"... personal evangelism includes inviting people to our church. There is far too much supposed evangelism that ignores almost entirely the church of Jesus Christ. God's people need the church and the ministry of the Word."

Personal Evangelism II - Rev. Den Hartog
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EDITORIAL NOTES
In the BEACON LIGHTS last month the letter received from Marty VanderWal was answered by the author of the editorial, Tom Bergman. This was unintentionally left out.

In the BEACON LIGHTS this month we have many great articles.
We currently have a series started on the order of salvation of which Jim Laning has written on the first step, regeneration. Rev. Den Hartog continues from last month on our duty of personal evangelism with the completion of this duty in the December issue. In this issue a convention speech by Rev. Koole on "Spiritual Youth in a Carnal World At Work" is included. Also an essay entry in the scholarship department by Nathan Brummel entitled, "A Dialogue between Sapiential and Deludius". Plus there are many more articles. Read on!
Question:

Only the elect are saved. But does article 3 of the Canons of Dordt, Head II mean that Christ’s death and suffering paid for the sins of all the people in the world? If it does, then why are not all people saved? If it does not, then what was the necessity in Christ suffering sufficiently to expiate their sins, since this did nothing for their salvation?

*Brian Bosveld.

Answer:

Before answering this question, perhaps it would be useful to state what Head II, Article 3 of the Canons of Dordt says.

The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin; and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

As we can see from reading this article, our questioner raises an important point, for at face value the article seems to indicate that Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world. However, this is not the teaching of Scripture, nor do the Canons of Dordt teach this concerning the suffering of Christ.

In order to understand the statement made in the Canons of Dordt, it will be useful to understand why this specific article was written and included. As we well know, the Reformed faith, in the doctrine of particular (or limited) atonement, has always maintained that Christ suffered only for the elect, not for the sins of all people in the world. The Arminians believe in the doctrine of general atonement. This disagreement, which originated in the 1800’s, spawned the writing of the Canons.

In Head II, Article 3 of the Canons of Dordt, the Reformed were answering the accusation of the Arminians that the doctrine of limited atonement makes God a limited and stingy God. The Arminians accused the Reformed of denying the infinite value of Christ’s death and suffering. In response to this, the writers of the Canons affirmed that the death of the Son of God “is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate (i.e. to pay the penalty of) the sins of the whole world.”

But what did they mean by this statement? Did they mean, as our questioner asks, that Christ’s suffering and death “paid for the sins of all the people in the world?”

No. Christ’s suffering and death was not for all men. Christ suffered and died for the elect alone. Scripture clearly teaches this truth. And Head II, Article 8 of the Canons of Dordt also beautifully expresses this truth, as follows: “It was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross . . . should effectually redeem . . . all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation.”

Rather, the statement in the Canons means that if we consider Christ’s death by itself, it would have been sufficient to expiate the sins of the entire human race. Christ’s death and suffering was so great that it would have been sufficient to save all men, if that was God’s eternal good pleasure.

We must be careful to take special notice of the wording of the Canons. They state that Christ’s death “would have been sufficient,” not that it “was sufficient.” Christ did not actually suffer and die for all men.

We may better understand the infinite worth of Christ’s sacrifice by taking note of the following. Sin was against God’s infinite majesty, and therefore the infinite wrath of God for sin had to be satisfied. This could only be satisfied by Christ’s sacrifice being of infinite worth.

For a more detailed explanation of this article, please refer to H. C. Hoeksema’s exposition of the Canons of Dordt, The Voice of Our Fathers.
Spiritual Youth In A Carnal World: At Work

by Rev. Kenneth Koole

We will be speaking of ‘work’ from a limited perspective this evening, namely, ‘work’ as a job or occupation for which you get a wage and are earning your keep to some degree or other.

