinner. He needs to open the Scriptures and read what they teach him concerning his sin. He must attend church and genuinely listen to the gospel preached, for the preaching is the word of Christ Jesus spoken through the minister directed at him. Only then will he see the path of righteousness and come to repentance from his sins.

It is a wearisome life, the life of a Christian, but that does not give an excuse to slack off and let down one's guard. Biblical living is supposed to be a challenge. God requires the child of God to serve him and strive to fight constantly against sin and the devil at all times, which is difficult due to our human nature's desire to sin. The devil does not rest, however, so neither should the child of God. Continuing to fight in the name of God is what he desires from his people, so living by his word is how his children must answer that call.

God's children are at an advantage when it comes to fighting the devil. The child of God is not alone because God is always going to be on his side. God is with his people at all times, so he need not worry about what the devil will do to him. Prayer to God to keep from temptation is an action that a child of God must repeat often. This is because God will

answer that prayer, strengthening his faith, making the burden of the devil's power on his soul lighter. The challenge of biblical living becomes easier with more prayer and faith in God's name.

The devil will tempt children of God, especially young people; that is inevitable. The young person is away from the watch of his parents most of the time, making him a prime target for the devil's attacks. A child of God will see those attacks coming and pray to God to forgive his sins and keep him far from temptation. The only way the child of God will overcome the devil and live with God in the forefront of his mind is with the power of God behind him.

This paper was written for a senior English class at Covenant Christian High School. Joel is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Poem

Julie Bergman

Near Me

No matter where I am I know
the Lord is always near me.
If something happens
in my life I know my
Lord and Savior will be walking
by my side.
Jesus is my Friend and Redeemer.
He is my
King and Salvation.
He is the one I can go to in prayer
day or night
and I know He will hear me.
If I am afraid of the dark
I know Jesus is with me.
Jesus, My Lord and Savior
You art my ever present
help in trouble
for You are always
near me.

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BAPTISMS

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."
Psalm 103:17

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Grant Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Audra Bruinooge—Bryon Center, MI
Bristol Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Katie Haasevoort—Byron Center, MI
Abigail Kimberly, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ken & Leanne DeBoer—Georgetown, MI
Brayden Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason & Katie Westra—Hull, IA
Penelope Esther May, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Manuel & Emily Kate Kuhs—Ballymena, N Ireland/Limerick, Ireland
Noah James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike & Kelly Jabaay—Redlands, CA
Audrey Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tony & Laura Van Donselaar—Southwest, MI
Colin Patrick, son of Mr. & Mrs. John & Julie Fennell—Southwest, MI/Pittsburgh, PA
Seth Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Michelle Drnek—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."
I Timothy 6:13

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

RJ Mercado—Doon, IA/Philippines
Mike Buiter—Randolph, WI
Lanae Smit—Redlands, CA
Jackie Hauck—Southeast, MI
Andrew Kuiper—Southeast, MI
Alycia Pipe—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it…."
Psalm 127:1

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. David Crosett and Miss Kristin Prins—Ballymena, N Ireland
Mr. Keith Gritters and Miss Melissa Kaptein—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Joey Mantel and Miss Sherry VanEgdom—Doon, IA
Mr. Aaron DeJong and Miss Kristin Westra—Hull, IA

"Reading has a significant place in the covenant of grace as an instrument of God for the fulfilling of His promises."

Rev. Brian Huizinga

"Encouraging the Next Generation to Read"

RFPA Annual Meeting
September 19, 2013 at 7:30pm
Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church
7146 48th Ave, Hudsonville, MI 49426

Connie Meyer

TULIP: P
(Perseverance of the Saints)
"Higher Climbing"

"LITTLE LIGHTS"
... let it shine !

"Just hang on!"

Emma's knees jittered against the side of the climbing wall as she looked up at her friends waiting for her at the top. She had never been so high off the ground before. They tried to encourage her.

"You can't fall!"

Emma knew it was true. The harness around her was secure. The ropes were strong. But she was still afraid. She put her hand on the next peg. Her sweaty palm made it hard to grip.

"Keep climbing!"

Somehow she hoisted herself onto the last ledge. Her body shook, either from fear or from muscle exertion—she did not know, but she was finally at the top. Her friends grabbed her hands as soon as she was free, and cheered.

The following Sunday Emma was in church with her family, listening to the sermon. The minister talked about perseverance. We can be set back in our walk, like David and Peter were, but only for a time. God preserves us and keeps us from falling. Not one elect saint will be lost. Not one elect saint *can* be lost. It is God's work to save us entirely, and to bring us home to himself where he is. That is our comfort, and that is his glory. The text was from Psalm 121: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help...." Emma remembered the last two verses: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

Emma thought about her climb on the wall. Perhaps it was not a full picture of what the minister was talking about, but the effort gave her a vivid idea of what it means to be kept safe from falling. Hanging onto those pegs and ledges high off the ground was a fearful thing. But there was nothing to fear. So it is when we know our heavenly Father holds us. There is nothing to fear. He will take us through all the trials of this life, to be with him forever. All we can do is thank him. The Reformed faith is beautifully simple and sure.

"Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace... which with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed, nor His promise fail..." (Canons V, Article 8).

In the puzzle below, find all the words of Canons V, Article 8 as quoted in the story above:

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

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The answer to this question has strengthened the resolve of Christians throughout the world for 450 years. Yet today, the answer to this question reminds Reformed Christians of the comfort they have in Christ. The theme of comfort is woven throughout the entire Catechism.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of the first publication of the Heidelberg Catechism, the unique, beautiful, and precious confession that arose out of the Protestant Reformation in Germany during the 16th century. This is a significant anniversary for all Christians, but especially for those of Reformed Christian heritage.

Elector Frederick III commissioned Zacharias Ursinus, professor at Heidelberg University, and Caspar Olevianus, the court preacher, to prepare a manual for catechetical instruction. Out of this initiative came the Catechism, which was approved by the Elector himself and by the Synod of Heidelberg and first published in 1563. With its comfort motif and its warm, personal style, the Catechism soon won the love of the people of God.

To celebrate this rich heritage the Protestant Reformed Seminary is hosting a special conference to commemorate the Heidelberg Catechism.