BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

HOVAH IS OUR LIGHT AND OUR SALVATION

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BEACON LIGHTS

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"Peace on Earth"

By Mr. Ray De Windt — Grand Rapids, Mich.

"Peace on Earth, good will to Men." With this message the angels came to the shepherds at Bethlehem nearly 2000 years ago. With this message the birth of our Lord and Saviour was made known to those who had long awaited His coming. This message, which was sung by that heavenly host on that first Christmas morn, has been the theme of the Christmas spirit of each Christmas since that first time.

"Peace on Earth". Wherever we go at this season of the year we see and hear these words. We see them beautifully worked out in the window display of our stores. We hear them coming over the air on many of our radio programs. These words are used as the key-note of all of the proclamations of our presidents, mayors, and other great world characters of our times. Yes, all men quote these words of the angels, and what vain words they appear to be when analyzed in the light of the present day events.

In reality, the world of today is anything but a world of peace. There has never been a time in the history of our nation when there was more unrest than we are experiencing now. Peace on Earth? Wishful thinking, you readily conclude after having read an issue of any of our daily papers. The press is filled with items relating the ever growing spirit of ill will and dissatisfaction springing up within and between the nations. We read of the research projects on which nations are feverishly working, in order that the military might of each one may be unexcelled. The struggle between labor and management is constantly raging. The leaders of the nations of the world have been in verbal combat in our United Nations assembly ever since the guns of World War II ceased firing. The eyes of the people of all the nations are steadfastly watching the progress of that assembly, hoping that they will find a solution to the troubles that beset mankind, and will establish a lasting peace among the nations. That wars will be past history and in the future all nations shall
live in brotherly love and good will. We, who are privileged by the grace of God to have an insight in the Scriptures, are well aware of the misconception that the worldly people have of that message of the angels. They are not able to understand the true meaning of the peace of which the angels sang, the peace of heart which only the Christian can experience. They are not concerned with their relationship to their Creator, but only with their earthly needs. Therefore they are expecting that peace to be an event of the future, even though it was an event of nearly twenty centuries ago. When the angels came to the shepherds with their message of, “Peace on Earth”, they were not conveying to them a promise of something which was to come in the future. That peace was given unto them when the Christ Child became incarnate. He was to them “Peace on Earth”. Had they not been living in darkness since the fall of man? Had they not been living under the wrath of God because of their sin? Their only hope of redemption was centered around the coming of the Messiah. His coming was their Hope of Salvation, and their Light upon a heretofore dark and obscure pathway.

With the birth of the Christ-child, the chosen people of God witnessed the fulfillment of a promise which had been made to them ages before. Surely those years of waiting, which generations of God’s people had been subjected to, must have been years of anxiety. We know that only the Grace of God could have kept them buoyed up in the faith of the Promised Messiah, which seemingly would never be made a realization. No doubt, the potency in the ultimate fulfilling of this promise must have waned at times, but God constantly held it before them by means of the Patriarchs and Prophets. And when it was finally brought about it was unexpected, as is evident of the circumstances under which the Messiah was born. However, the reaction of the shepherds, when they had been told of the birth of their Saviour, reveals that they were aware of the meaning of the message: for they immediately went to Bethlehem to see their Saviour.

Peace on Earth? Yes, for the child of God who has the living faith of the shepherds, there is peace in their hearts. A peace that passeth all understanding. The incarnation of the Son of God has given this peace in an overflowing measure. For as we look at the Christ-child lying in that humble birthplace, we do not see a mere child who eventually grows up to a man of unexcelled character, and someone who can be held as an example or pattern for a good citizen of this earth. But through the
Grace of God we see in that manager our Saviour and Redeemer, born in the likeness of sinful flesh. We see in that manager, Him of whom the prophet Isaiah had foretold. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace”.

Peace on Earth? Yes, for those that have a living faith in this Saviour, the Christ. Now, and forever. Peace, no matter what we may be facing in the near future. That Peace which the world can never have, we have through Him, and it can never be taken away from us, if we see in the Christ-child, our Lord and Redeemer. And this Peace is not ours because we merit it of ourselves, but only by the grace of God. For we know that to His own. He gives the grace to believe that His grace is sufficient for them in every circumstance of life. Whatever their way may be. He enables them to live by Faith and to seek their Salvation in Bethlehem, and thus enjoy His favor and Peace.

“Peace on Earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled”. Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies; With angelic hosts proclaim, Christ is born in Bethlehem. Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the new born King.”
As this December issue of Beacon Lights comes into your home, no doubt your thoughts are turning to those things that usually are associated with the Christmas season. In our churches our pastors are now preaching pre-Christmas sermons. Our younger brothers and sisters are preparing to render a program on Christmas day, telling the story of the birth of the Savior in word and song. We are also preparing the gift list of our friends and relatives and perhaps we are planning our budget to meet the strain of the Christmas shopping season. This season is indeed a busy and important time for us and often the pressure of life during the Christmas season causes us to be dulled to the full significance of the Christmas message.

The Christmas message of the fact that “unto us a child is born and unto us a son is given. . . . and his name shall be called Immanuel”—is a most important message for us as Christian youth in the church of God. It is important because this message tells us that God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh in order that the propitiation and atonement of our sins should be accomplished. This fact of the incarnation of our Lord has vital significance. It is the cornerstone of our faith. If this message had never been given to us we would never have come to the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and the blessings of eternal life.

The Christmas message is particular. When the heralds of the Christ-child sang their glorious songs they did not sing to the world in general, to the Roman rulers of the earth nor to the apostate church of those days, but they sang their wondrous song to the shepherds, to the meek and lowly, to the poor in spirit, to those who were distinguished by a true and trusting faith that God would remember His covenant people and provide a Saviour for them. This is still true today in this decade of the twentieth century A.D. The Christmas message today has a spiritual significance only for the true and
faithful church of God. Although many pious platitudes are found on the lips of worldly people, the Christmas message has no significance for them because they fail to see that the babe of Bethlehem is the Saviour of men of good will. This message comes to the church, to those who have been reborn by an almighty work of God whereby the spiritually blind have been made to see the things of the kingdom of heaven.

The message of Christmas was long awaited by the saints of the Old Testament era. They had received the promise from Jehovah that a Saviour would be provided for them and the faithful sons of God throughout the long dark centuries of that era had looked forward with longing hearts to the advent of the servant of the Lord. The speech of Simeon was indeed an expression of joy at the fulfillment of the promise of God.

To us, if we hear the Christmas message with a true faith, the Gospel of the birth of our Saviour is also a source of joy and comfort. But this wonderful truth can only be discerned spiritually. Desperately wicked men attack this Gospel continually hoping to overthrow the faith of the chosen saints by their perverse railings against the doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord. As each Christmas season approaches the vicious and malicious slander against the Lord of glory is repeated. In interpreting modern thought concerning the Christ, we must, in the light of Scripture, place the modern view in the category of the things pertaining to the antichrist. Although the true message of Christmas is daily ridiculed, we nevertheless affirm that the word of God is true and that our trust is in the Christ-child.