Now, I am well aware that that is not the only kind of ‘work’ there is. For many here, though you may have a part-time job, or a summer job, that is not your main calling in life at the moment. You are students, whether in high school or college, some even attending here at Dordt. Studying, doing assignments, preparing for tests, writing papers, in general, using your mind rather than your hands is also work. It better be, otherwise I, since I do most of my work in a study, writing and speaking, haven’t done much work the past 20 years or so. (Actually I have some brothers who don’t think I’ve done any real work since the day I was born.)

Let me put that notion to rest. Besides knocking apart truck-tires for a couple of summers while in college, and driving a garbage truck a couple of others, while in seminary I did work a couple of summers pouring cement walls (actually, carrying and cleaning the panels that formed the walls). So, I am somewhat acquainted with physical labor.

More importantly those summer jobs rounded out my education for the pastoral ministry. It was part of the course called ‘Realities’. I could better understand what it means for believers to work out there in society and to rub elbows with the world. I discovered, for instance, that truck drivers are not usually the most religious and pious fellows in the world. One comes to understand and appreciate how difficult it is to work in the world every day and still maintain your Christian distinctiveness and spiritual integrity.

This matter of working out in the world is a matter of importance to every one of us, even if for many of you that will not be your primary occupation in life. Most of you young ladies here tonight will marry and spend your time not out in the ‘work-force’, but laboring in the home, raising a family. Still, this matter of working in the world is important for you too, simply because the children you raise will have to pursue some occupation. And you will have to instill in them the Christian work-ethic.

We will concern ourselves with one main point this evening, namely, HOW one is to work, or more precisely, what is to characterize you as you work. Our chief concern at this point is maintaining our Christian distinctiveness at all times with those with whom we work, many of whom may be spiritually indifferent, and may even be morally antagonistic to the Christian life.

This is not the only point about work worth considering, of course; for instance, we could consider why we are to work, namely, to support one’s family, the kingdom causes, and those who have needs. But our chief concern this evening is with one thing, namely, making a witness, showing our Christianity, and doing this at one’s place of work. This is worth considering.

This is worth considering, first of all, because maintaining one’s Christian principles working with worldly fellow employees can be a difficult thing. It may mean paying a price while you earn a wage.

Secondly, how you deport yourself at work is tremendously important because your reputation is at stake. Consider that the main way in which outsiders get to know you, if not the only way, is by contact with you at work. And consider that there is no other single factor by which men will judge you more than by how you work, that is, whether you give an honest day’s labor or not.

And remember that our ultimate concern is not simply our own personal reputation but our reputation as Christians. You may go to church every day, and twice on Sunday for an hour and half service, but it will mean nothing if at work people know you to be lazy, and that they can not trust you. The only thing they will judge you to be is one great, pious hypocrite and probably your church right along with you.

For these reasons how you work, how you deport yourself while working, is of crucial importance. The first thing that is to characterize you at work, if you will show your Christianity, is that you give a full day’s labor, that you are willing to work hard. Yes, something as common and unspectacular as that. In our day and age, when the work-ethic is deteriorating so badly, working hard is something that is to be
STRESSED, and which will stand out.

We live in an age when sloth and laziness in society is becoming a way of life. It is accepted, approved, and even REWARDED! By not working one can earn (i.e. - receive thru welfare) as much and even more than for working a 40 hour week. And even those who do work do not see a great need to work hard or to produce quality products.

The great goal of life today is not to do good work, but to see how much work one can get out of. They view work in much the same way as they view going to church. They go to church in order to see how soon they can get out of church. That attitude is not conducive for worship. Neither is it conducive for work.

What must be stressed is that there is a dignity to work and to the working man (or woman), dignity to his toil, to his being productive by use of the energy of his mind and the sweat of his body. I repeat - A DIGNITY.

By ‘dignity’ I mean something worthy of esteem, something touched with royalty, and something giving purpose to life itself.

It is God who gave to work with its effort and production its dignity. God made man and woman to work, to expend energy, to produce thru labor. That was true even in Paradise. Paradise was a place for work, for productivity, and for finding enjoyment in that.

Today, you would think that Paradise is doing nothing! People work for one main purpose, namely, in order to earn enough money and benefits to come to the point where they do not have to work at all. The goal of life has become finding a job that gives long vacations, one that enables you perhaps to visit the South Sea Islands, to do nothing but sun one’s self, to gorge one’s self with food and drink, and perhaps play a little golf (using a cart of course). That would be a return to Paradise, the perfect world — no need to work.

Well, let me assure you that if at the end of the first week in Paradise, God had found Adam spending his time out on the beach, gorging himself with food and drink, and not wanting to do much else than play a little golf, that would have been sufficient reason God to have driven Adam from Paradise. Adam would have proved he was not worthy of being head of creation, and he would have forfeited his stewardship.

Adam was not in Paradise for recreation and trivial pursuits. He was in the garden as an occupation. He was there to ‘dress it and keep it’, pruning, picking, planting. He was there in the name of horticulture and agriculture - a husband-man. He did not have to sweat and toil as we do, but he still had work to do.

Recreation, vacation, ocean cruises, and doing nothing productive is not a return to Paradise! Recreation and vacation, golf and basketball, and other trivial pursuits are like the apostolic wine recommended to Timothy - “a little for thine own infirmities.” And the last I heard, the emphasis was on the word ‘little’. You (not to say I) can become as addicted to these trivial pursuits as some can to alcohol. And as with alcohol taken in large doses, these trivial pursuits can do permanent damage both to yourself and to others.

The point is, there is nothing shameful about common toil, to work that causes you to sweat, drenches your shirt, and which overpowers even that deodorant advertised as strong enough to prevent every B.O. and is supposed to disguise what we really smell like.

I find it striking that Christ called his apostles from amongst the commonest day-laborers of his day, or perhaps we should say, the ‘night-laborers’, because a number of his disciples made their living as fishermen. They often toiled all night casting out their nets, drawing them in, and then rowing to another spot - toilers of the sea. They earned their bread by the sweat of their brow. Perhaps you’ve heard the old joke, ‘Old fishermen never die . . . they just smell that way.’

The point is, body odor was not offensive to Christ. That’s not the bottom line on what a person is worth no matter what our perfumed, lazy society would have you believe. Christ said to those perspiring men, just finished with a night of hard toil, “Follow me!”

What stinks to Christ is not the sweat of toil, but it is the attitude of those who want to get by with as little effort as possible, and who want to live on Easy Street, and who will perspire only if it is of the recreational sort. Then no effort is spared.

Remember that Christ himself, before he began his earthly ministry, was a common day-laborer, working with his hands in a his step-father Joseph’s carpenter’s shop. He worked in a hot, dry climate in days before air-conditioned comfort. Jesus knew what it meant to work and to sweat. He gave to work its dignity.

A striking passage that shows just how important honest labor is to the Christian life is found in II Thess. 3:6ff “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

Notice, ‘withdraw yourselves’. That’s pretty serious.

You wonder what sin Paul had in mind. False doctrine perhaps. That is serious. But no, not here.

Well, perhaps immorality, fornication, idolatry or some defilement. But no, that’s not it either.

What then is Paul so concerned about?

Listen to vs. 11. “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly working not at all but are busybodies. . .”

What is their disorderliness? They were working not at all. And as a result they were busybodies. Idle hands, the devil’s workshop. Withdraw yourself from such! That is how serious Paul took laziness and how he valued being a hard worker.
In addition to this good attitude towards work, one makes a powerful witness by showing a good attitude towards one’s boss; if you will, respect for those over you. Do that and you are going to stand out. Owners will take note. They will note your family, as well as your church and even school. They will conclude, “These people are actually taught to be concerned about their neighbor (that is, the guy they are working for) and not just about themselves. With these people it’s not simply ‘How much am I getting paid, and how much work I can get out of.’ These people have an upbringing. Their religion means something.” They will be impressed!