The blessedness of the Christmas message lies in the fact that it tells us "things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard." The history of this world is nothing but a succession of sinful words and actions, of scene after scene exhibiting the sordidness and depravity of mankind, of a sequence of events distinguished by corruption. Against this horribly black background God as it were, in letters of fiery purity, has written that He has appointed us a Saviour. The blessedness of the Christmas message lies in the fact that we belonged to this history of corruption but by the gracious power of God were regenerated and converted from sin to the service of God. The Christmas message is a vital part of that act of God. We are saved by virtue of the fact that Christ came in the midst of our death and corruption and became sin for us and delivered us from the wrath of God. For that we sing the song of the angels "Glory to God in the highest."
Again it is December, and while this is also the month wherein the Church commemorates the blessed birth of her Savior, it is likewise the month that tells us that another year has come and gone,—almost.

Only a few more weeks, a few more days, and the clocks and chimes all over the world, and shrieking sirens, too, will announce to earth's inhabitants that they are crossing the threshold of another year. What a solemn occasion it is! What a wealth of material it offers for a moment of quiet contemplation! How proper it is that we avail ourselves of this opportunity and pause a moment,—pause to reflect,—pause to ask ourselves some pertinent questions.

With this inexorable stream of time we all are borne along, young and old, rich and poor, parents and children. We think of the words of the psalmist:

"Time, like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away;"

They fly forgotten, as a dream,
Dies at the opening day."

Yet, what a difference between the Church and the world in the way wherein these sons of time bid the old farewell and welcome the new. Never does the infinite difference between the life of the world and that of the Christian reveal itself more strikingly than on this occasion.

For the children of this world New Year's Eve is the opportunity for unparalleled hilarity and revelry. How strange! How completely out of line with reality! Through out the year there is no single moment when they yield themselves so entirely to the things below, indulge in such unbridled carnality and shameless silliness in overcrowded taverns and night-clubs and ballrooms, and reveal so clearly their consummate folly and blindness of heart. On New Year's Eve there are no restrictions and all dignity is thrown to the winds. What fools they make of themselves in their drunken hilarity and with
their silly costumes and tooting horns!

How come? Is it ignorance on their part? Don't they know? Of course they do! They know well enough that man, at best, is only a breath, a fleeting breath. They see that all below is transient, that the years are speeding by with incredible swiftness and that it is only a matter of days and also this generation, themselves included, will have lived its life. Yes, they know, but they want to forget. They hate the very thought of the end, of death, of eternity. They will drink and play and dance and sing these horrid thoughts from their minds. They tell themselves that a new year means a new lease on life. The fools! They forget, or try to forget, that time marches on, nevertheless, and that presently a year is coming which will be succeeded by no other, a day, an hour, a moment, which will be their last.

How different with the Christian!

To him New Year's Eve is a precious occasion, precisely because it speaks so clearly of the reality of life. Reverently he pauses a moment to catch his breath, to reflect on the year that has again gone by, to direct his attention to the end, not merely of this single year, but of all of life and all the ages, and to be reminded in one way or another of the words of Scripture: "Jesus is coming! Quickly! and His reward is with Him". Also: "Children, it is the last hour!"

Another year of our fast moving, transient life has again sped by;—almost. Now that it is past, how brief it was. Those hours, days, weeks, months, seasons,—how they flew by! How well we understand these familiar lines:

"Hours and days and years and ages,
Swift as moving shadows flee."

It made no difference where we were, or what we did,—it mattered not what our experiences were, whether we laughed or wept,—always time sped on its flight to eternity. And always at the same steady pace. There were times, especially of pain and sorrow, when we would like to have hurried it along; there were other times, of happiness and laughter, when we would like to have held it back. The one was just as impossible as the other. Looking back, we must acknowledge: it was as a dream when one awaketh.

Yet, how great is the significance of it all. It is not so; that we have lived this year, for, better or for worse, and are now finished with it. All that transpired it of lasting importance. Life is serious. The Lord gave us our place in this world, in His church, in our homes. He gave us our gifts and talents, our money and possessions;
wives and husbands, our parents and children, our time and opportunities. We are responsible for them. What did we do with them?

It was our calling to use them in the service of our God. Did we? The tremendous fact is, that not one of those moments was lived in vain. In a sense, yes, the past is gone, irrevocably. In another and deeper sense, nothing is past. We carry everything along with us into eternity.

New Year’s Eve also reminds us, Christian friends, that the end of all things is drawing near. It is the last hour, the last period, the last dispensation, of all history. Do not forget it! Presently the antichrist is coming, that man of sin, that mighty world empire wherein all earthly things will reach their highest development, but wherein the people of God will have no place. Even now the world is preparing itself for that day with all possible haste. Don’t you see it, my friends? How different things are today than they were a few decades ago. How rapidly all of life is developing. Everything stands in the sign of amalgamation, and of apostacy too. These are the signs of the times. More and more all present things are pointing in the direction of the antichrist, whose name is 666,—whereby we know that it is the last hour.

With a view to all this, what shall we say? Ah, there is so much that could and should be said.

Looking back, let us give thanks for all the Lord has done for us, and humbly beg His forgiveness.

And looking ahead, what must we say?

Let us heed the signs of the times. The days wherein we are living are especially serious. The end is drawing nearer. Let us take this to heart. Know your times in the light of the Word of God.

I pray you, be spiritually minded. Think, speak, and walk spiritually. Don’t be blinded by the glamour of this world. Don’t clamor for the things of this world as do those who love and worship the beast and its image. Learn to look for your Savior. Love not the world. Abhor all earthly things and the things of the world. Time is too short, life too serious. Remember: “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation.

Set your hopes and affections on the better life that is yours by faith in Jesus Christ.

“Hold that fast which ye have, that no man take your crown.”

And presently, when crossing the threshold of a new year, don’t forget the lesson of New Year’s Eve, but let the Word of your God fill your souls: “The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”
That the devil clearly understands the tremendous importance of Christ for our salvation is plain from the pattern of false doctrines through the ages. The doctrines which the church has had to fight throughout the ages ever since the appearance of Christ have centered around the truth as it is in Christ. This does not mean that they always had direct bearing upon His person or works, but it does mean that either directly or indirectly it was propagated to destroy faith in Him.

The Apostle Peter, for example, makes mention in his second epistle of false teachers who "bring in damnable heresies". These false teachers, according to 1 Peter 2:1, deny that the Lord has purchased them through His blood. Here very plainly it is the work and person of Christ that is openly denied. At other times heresies are taught which deny truths related to Christ and His works with the express purpose of leading up to and preparing for the open denial of His work and person. Then Christ is still the center of the attack of these false doctrines. For these false doctrines have for their purpose the overthrow of this central truth of Christ and His cross. These false doctrines are meant to be wedges whose purpose it is to make an opening that the heart of the center may be pierced through. Thus, for example, you have the heretical three points of 1921. Openly they do not deny Christ and His cross. Openly they seem to do more justice to God's grace and love than does the truth of Scripture. Yet they constitute a wedge which if driven far enough will end in the denial of Christ and His cross. Bear in mind that these pernicious three points of common grace maintain a grace of God that comes to those who are outside of Christ and a grace not merited by the cross of Christ. For some blessings then (for so the defenders of common grace call them) Christ and His cross are not necessary. That wedge opens up the way to a full denial of Christ. It softens one and prepares him for a stronger dose of the lie. But to return to what we began to say, the pattern of false doctrines through the ages show a continual attempt at destruction of the truth concerning Christ.
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Thus we are not surprised to learn that in the fourth and fifth century there was a series of false doctrines which together are called, "The Christological Controversy". The false doctrine of Arianism to which we called your attention recently also dealt with Christ. Arius, you will recall, denied the divinity of Christ. This heresy is classified as belonging to the Trinitarian Controversy rather than the Christological Controversy. For there the question was more particularly whether the Father and the Son were of the same essence or not. Arius denied the truth of Scripture that the person of Christ is the Person of the Son of God. Who is of the same divine essence with the Father and the Spirit. Arianism was condemned. and the truth triumphed.

But the devil is a persistent adversary. And soon enough a new attempt is made from a different vantage point to thrust a wedge and a mighty blow to the truth as it centers around Christ. The first attempt made its appearance in the latter half of the fourth century and was called Appolinarianism after a bishop of Laodicea by the name of Appolinaris. The chief characteristic of this heresy is that it denied that Christ had a complete human nature. Notice here the new angle of approach. Arianism denied the divinity of Christ and was condemned by the church. Now less than half a century later the human nature of Christ is denied.

Let us try to appreciate the problems behind the defense of the truth of Scripture as well as behind the appearance of this heresy. If Christ has a complete human nature and a complete divine nature, are there then not two persons, the divine and the human in Christ? Is it not safer to say that what Christ received from Mary was simply a body but not a human soul? If Christ received from Mary a complete human nature, does He not also receive from her then a human person? The matter is not one that can easily be solved by quoting this or that text. And for those unlearned in the Scriptures the arguments put forth for the lie seem very convincing. We will have to wait till the next edition of Beacon Lights to continue this. But we wish to leave this thought with you meanwhile. Is it not amazing that so many of these tremendously important truths of Scripture were boldly denied before the common church member had his own personal family Bible to which he could refer? And is it not also then an amazing work of God's grace that nevertheless He kept His people informed as to the truth and faithful unto it? Should we then despise our more abundant opportunity to search the Scriptures?
In the semi-forested grasslands of central and southern Africa a very unusual animal is found. When it was first brought to England in 827 as a zoological specimen, it created excitement and great interest, and spectators were astonished that such an animal really existed.

Some evolutionary scientists today maintain it is the last of the prehistorics. Indeed, we, too, would be temporarily dazed, if we saw two eyes peering over the top of an eighteen foot tree. Visualize a creature which is eighteen to twenty feet tall and weighs 2,000 to 3,000 pounds as it comes rocking through the low trees. It appears as a shadow for its body is peculiarly marked in plaids revealing an example of protective coloration not to be found elsewhere in nature.

Sometimes we hear the expression—"a dumb animal". Unique also in this characteristic, the camelopard is truly a dumb creature, for it never emits a vocal sound during its entire span of life. It was created without the physical means necessary to produce sound—it lacks a voice box and thus, is literally "dumb".

In comparing it with the camel we find that they have much in common, for they both have cloven hoofs, long legs and neck. They are also similar in their method of walking and running—a rocking gait due to the fact that both legs on the left side move simultaneously followed by joint movement of the right legs producing a very clumsy awkward movement. The camelopard can also survive water shortage; in fact, it is believed that it can surpass the camel in endurance.

As you have by this time surmised, the first part of its name comes from the animal it most closely resembles, namely, the camel. Undoubtedly, the last part of its name "opard" is still an enigma to many readers. Previously, in this article we mentioned its unusual plaid coloration which consists of dark brown plaids on a fawn colored background. This proximates the color effect of the spotted leopard and hence its name "camel-leopard" or "camelopard".

On the cover of the September 7, 1946 issue of the "Science News Letter" was a large photograph of one of these newly born animals, taken at the National Zoological Park in Washington D.C. Imagine a newborn weighing 100 lbs., and being over four feet tall. By
its first birthday it reaches the height of 12 feet and thereafter averages about a foot a year until it is fully mature. Due to the inconvenience of its height several African railroads passed the following code: "Camelopards measuring more than thirteen feet in total height cannot be accepted for transport." It might be of interest to note that its tongue reaches the length of eighteen inches. This is, indeed, advantageous when gathering food which consists of the foliage of the acacia and mimosa trees. A substitute for this is difficult to find in captivity; consequently, feeding them is quite expensive.

In classifying this peculiar specimen its appearance would suggest that it belongs to the same group as the camels but "looks are deceiving", for its structural characteristics reveal it to be more closely related to the moose and deer tribe than any other. Like the deer they possess two short horns which are covered with a velvety skin. These horns, however, originate from skin tissue rather than from the bones of the skull as in the case of the deer.

In the 19th century Lamarck and his associates used this animal as a classic example of the effect of environment upon an organism to prove their evolutionary theory. They reasoned that due to adverse weather conditions there was a lack of grass and lower vegetation. Consequently, this animal was forced to stretch its neck in order to obtain food to maintain itself. This continued effort on the part of the creature gradually made it become longer. They claimed that this was transmitted to succeeding generations as an environmental acquisition. However, this theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics has been discredited. For example, the Orientals who bound their women's feet for centuries in endeavoring to keep them small, failed in transmitting the characteristic of tiny feet. To the evolutionists a satisfactory explanation for this long neck is truly a "pain in the neck". To the creationist this so-called "misfit" presents no problem for Genesis 1:24 states. "And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after his kind; and it was so."

In spite of its advantage of keen vision and unusual height, it is never-the-less, subject to attack by the lion and the leopard. As it is providentially able to survive the rigors of a dry climate, it instinctively withdraws from the more abundant pastures and seeks a safe retreat in the arid lands to bear and rear its young where its enemies are unable to exist.

This strange camelopard is none other than the giraffe!
**Book Review**

**MRS. H. C. HOEKSEMA**

Grand Rapids, Michigan

**GALLEY SLAVE . . . .**

the story of
*Most Excellent Theophilus*

by JOSEPH STEPHENS.