Let me go on record as saying that I know for a fact that in the Jenison, Grandville, and Hudsonville areas our young people (who work in a lot of restaurants, and have part time jobs), have a good reputation. Students of this Covenant High (“That Prot. Ref’d School, you know.”), they’ll work hard, you can trust them, they’ll be on time (usually), and they’ll show you respect. They have good upbringings. Giving an honest day’s labor is one of the most effective witnesses there is.

Still we haven’t put our finger on the most important characteristic of all as Christian workers.

And what is that?

It is stated in Eph. 6:5ff where you read that you are ‘to be obedient to them that are your masters . . . in singleness of your heart as unto Christ, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers . . . with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.

Note, ‘not with eye-service . . . (but) as to the Lord.’ This is the chief principle. No matter where you work or what you are doing you are not working first of all for money, nor for yourself, nor even for your employer, you are in the service of Christ, doing His business.

That means that the primary principle of your work and life is that you are a Christian, and Christ is your Lord. You are not working to please men, but to please Christ.

This is of tremendous practical significance.

First of all, that has everything to do with your relationship to your boss/manager. If you work as an eye-pleaser, to impress your boss, then the temptation is ‘expediency’, which means you only work hard when the boss is watching, to impress him. But when he is not watching, then what? You can slack off or cheat a bit. That is ‘eye-service’. Paul means, forget about the boss’s eyes; remember Christ is always observing.

And the simple fact is, not all bosses are a joy to work for. They can be moody, unfair, demanding, tight, inconsiderate to the extreme. And I have to give HIM my best?

If one is working to please Christ, then nothing changes, not even when the boss is oppressive and less than fair. One still gives an honest day’s work, and shows respect. Men may not praise you for that, but Christ will reward you abundantly in due time.

In the second place, acknowledging Christ’s Lordship at your work will have everything to do with those with whom you work, your fellow employees. These are the ones with whom we are most concerned, and that for two basic reasons; first, they are the ones to whom you will make a witness; and second, because it is your fellow workers that often confront you with the greatest temptations (as many of you probably know by now).

First, we reiterate that where you work is the place of your greatest witness. Let me stress that. No matter what, you will make a witness to those with whom you work. No matter what you do at work nor how you act, you will make a witness. It may be a poor witness, it may be a bad witness, but still it will be a witness. Those with whom you work know you claim to be a Christian, and perhaps even that you belong to one of those ultra-conservative Calvinistic churches. They are waiting to see how people from that group live and behave. Remember, they will reach their conclusion by observing you!

Now, secondly, there is this matter of temptation at the place of work.

The first temptation, of course, is to hide your Christianity. If you show your Christianity, the risk is that you may be mocked or excluded, to a certain degree shunned. And what an unpleasant thing it is to be excluded, especially when one is young. Who doesn’t want to feel he belongs! But showing one’s Christianity may mean paying the price of being excluded. The temptation is, therefore, not to display your Christianity, but to hide your identity.

But temptation also comes in the form of the friends you make at work. You will meet those who have different values, and perhaps lead a permissive lifestyle. And if they are friendly kids, as many are, they will want you to run with them. The question is, run where? Go where? See what? Visit what popular ‘watering-hole’? See what movie, filled with what violence, profanity, nudity, and sheer ungodliness?

The question is - when confronted by these things at work how will you respond? Will you have the courage and fiber to say ‘NO!’ , and then perhaps give a reason or two for that response?

If you are going to make a good witness at work you will have to be able to say ‘NO’. But do not “Just Say ‘NO!’.” That is only the first step. Go on and say something along the lines of “No, because I do not think that is where Christians belong.” In other words it is not just a matter of your parents forbidding it, but of your own choice too.

And let me tell you something: if you do that, you will have others’ respect. They may not tell you that right-off up-front, but you will. And it may be that like Nicodemus, who came to Jesus under cover of night, they will approach you in private also, when no one is watching, in order to ask you a few other things about
your faith.

I say again, being open about your Christianity is the way of earning respect. If you were working with some young person from a Baptist School and he responded that way to some improper suggestion, "No, I'm not going with you because I don't think Christians belong there," or "... should do those things," wouldn't you be impressed? Well, why in the name of your Lord does it always have to be a sincere Baptist who is open about his or her Christianity? Why not a sincere P. R. young person? One of you?

So, look at your work as a place of golden opportunities for making a witness. But recognize the opportunity often will come wapit in a temptation. Dispose of the temptation, and do not let the opportunities slip by.

Last, but not least, I want to touch upon the matter of your speech while at work. Your speech will be the most powerful witness of all, that which comes out of your mouth.

First, what must come out of your mouth is SILENCE! By that I mean there are words we ought never say, there are things we must refuse to talk about.

There are words that we must never say, words that are used very freely in our society, curse words, words of filth and defiance. Without a qualm people say, 'Damn-it-all!' or 'Jesus Christ!' and so forth. People feel free to defy God. What folly. Never think you can challenge God and win. God will always have the last word. Pray it is not His word of condemnation!

But there is one word in particular that I want to warn you against as Christian young people. And that is the 'F-' word. You know what I am speaking of. I have an eight year old daughter who has heard about the 'F-' word. It is 'flippin' this', and 'flippin' that'. And it grieves me to hear that word is not unknown coming from the mouths of our own young people. What a grief!

It is bad enough that we say 'S-H-I-T' as often as we do. We use it far too freely. That word itself can severely compromise any later witness we intend to make. I recall that from work myself, pouring concrete under the hot sun, sweat in one's eyes, a panel crunches your toe. And what's the first word that comes out of your mouth?

Most of us were PR's on the crew. There was also a young man of a different background beginning work. Two weeks into the job he got mad and said, "Damn it all." And we all turned and said, "You shouldn't curse like that!"

His response was, "Why not? You guys all say s-h-i-t all the time." We tried to explain the difference. The one is the stinky stuff you step in, the other is the preterogative of God. But it did not make much of an impression on him. To him the one word was as bad or worse than the other. Through carelessness we had offended him, giving him an excuse to use stronger, more vile language yet.

The point is, if we will avoid offense and not ruin our own witness we must avoid these crude vulgarities so common in our speech. The world puts them all in the same category. Besides the spirit in which we utter the vulgarity is usually just as profane as with curse word.

That brings us back to that 'F-' word. This is a word that simply must not be found on our lips. It is a violent word of the most vile sort. It partakes of murderous assault. It approaches blasphemy in that it defiles marriage, the picture of Christ with the church. Once used, this vile 'F-' word destroys your witness forever. As you claim to love Christ, avoid it at all costs and be cleansed of it.

Remember, the words we refuse to use are a good testimony. This also, by the way, means refusing to speak evil of the manager and boss. Gripe, gripe, gripe. It is so common today. Do not join in on that, nor in filthy jokes. Refuse to utter such things. And have the courage at least to say, "Hey guys, clean it up!"

In the end it is not only what we do not say, but what we do say at work that is important. This means having the courage to rebuke, reproving in a non superior way, and a willingness to talk about the undefiled and good things of life as well. As Peter states, we ought to be ready always to give an answer of the hope that is in us. We ought not be embarrassed to speak of spiritual things, of what Christ means to us as Lord and Savior. He does mean something to you, doesn't he?

It takes strength to work. But more than physical strength, it takes spiritual strength. Maintain a good witness and you may be challenged and mocked. Life is full of confrontations and having to take some abuse, like the juniors here learned from the episode at the mall in Sioux Fall.

The question is, how are you going to respond? Are you going to retaliate in kind? That is the temptation. We must have the strength to refrain.

In this connection let me quote an appropriate Proverb. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (Prov. 16:32) You see the point? The greatest measure of strength is not how much abuse you can give out, and injuries you can inflict; the greatest strength has to do with how much abuse you can take, without paying back in kind.