This novel, written in the early days of Christianity, tells the story of Prince Catar Virginius of Cymru, who became one of the favorites of the Roman Emperor, Claudius. At Claudius' command, he was engaged and married to Io, a wealthy Grecian girl. On their wedding day, he was drugged and accused of infidelity to Io by crafty Agrippina, wife of the Emperor Claudius. Instead of believing him, Io was angry and beat him in public.

Catar Virginius was condemned to the galley. The author vividly pictures his bitter experiences as a galley slave.

A year later he was rescued by a repentant Io, and another year later she raced with Nero in the Roman Chariot Arena for Virginius' life.

Now, though he was her husband, Nero decreed that he was to be Io's slave. Both moved to Antioch, where Catar Virginius became a glass-maker. His bitterness wore away and after three years he and Io became reconciled.

Through Luke, whom he sheltered in his home, he heard of the Christ and became a Christian. It was at this time that Nero started his persecutions of the Christians. Virginius, named Theophilus by Luke, was scourged and sent to Rome where he met the apostle Paul in a terrible dungeon. Through Io's efforts he was rescued and together they went to bring the gospel to Gaul.

The story is vividly written, revealing a picture of the wickedness of the Roman court, and of the trials of the early Christians. Of course the author uses his imagination in weaving this story around Theophilus, of whom we know nothing. However, it is a worthwhile book for all of us to read.

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When the occasion presents itself to study the many works of John Calvin, the great Reformer, you discover many outstanding teachings seldom thought of. The great struggle of the Reformation in which the defendants of the true doctrines of Scripture were constantly accused falsely, blasphemed and harassed, became the occasion on which they carefully studied the Word of God. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of God, the Reformers became the means in God's hand to establish the truth. Thus also in Calvin's Institutes. Book 4, Chap. 2, Par. 5, you find a very interesting definition of heresy and schism, as these two factors are the contributing cause of destroying the unity of the Church Militant in the midst of the world. Calvin quotes from some of the oldest works of the Church Fathers on record: quoting Augustine, Calvin says that:

Heresy: Corrupts the purity of faith by false doctrine.

Schism: Breaks the bond of affection.

Therefore Calvin says, the union of affection is based upon the unity of faith. Thus when the Scriptures as quoted below, enjoin upon us the unity of the Church, it is required that we with our minds hold the same doctrines in Christ, and with our wills be united in mutual love.

Calvin and Augustine thus taught that the Communion or Fellowship of the Church of Christ is preserved by two living Scriptural bonds:

1st: Agreement in sound doctrine.

2nd: Having brotherly love for one another.

Heresy destroys the first bond, agreement in sound doctrine.

Schism destroys the second bond, brotherly love.

Calvin comes to the conclusion, that because unity of affection or love is based upon the unity of confession, it follows that where heresy and false doctrine creep into the Church, schism follows because the basis of love was destroyed.

Calvin quotes the following Scriptures in support of his argument. Eph. 4:3-6, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4:11-16: "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets: and some evangel-
ists: and some pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine and by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Phil. 2:1-2: "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

The history of the Church thru its various reformations has shown that this practical teaching of Calvin and Augustine, namely union of affection is based upon the unity of faith, is very real. Where unity of confession is broken up, the unity of love is destroyed. It is therefore important that the Protestant Reformed Young People receive training in the fear of the Lord, learning the fundamental doctrines of Scripture as God has revealed them to us, that they may grow up in the environment of true Reformed Confessions and understand them, and appreciate paramount, it is here that the youth are seasoned with the ideas and confessions of their parents. It is in the home that the world and life view of the parents is engraved upon the minds of their children. It is therefore very essential that Father and Mother in the home have unity of confession, that they serve God on the same basis of confession. For, says Calvin, unity of confession is the root of unity of affection. And true affection is only rooted in God. Therefore the believer and unbeliever should not enter the marriage bond for they have no common unity of confession, no common unity of love for God, only discord which is a natural basis for disunity. The same applies to mixed marriages where father and mother have no common ground of confession, where there is no unity of confession you again have the basis for lack of true spiritual affection, no matter how appealing the personalities may be, nor what the flesh may desire. Therefore, young people, it makes a lot of difference whom you choose for your friends and companions. By nature we are dead in sins and trespasses and love the things of
the world. The world appeals to our flesh, and the sons and daugh-
ters of the world appeal to us as we are by nature. Therefore we
are called to put on the whole armour of God to fight against the
wiles of Satan who would see us destroyed.

Unity of confession affects the
whole realm of Church life. It
bonds the entire Church into the
bond of love. They are one to-
gether in Christ Jesus their Lord
and Redeemer. They understand
one another. They reason together
and edify one another with one
common confession. They are
brethren and sisters in the Lord.
And reveal their oneness by loving
one another. Under the one unity
of confession they are built into a
spiritual house, an holy priesthood,
to offer up spiritual sacrifices ac-
ceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
Every elect stone in that spiritual
house contributes an important
part to the finished body. For we
read in Eph. 4:16: “The whole
body framed and knit together
through that which every joint
supplieth unto the building up of
itself in love.” For therein con-
sists the majestic richness of God
as Creator, that He did not create
millions of people who are exactly
alike, but that He created no two
who are the same, but in every
Child of God something else, some-
thing new, the embodiment of a
proper sovereign Divine thought.
Therein glorifies itself the infinite
richness of His manifold wisdom.
that every child of God, every elect
is something by itself, something
which no other one is, and some-
thing that therefore cannot be
missing in the temple of God. Be-
cause not one child of God can take
the place of another, and it takes
every last one to complete God’s
house.

God will show us our own being
was recreated and born anew in
Christ Jesus our Lord. And the
name of this being will be en-
graved in the white stone which no
man knoweth saving he that re-
ceiveth it. So that your own name
speaks of your own being. And
your own being of a sovereign
eternal thought of God and that particular thought of God regarding you of a particular calling, a proper place, all your own which you are to occupy in the kingdom of God, unto all eternity.

God’s children therefore confess the same fundamental confession which seals their salvation and redemption in Christ Jesus their Lord. However this does not mean that all God’s children come to the perfect unity of the faith in this lifetime. But does not the Scripture exhort us to this perfect unity in verse 13 of Eph. 4? It does! And this unity also reigns among the sons of God, but not so perfectly as to make them come together into one perfect Church on

earth. Such is the weakness of our nature and our being under the curse of sin. However in the proclamation of the Gospel every day brings some children of God nearer to others, and all nearer to Christ. Therefore the term, coming together, denotes the closest union to which we must still aspire, and which we shall never reach until this body of our flesh which is always accompanied by some remains of ignorance and weakness, shall forever have been laid aside in the grave, and we enter into the perfect rest where perfect unity of faith shall come to its own unto all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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The Mutual Relationship Of The Sexes

Before I say anything at all about the subject "The Mutual Relationship of the sexes", I wish to make a couple of introductory and clarifying remarks. In the first place, when I write a few lines about the topic proper I wish to state that I conceive of my subject in a very limited sense. Secondly, it stands to reason that also here we must let ourselves be guided by the Word of God. What I mean by this will become plain in the sequence of the article. In the third place, the heading of this article does not quite cover the contents of it. This is due to the fact that a more suitable heading might create the wrong impression. After all we are not interested in anything sensational but wish to emphasize some sober facts. And, finally, it stands to reason that in writing these lines I have especially in mind our young people.