It has nothing to do with cowardliness. The greatest example? The most powerful person ever to grace this earth. You know who He is. He bore reproach and scorn, the ridicule and taunts of evil men. He could have leveled them all with one word of anger. But He had the strength to refrain, for your sake and mine.

Well, for His sake let us have the strength to do likewise should our witness lead to confrontation at work. Regardless, never be embarrassed to show at
work that Christ is your Lord.

It is exactly your conscientious labor that will be the occasion for someone to ask you "What religion did you say you were? Where do you go to church?"

Let your answer be, "To a genuinely Christian one!"

Such a witness wears well not only in church but out in the marketplace as well.

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**Called To Remember Our Creator**

by Rev. John A. Heys

You Young People are aware, are you not, that in some of the verses in the Bible God is speaking directly to you, rather than to your parents?

There are many verses in Scripture wherein He speaks about you. But there is a verse wherein He clearly is speaking directly to you, rather than to your parents, or to other adults. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 we read: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Here, through King Solomon, our God is speaking to you. And He is commanding you to remember Him as the One Who brought you forth into being. He is the Creator of all things. And He created you so that by you He will be served and praised, as the one true God. And now in this verse quoted, He calls you to remember Him as your Creator.

It is true that in the days of your youth, and when you are young men and/or young women, you do find times and things that cause you to laugh and sing, to shout and express pleasure and joy. But you are called to remember Him as the God Who created you, and uses His creation for His own glory. You are called to serve Him, and in your thinking and willing, as well as acting, to confess Him not only to be your God, but as the one and only God, Who must be served and confessed to be God alone. You are called to remember Him as your Creator.

Now it is true that your parents taught you to pray to Him, not only as the God upon Whom you depend for all your physical life; but also as the God of your salvation, through Christ Jesus His Son, and our Savior. Therefore your parents taught you to pray to Him before every meal that you ate, and with thanksgiving also after every meal that you ate. You were also taught to get down on your knees and pray to Him before you climb into bed for a refreshing sleep.

But an important question, Young People, is how much time passes by after you awake in the morning, and before you get up and out of bed, do you remember your Creator? Do you begin your day with prayer to God as soon as He brought you out of sleep and into a conscious life? Do you at once thank Him for bringing you safely through the night and into a day, wherein you have Him still letting your heart beat, and your life still to be with you? Does the truth, which He gives us in Romans 8:28, comfort you the moment you awake? Namely, that blessed truth that "And we know that all things work together for good to them who are the called according to His purpose." And do you thank Him for what He has done, or do you grumble and complain and question His grace and goodness?

He, through Solomon, commands us to remember Him as our Creator. In fact in verse 13 He moved Solomon to state: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." He had through Solomon commanded us to remember Him as our Creator. That we must do when all goes well in our judgment; but we must also do so when our God sends afflictions upon us. As Paul wrote in II Corinthians 4:17, God works for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And he states here that our afflictions, which compared with the everlasting life that is promised us, are light, and but for a moment.

What is serious, Young People, is the fact that Satan has gotten the human race to believe what he told Adam and Eve, namely, that what God has forbid-
den, actually benefits us. To sin would make us as gods. Look up Genesis 3:5. Bear in mind, Young People, that today Satan is working very hard to get the church world to get you young people to walk in a way that leads you farther and farther away from God, by walking in the way that He, our God, forbids.

Do not take Satan’s advice. Fear God and keep His commandments. Fearing Him means having awe and respect for Him as God. And when I was a young man, the faithful parents in God’s church would not allow their children to go to the theater to enjoy that which those, who do not remember their Creator, present and enjoy. They enjoy what Satan gets into the souls of men. And the sad thing is that today Satan has gotten those godless movies into our homes by means of television. What Satan there presents is what to no degree remembers God as our Creator. It even denies God’s existence. Through television Satan strives to get church members away from God as God, and as the Creator of heaven and earth, with all that which they contain.

Look up II Corinthians 6:17. There we are told, and commanded, to come out from and away from them who do not remember God, and deny His Son as our Saviour. But because God is our Creator, we have been brought into being with the calling to remember Him every day, and all day. We must not forget or turn away from the truth that He is God, and is our Creator, Whom we must love and serve every moment of our lives here on this earth. Our calling is to serve Him in love, and not forget that He is the one and only God.

Consider then your calling to do only that which pleases God, and behave in the conviction that He has the right to demand of you constant acts of love of Him. We are creatures, but He is The Creator. All of creation depends upon Him, and was made for His glory.

God depends upon no one and upon nothing. He can and will punish every one of those not chosen in Christ, and every fallen angel. He will forgive the sins of those whom He chose in Christ. But that He chose us in Christ, Who blotted out our sins, will become evident only in a walk manifesting that we remember God as our Creator, and revealing hatred against Satan, and the godless citizen of Satan’s Kingdom of Sin.

Remember your Creator and you will also remember His gracious promise to you. Remember Him and you will manifest love of Him. It will reveal that He sent His Son for your salvation. It will reveal that He has recreated you and begun manifesting a rebirth and the coming of full salvation.

Is He your recreator? Thank Him for His election, and for the gifts of salvation from walking in sin.

"The Boarder"*

by Femmie VanderBoom

Bill and Jane have a boarder in their home. He’s been with them for many years now. In fact, he joined their family soon after they got married.

Now I could never understand why a young married couple would want to take a third party into their home, but Jane assured me that he was no trouble at all. It seemed to me that they quite enjoyed having him in their home. He was usually very quiet, speaking only when asked to do so, and yet full of the most interesting stories that you could imagine. It was easy to spend a whole evening listening to him. He was very imaginative and certainly knew how to keep his audience spellbound.

As time passed I couldn’t help but wonder if this boarder of Bill and Jane’s was such a good influence on them. It became clear that they spent many evenings engrossed in his stories. Some of them were not so innocent, telling about a side of life that clearly laced any Christian influence. When I mentioned this to Jane once, she laughed at me and declared that I was “too square.” After all, that’s the way the world is, and what harm can it possibly do to hear about how the other side lives?

As time passed, Bill and Jane had a family, the same as we did. Those were very hectic times: the
baby was crying and needed feeding, the supper on the stove was boiling over, and the other children were fighting about the toys. Those were days when I sometimes doubted if I would stay sane.

Jane had it much easier than I did. She had here wonderful boarder to help her out. Those were times when I was just plain jealous. While I was running around trying to be in three places at once, she could relax, for her boarder kept all the older children quiet and occupied. The stories he told them were totally enthralling. The children would sit on the floor listening to him with rapt attention. Jane’s house was quiet, instead of being filled with shouts and crying and running footsteps.

Jane was convinced that her children were learning a great deal from her boarder. Not only were they learning about other countries and cultures, he was also teaching them how to read and to do arithmetic. Surely her children would do well in school - they were so far ahead of my children who only had toys and books to learn from.

However, I couldn’t help but feel somewhat uneasy when I learned about some of the stories her children talked about, things they had heard from the boarder. The stories seemed to be full of worldly ideas, families that were broken by divorces, children who didn’t listen to their parents, homes that were full of materialistic things, dancing, movie-going, and rock music. It seemed that the boarder had also started to teach songs to the children. They were not the type of songs Christian children should be singing. There was seldom any mention made of families praying together or going to church. Clearly, the people portrayed in the stories were not Christian.

In fact, it seemed to me more and more that the stories the boarder was telling the children were in conflict with the Christian principles that Bill and Jane were teaching their children. For Bill and Jane certainly were doing their best to bring up their children in a Christian home. They were regular churchgoers, always had devotions at their meal times and sent their children to a Christian school. Yet it didn’t seem to them to be a contradiction that their Bible reading at the table was immediately denied by the boarder in his stories to the children right after supper.