I said in the preceding paragraph that we must proceed from and let ourselves be guided by the Word of God also when we deal with this subject. Without the Word of God we cannot write one good or true word about the 'mutual relationship of the sexes'. He who deals with this subject and ignores Scripture certainly is not a trusted guide. Only the Word of God can teach us about the norm of this relationship.

Especially in our day the sexes mix rather freely and frequently. Young people have their schooling together, they have their societies, socials, parties, picnics, etc. And also the automobile has been a means to bring our boys and girls together frequently. Oft times they are together under the watchful eye of parent or leader. But there are also many times that they are together by themselves, sometimes in groups, oft times in couples.

Now, there is something very nice about the friendly relationship of the sexes, to study, work, play and be together. It is also normal for our young people that they want to be together. Also 'sex' is a gift of God and it is a phenomenon of nature that the opposite sex attracts. No parent need to become alarmed when his boy or girl manifests a liking for the opposite sex. It would be abnormal if this were not so.

However, the frequent and mutually friendly relationship of the sexes is not without danger, and that for more than one reason. We might enumerate a few of these reasons. In the first place the time of youth is still the time of instability. it is the time of the 'Sturm und Drang-period'. Besides, our children are conceived and born in sin, they are apt to
transgress the God willed limits which He has placed for the mutual relationship of the sexes. And in moments of temptation they are apt to yield to sinful passions. Add to this, we live in a world which knows of no norm. The world has its mouth full of love but from their songs, words and deeds it is apparent that they do not care for the norm of the Word of God. We we live in an age of lust and bestiality. I can sympathize with our young people because their struggle to stay clean and keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world is not an easy one. It’s so contrary to our modern life and world-view. One needs but to look at the pictures that advertise the modern movie or read the titles of the modern romance love songs to become convinced that the world of our day has reached an all time low when it comes to the appreciation of moral values and purity of the interrelationship of the sexes. The norm of Scriptures stands in the way of modern man. Ethical values are despised because they spoil the ‘love adventures’ of youth, the free development of nature. One such a modern man has said: “If nature has made man a sexual being, then it is definitely wrong to put limits to the sexual passions of man. Sexual passion is a natural phenomenon like hunger and thirst and should seek and find satisfaction just like hunger and thirst. We may not curtail and bridle the natural instincts of man. —Those who reason thus have reduced man to a piece of nature, for such there is no longer a law. The seventh commandment goes contrary to their nature, why then should they keep it?.

Covenant youth, in this connection I like to call the following to your attention: In the first place remember that you were placed within the sphere and also the limits of God’s covenant. You belong to a peculiar people, and you are a peculiar youth. You were set aside by God to reveal and manifest His praises and to live as His people. In the second place, in your relationship to one another as boys and girls, always remember that your bodies are a temple of God, of the Holy Spirit. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (I Cor. 3:16, 17). What this means for your conduct also in your mutual fellowship with one another as covenant youth is further made plain by Paul in this same letter to the Corinthians. I quote: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid! . . . Flee forni-
cation. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body: but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:15, 17-20). In the third place remember that you are bound and limited by the law of God and more specifically by the seventh commandment. What this implies is briefly but rather completely stated in Lord's Day 21. Permit me to quote this entire Lord's Day. "Q. What doth the seventh commandment teach us? A. That all uncleanness is accursed of God: and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same and live chastely and temperately, either in holy wedlock or in single life.—Q. Doth God forbid in this commandment only adultery, and such like gross sins? A. Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, he commands us to preserve them pure and holy: therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto." — I need not comment upon this brief, frank, but also clear teaching of our Catechism.

Keeping the above in mind it is very evident that our relationship as covenant youth and the manner of it is determined by God and limited by His Word and His Law. And if you keep in mind some of these fundamental principles which we emphasized in this article you will let yourselves be guided by the Word of God. Also in our relationship to one another we must be ever mindful of our high calling, of the God appointed limits. And if you let yourselves be guided thus your relationship between one another will be pure, wholesome, God-pleasing. Then you can "play" together, but you can also "pray" together. Let our modern world never be your guide or model. Neither follow the sinful passions of your evil nature.

But, one may say, doesn't this make our life awful 'dry' and 'stale' and 'dead'? Not at all. You can enjoy youth, the life of youth, the fellowship of youth, the association with boys and girls as no 'modern' youth can enjoy it. I admit this sort of life does away with a lot of cheap loving and cheap kissing and necking. However, it lays the foundation for a solid future, it gives the proper preparation for a happy marriage. There is never true joy in licentiousness and evil lusts of the flesh. That leads to ruination of body and soul. And many are the victims who have a shipwrecked life because in the days of their youth they ruined their souls and bodies in the ser-
vice of sin and sexual excess. True joy, also in the days of our youth, also in the matter of the mutual relationship of the sexes, lies in obedience to the Word of God. The highest freedom is not the freedom without law (that is anarchy and means ruination) but the highest freedom is this: that we live within the limits of the God appointed law, crucifying the old man and walking in newness of life.

Hence, enjoy the days of your youth. That beautiful period, the very springtime of life, will never return. Enjoy also the fellowship of one another but always keep in mind the basic principles of the Word of God, some of which we enumerated in this article. You are under covenant obligations. You must honor and respect and treat one another as image bearers of God and temples of His Spirit. Your freedom lies within the limits of God’s law. Therefore, the conclusion of the matter is: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” Schuller.

EDITOR’S DESK

Two new names appear in the Beacon Lights, as you may have noticed. The article Peace on Earth was written by Mr. Ray De Windt, who is a member of our Fuller Ave. Church. Mr. J. H. Kortering, who wrote A Practical Teaching from John Calvin’s Works, belongs to our congregation in Holland, Mich.

* * *

Are you puzzled over the question of what to get that friend for Christmas? Why not give a subscription to Beacon Lights?

* * *

The Federation Board and the Staff join in wishing you all a Christmas season rich with the blessings of our Covenant God.
IN EGYPT

As Raanah entered Egypt he was thrilled with its quaint beauty. The lingering loveliness of its white nights cast their spell upon him. In such a magnificent setting it seemed that the veil was slipping from his dreams and they were approaching reality.

Joseph was not so happy. He had not recovered from his transplanting. It seemed that his very life had been torn up by the roots, and his heart ached because of it.

"Taphanhes is having a festival and a parade for the gods tomorrow," Kedar announced. "'Tis a great event. Seth, the god of this nome, has invited Mumbo-Jumbo of Central Africa to be his guest of honor."

After the boys prepared their pallets that evening, each bowed silently to the uncertainty of his future. Joseph never lost faith because he believed that all the events of his life were part of God's plan; and that by experiences one is disciplined and developed. So troubles were not to be despised, for by them one could step to higher things. With such a belief he could take whatever befell him with fair grace.

But Raanah was confused and uncertain—a feeling he had never had before. His goddess was so small, and the Egyptian gods were so big and seemed so powerful. He turned on his side and drew the image of Ishtar from the pocket over his heart.

The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty and misery, but you have always guarded me well," he praised her. "Before my heart failed, you gave me youth strength. Before my foot slipped you upheld me. Now, I pray thee, walk beside me and quicken me with thy brightness."

He pressed the jewel to his lips and its fire illumined his face. With a sigh he returned it to his picket and went to sleep.

After breakfast, Accid-Adab straddled Uruk and left for the city.

But before the afternoon was spent Accid-Adab returned, with a man of flashy military garb and bearing.
The men walked toward the youths. There could be but one meaning to such action, but neither dared give it form in his thoughts. In cold, level voice, Accid Adab announced that he had sold Joseph to Potiphar, Captain of Pharaoh's Guard who was in Taphanhes for the festival, and the soldier had come to fetch him.

Joseph glanced at Raanah warningly, yet with tender compassion. Before these men, pride restrained them. The soldier showed some impatience, and Joseph grasped Raanah's hand warmly. His voice was low and constrained. "Send me word of yourself some time," he begged. "Let me know where you go."

Raanah could not answer.

**THE PARADE**

A short time before the parade started Accid-Adab. Egiba, Isme-Dagan, Dahmru and Raanah stood waiting before the line of march. Raanah's heart still ached over his parting with Joseph, but he tried to put it from his mind.

The crowd milled about them, and they watched this strange Hamitic people with interest.

Soon the pageant was rolling before them. With the resilience of youth, Raanah was drawn into the mood of the occasion, and his heart throbbed and ached with delight at the strange sights before him.

Dreams, riotous dreams! Prancing horses with arched necks and shapely legs snorted with restrained desire as they dragged the floats along. Raanah adored every one of them.

The first float contained the colossal image of Seth. His symbolic animals—the ass, the crocodile, and the hippopotamus were grouped around him. Crouching, sweat-glistening slaves waved palm leaves above his head.

"So that's the fellow who cut up his brother Osiris," Isme-Dagan whispered. "May a million gnats settle on him!"

"Yea," Egiba responded. "but the other one seems not to have fared so badly at that. Here he comes. He is Judge and King of the Dead: and that is a mighty kingdom! See the Book of Judgment: on his knees, and the flail and the crook in his hands?"

"And here is his wife, Iris," Dahmru whispered timidly. "Oh-o—" he groaned: "She is cow-headed, and there are snakes on her horns."

All were dour, evil-looking gods, avenging gods, ruthless gods—on they rolled! Raanah wanted to scream a protest at them. A smothering sensation tensed him. Smoke from the torches choked him. Egiba's chatter irritated him.

(To be continued)
The Book Of Judges

OUTLINE X
(Judges 6:11-16)

A Castaway Israel?

INTRODUCTION:

To appreciate our present lesson we must consider it against the back-ground of what we discussed last week. vs. 7-10. Had not a prophet appeared? Hadn't he told them that they were disobedient? Then the prophet shut the door and left them. Could this be the end perhaps?

Had we lived at that time and heard this sermon of the prophet we likely would have said: Now the Lord has forsaken us and we have fully earned to be forsaken of the Lord.

The remnant in Israel said just that. Look at vs. 13, and you discover that Gideon, the man of faith, saith that also. No wonder. Very often men of God shuddered at the sight of things, and with Elijah said: God has cast away His people.

Paul came to this question also in Romans 11.

But, no. a mother can forget her suckling (imagine that, but it can, we frequently read of mothers casting their children away) but God cannot forget His people (Isa. 49: 15).

Sin abounded. Grace did much more abound. After the prophet is gone the Angel of the Lord appears, and he prepares deliverance for this unworthy people.

1. The Angel Appears. vss. 11-12.

This is not merely one of heaven's many angels. This is the One whom we always call the Angel of the Covenant. He frequently appeared, at least in critical times or at turning points in Israel's history.

Concerning this Angel: Ex. 23: 20: "Behold, I send an Angel before thy face to keep thee in the way and bring thee unto the place which I have prepared for thee". Ex. 33:2: "And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive
out the Canaanite," etc. Isa. 63:9: "And the Angel of His Presence saved them."

Refer to your Concordance for numerous other passages about this Angel.

Opinion: This Angel is an Old Testament revelation of Christ. Christ is THE Ambassador of God. THE Captain of our salvation, who brings God's people unto the Inheritance. God, in Christ going before the Old Testament Church.

This Angel sat under an oak, near the place where Gideon was threshing wheat and hiding it from the enemies.

Notice: Heaven is not in a hurry. God is never excited, not even when Israel's handfuls of food are numbered. God does not adapt Himself to history's circumstances. God makes history, therefore to us it may sometimes seem that the Lord moves slowly.

He appeared to Gideon, son of Joash. This Joash had an altar of Baal and conducted a grove (6:25). Gideon was the least in his father's house, also the youngest perhaps. And no doubt a remnant among a Baal worshipping communion.

Discuss: Baal worship had now been set up in Israel, in Ophrah, one of Israel's cities. They no longer went out to worship Baal, they brought the Baal worship into the church. An advanced stage of apostacy. If a church seek the world, it invariably brings the world into the church. It works that way in our homes and schools also.

Question: How do you account for a believing, God fearing Gideon in a family where the father conducts a Baal grove?

II. This Angels informs Gideon that God will use him to save Israel. Notice that God does not deal with Israel according to its folly and desert, but according to His wonderful grace. Vs. 10 ends "ye have not obeyed my voice". Yet now we read that the Lord sends an Angel and gets ready to deliver Israel.

Question: Does God overlook their disobedience, pass it by, forgive it, or what, that He saves them when it is so evident that they are disobedient? If God saved the people, in spite of their oft repeated disobedience, wouldn't Israel get the impression that God was careless about justice?

Note: Never forget that we deal here also with a remnant. A remnant in whom God's grace works repentance and the will to turn from folly to God. Here also is a fine opportunity to discuss how God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. God was
postponing the punishment of disobedience until Christ came. . . . for God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53).

Gideon can hardly believe such gospel news. "If the Lord be with us" he says, "where is He?" God has forsaken us! But no. God has not forsaken them. Go in this thy might, says God to Gideon, and thou shalt save Israel. But, says Gideon, with what tools? Then the Lord says: I will be with thee.

No, God has not forsaken His seed of Abraham. God is here yet. Only the cloud of sin has to be removed before they can see Him.

Questions: 1. Do you think that today we can determine whether God forsakes or blesses a movement on the basis of events or circumstances? At that time poverty, hardship, famine, pestilence and oppression were signs that God had forsaken Israel. Is that true today yet? Discuss why or why not. 2. How did Gideon know about God's miracle work in Egypt (vs. 13)? Do you think that his father, the superintendent of the Baal grove, told him? 3. In Canons V:5 we confess that the child of God who falls into sin can "sometimes lose the sense of God's favor for a time". What does this mean?

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OUTLINE XI

(Judges 6:25-33)

Jerubbaal *

* The name Jerubbaal means, literally. let Baal start execution proceedings against this man.

INTRODUCTION:

The hearing of the Word of God works faith, the sacraments strengthen that faith we generally say. Notice the faith-strengthening process in Gideon. In vs 12 comes the word of God: The Lord is with thee. That would be enough to send Gideon forth in power, is it not? But not so. All flesh is frail, all flesh is as grass. Therefore in vs. 16 it is repeated, the Lord once again says: I will be with thee. That will be enough, is it not? No, the Lord will do still more.

To strengthen Gideon's faith the Lord gives him a sign (vss. 17-21). This sign was intended to convince him that he was in communication with the Lord, and in the power of that conviction he builds an altar, calling it Jehovah Shalom (The Lord, Peace). Later he receives another sign (vss. 36-40) assuring him that God would save Israel by his hand. A third sign follows in the form of an overheard dream (7:11-15). Thus God makes heroes of faith.

And thus the Lord raises up in
the midst of that apostate Israel a hero of faith. God brings life out of the dead. Faith, where there is no faith.

Now to our lesson: vss. 25-33.

1. Down With Baal. vss. 25-27.

The very night of the day that the Lord had raised up this hero of faith God sends him to the work. He is to destroy the Baal-center located on his father's premises.

Observe: That a Baal-center had been erected right in Israel, in the church, and Gideon's very father had the altar. Hence Joash, Gideon's father, must have been somewhat of a superintendent of the Baal service conducted them. Out of this Baal-center God raises up one who will destroy Baal.

Not Midian but Baal-worship is Israel's No. 1 Enemy. Wherefore God directs deliverance, beginning at the root of Israel's misery. Some might have said: The Midianites, they are destroying us, they are our enemies. God says: No. Baal-worship, sin, is your enemy.

Note: The oppression of Israel was but a symptom of an internal disorder. A rash on one's skin is evidence of an internal disorder. So it was with Israel. The oppression of Midian was the righteous result of Israel's defection in worshipping Baal. With Baal worship here, how can God bless Israel?

When Jesus later performs His healings. He is not merely a great physician as some present Him. Jesus works with the symptoms, but His labor is directed toward SIN which lies at the root of all misery.

Gideon wisely chooses the cover of night to perform the work which God had given him to do. When dawn comes, behold, the Baal-center is completely destroyed, and instead of the Baal altar stands an altar of God, the smoke of its sacrifice writing the name of God and the faith of His servant in the morning sky.

Discussion: 1-Does the fact that Gideon did it by night instead of by day time indicate a certain fearfulness unworthy of faith? 2-Someone commented on this as follows: Gideon used force. You can't use force to convince people. What do you think of such comment?

Suggestion: Baal worship has no right to exist anywhere, least of all in Manasseh... it is a weed. Weeds are pulled out and destroyed. Remember, after Gideon comes He who was before him, namely Jesus Christ, and His task it is to destroy the works of the devil. When the works of the devil are
destroyed men must be convinced that God is God.

11. Baal’s Followers Protest. (vss. 28-33). The next morning early the officers of Baal discover what has happened. They are greatly incensed. It requires but little investigation to trace this destruction to Gideon, son of Joash. At once word goes out to Joash: bring forth thy son that we may execute him for this great offence.

Notice: How attached they are to Baal. The thought of sin is far from their minds. How grievously they offend against Moses does not seem to bother them a bit. They hold fast their sin, as do all men by nature. Isaiah speaks of them thus: they draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as it were with a cart rope. In our Canons we also confess that natural man is incapable of disposing himself to reformation.

Question: 1. What is there about SIN which makes it so attractive for us by nature? Heb. 11:25 speaks of Moses rejecting the “pleasures of sin”. What pleasure is there in sin? 2. What is there about God that He is so unattractive to the natural man? 3. How is Baal worship conducted in the church life of today? What instrument(s) do we have for breaking it down... or isn’t it our calling to break it down?

Joash answers: If Baal is god, let him plead, let him take up his case against my son. Baal ought to be able to defend himself against a mere Gideon. Let them be put to death who insult Baal by leaving the impression that he cannot take care of himself.

Observe: This is sarcasm, pointed irony. Joash means to say: Baal is nothing (an idol is nothing in this world, says Paul). As proof of the fact that he is nothing you take up the case for him. By calling his son Jerubbaal. Gideon henceforth becomes a walking evidence of the fact that an idol is nothing... he does nothing to Gideon. As long as Gideon lives Gideon is proof that Baal does and can do nothing, even if men smash his very altar to the ground.

Questions: 1. How do you account for it that Joash now so suddenly turns against Baal, when until now he had been superintendent of the worship in his grove? 2. Or are we to suppose that Joash merely had the grove on his farm while he himself did not approve of it. (6:25 simply says “the altar of Baal that thy father HATH”). 3. In what respect is Gideon here a type of the Christ? And don’t overlook the Antichrist in all this.
OUTLINE XIII.
( Judges 7:1-15 )
On The Battle Front.

INTRODUCTION:

We speak of the heroes of faith. Gideon is a hero, if you understand that his heroism is only this: the Spirit of the Lord in him (6:34). Gideon is a hero but what makes him a hero is the assurance that nothing of the great undertaking will be left to him. The conviction that God will do it, that makes him a hero, a hero of faith. Gideon is in himself a fearful man. Again and again he turns to the Lord, for Christ is THE HERO and by His power Gideon is a hero. Only remember this: God does not find heroes. He makes them.

1. An Insignificant Three Hundred. (7:1-8). So far Gideon has the conviction that the Lord will save Israel by his hand (6:36) but it was natural that he should interpret this to mean that it would require a huge army. Wasn't the army of Midian huge? Consequently with sun-up Gideon has an army of thirty two thousand men and they maneuver into battle position.

But now we shall see how the Lord reduces Gideon's army from a mighty thirty two thousand to a mere three hundred, in other words there is virtually no army left. Thirty two thousand against perhaps five hundred thousand, what a forbidding contrast. But what then if there shall be but three hundred left? The Lord says to Gideon: I cannot give the enemy into your hands with such a large army under your command.

Reason: Flesh will boast. Israel will pride itself and say: mine own hand hath saved me. Sinful man is eagerly looking for something on which he can hang the boast that he saved himself, at least that he contributed thereto. Therefore every possibility of boasting must be cut off.

Observe: Salvation is important. More important still is how was it attained. In Gideon now and in the Cross afterward a salvation appears which forever shuts out any and all boasting. God's works are Self-centered. His aim is not first us, but Himself.

Questions: In the manner of salvation, how has Arminianism given place for the flesh to boast? How does salvation through Christ and the Cross shut out all boasting? Because it shuts out all possibility of boasting, is that perhaps also one reason why the wisdom of this world calls the Cross of Christ foolishness?

Consider now by what method
the Lord reduces Gideon's army to a virtual nothing.

First Sifting (vs. 3). It is announced before the army that all who are fearful and afraid, let them go home at once. Result: twenty two thousand go home. Typical of how terrorized Israel was at the sight of that well equipped army of Midian. Israel is not facing an imaginary foe, this battle field is REAL. It is just that real on our battlefield of life. Twenty two thousand go home. As far as they were concerned Midian might swallow up Israel.

Question: If they came up at Gideon's call, why do they now return? They seemed to be eager for battle once, how come then they are now so fearful?

Second Sifting (vss. 4-6). Evidently to Gideon's great surprise the Lord tells him that his army is still altogether too large. Ten thousand are still too many. The Lord says: bring them to the water and I will try them there. All those who bow down to drink must return home, but all who bring the water in a cupped hand to the mouth, they shall remain.

Result: Ninety seven hundred go home, leaving three hundred. The nine thousand seven hundred who now go home were neither fearful nor afraid. What then? I would suggest two possibilities, you can suggest perhaps still more. They might have reasoned that it would be a long, long time before they could get a drink again, hence they had better drink themselves full now. Victory under such conditions seemed impossible anyway. Or: they were in no hurry to get on with this unevenly matched battle, hence they leisurely indulged in refreshment. In any case, the nine thousand seven hundred break down before the reality before them.

Note: God creates an atmosphere in which none can live except they have faith. Thirty one thousand and seven hundred have fled from this thing in fear. God Himself raises men of faith.

Thus there remains a Gideon and three hundred men. In vs. 7 God comes with His Word of Promise and Gideon dares to proceed to battle.

II. A Strong Gideon (vss. 9-15). God lets Gideon overhear a dream being told in the camp of the enemy. Gideon hears that God has gone before him. has invaded the enemy camp with His terror. Terror is among them, they have smelled the savour of death unto death. It reminds us of Jericho. whence also the rumors of Israel's victory outran the victory itself.

Discuss: Why did the dream which the Lord had sent upon them
center around a cake of barley bread? Does the world today know that we have the victory? Christ has triumphed, do the devils know that?

Result of this overheard dream is that Gideon falls down to worship, and with the Word of God upon his lips he says what he had heard his God say: arise, the enemies are delivered into our hands. How glorious is that Word of God. In that Word the Greater than Gideon conquered, in it. we conquer with Him.

* * * * *

OUTLINE XIII.

(Judges 7:16-25)

The Sword of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION:

The day of deliverance has dawned, but also the day of vengeance. The day of deliverance for His people but the day of destruction for the enemies of God's people. The judge is at hand. But he is never more than a type and forerunner of the far Greater Judge, Christ Jesus. Gideon's instrument is the sword of the Lord, the Word of the Lord. After while comes He Who IS the Word of the Lord. His weapon is the Cross. See Him ride in glory in Rev. 19:11-13 and the armies which follow Him. Gideon was following Him.

With Gideon we still see three hundred men.

At the cross after a while there are no three hundred. Not even one. Christ alone, with the Sword of the Lord conquers the enemies and is our Judge Supreme.

Thus to our outline for today:

I. The Battle Weapons (vs. 16). An army of three hundred is pretty small. This three hundred is again divided into three groups of one hundred each hence everything becomes still smaller. Truly, as insignificant as that cake of barley bread of which the Midianites had dreamed.

And weapons?

As far as I am able to discover none of them had as much as a sword. Every man receives a trumpet, with a pitcher having a lamp inside of it. One in the right hand the other in the left.

Observe: In vs. 14, in that overheard dream there had been mention of the sword of Gideon. But God wants it emphasized that the sword of Gideon is the sword of the Lord. Therefore in vs. 18 the words "the sword" is in italics. The Hebrew text reads: "Of (or to) the Lord and of Gideon". The battle, the arrangement, the forth-
coming victory, is all of the Lord. And being God's servant Gideon is privileged to represent God. Gideon is not God, neither has he a sword. God is God and Gideon's sword is God. Gideon's power is the Word of God, the promise of God. That is really his sword.

 Discuss: What have the trumpets and the pitchers and the lamps to do with this? Why is Gideon sent forth to battle with such instruments.

II. The Attack. (vss. 19-22).

It comes shortly after midnight. Gideon's band took its position round about the camp of the Midianites. Gideon takes the lead and after his come the hundred under his direct command. The trumpets blast, the pitchers break, the lamps shine forth, and from every corner at once there comes the shout "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon". The sword stands for the judgment of God over the wicked (cf. Isa. 34:5, 6). There is no battle as such. At the moment that the Word of God falls among them the Lord sets every man's sword against that of his neighbor. The sword of the Lord turns the swords of the enemies to their own destruction. The more sword power the enemy has, the worse for them. Surely the strong are snared in their own strength and the wise are caught in their own craftiness.

 Questions: The Lord would not allow flesh to boast that it had attained the victory, what was there in this victory which would prevent even the three hundred from boasting? The Lord sent the Midianites against Israel, now the Lord has them destroyed... why? How is the Cross the judgment of the world?

III. The Victory. (vss. 21-25).

Fighting against themselves in wild confusion, the enemy fled. Gideon summons an army to pursue after them. He dispatches an army to stop the passage of the Jordan. The princes of Midian's army are slain and the remnants of the Midianites are tracked down until there is nothing left.

Note: After the Lord has slain the host, Israel takes part in the battle. The Lord has slain them, but Israel slays them too. The Lord reserves the glory of the victory. His people are privileged to take part in that victory (Rev. 19:14).

 Questions: If Israel then is the church today, who are the Midianites today? Why is it such a great sin to oppress the children of God? Don't we do it sometimes? Why does the final victory depend completely upon the return of Christ, as the book of Revelation shows?
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