As the children got older, the boarder’s stories became increasingly disturbing. The children were no longer satisfied with baby stuff. Now they needed more exciting fare in order to hold their attention. Good guys and bad guys predominated the themes. Car chases and killings were a regular part of the plot. Even ordinary good and bad guys were not enough. Motorcycle gangs, weird space monsters and creatures were the usual characters. Even more disturbing to me was the fact that the bad guys were frequently the heroes of the stories.

When I mentioned to Jane that more and more of the boarder’s stories were teaching a message that was totally opposed to the Biblical message that they were trying to teach their children, Jane felt that I was being too alarmist. The children, she said, could easily understand that what they taught the children was the truth and that the boarder’s stories were just fantasy. They could understand that, when they read in the Bible “Thou shalt not kill,” that was the truth by which they should live. The fact that the boarder told them repeatedly about murder and killings in his stories, about shootouts and bashings as ways to solve conflicts, would not affect their way of thinking.

When their children were teenagers, Bill and Jane were frequently away from home. But the boarder was there to look after the children. By now his stories were full of sexual overtones. The children were not upset to hear about unmarried people going to bed together, about nakedness being described in lurid detail, and about relationships between members of the same sex. This was, after all, part of the reality of life.

But slowly a revelation was sinking into the minds of Bill and Jane. Their children were not turning out quite as they had expected. They didn’t like the way their children dressed. They didn’t like the music their children listened to. They didn’t like the activities their children participated in: going to movies, frequenting bars, and participating in parties where alcohol and drugs were being used. They had the dreadful suspicion that their children were participating in premarital sex. On top of it all, their children were not willing to listen to them. Curfews were ignored and their opinions were laughed at.

Bill and Jane were stunned. What could possibly have gone wrong? Hadn’t they done their very best? Hadn’t they always given a good example, had a Christian home life, gone faithfully to church, and sent their children to the right schools? It must be the fault of the teachers! The church isn’t appealing enough! The minister is too dry and dull in his sermons! Maybe we’ve overdone it with religion; the poor kids are sick of it by now.

It never occurred to them that the fault was present in their very own home: the boarder. All these years they had allowed him to do his thing. He had filled the minds of their children with ideas and values that were completely opposed to Christian ones. For years he had fed them a diet of violence, sex, materialism, pleasure seeking and worldliness. No, even now Bill and Jane deny that this had any effect on their children. After all, their children always understood that this was all fantasy and not real.

In fact, if you were to visit their home today, you would probably find them sitting in front of their boarder watching him doing his stuff. As for the children, they’ll grow out of it. All those years of teaching have to have some effect, don’t they?
Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

Jeremiah 46:1-12  
Israel had to arm herself for war and go and fight against Egypt. This was during a time when they were not very strong. The church today has the same calling. We do not fight physically, but we must arm ourselves with the weapons of faith and fight against spiritual Egypt which is the wicked world. This calling comes at a time when we may not be so spiritually strong. Look at the church world around you; look at your church; look at you. Are your weapons strong? Is your Bible knowledge what it should be? It won’t get any better unless you practice it. Read or sing Psalter 329.

As we are finishing the harvest season, it is well that we consider the picture Christ puts before us in these words. What are you putting aside for days to come? Is it just the harvest of earthly things? Are you making so sure that your education, work, family, or other earthly concerns are well cared for that you are ignoring the things of the kingdom? This starts with your own Bible study, extends to attendance at some Bible study group, and branches out into whatever kingdom work God calls you. If we concern ourselves with the spiritual, God will give us all the physical we require. Sing or read Psalter 331.

Job 19:21-29  
Job has come to the depths of his despair. His body reeks with the sickness given him by Satan. Most of his friends have left him. Those that do remain have no comfort for him. In all of this job is able to say the words of verses 25-27. What about you, young people? If you are in despair, are you able to confess the truth of your redeemer? Do you want to see God now? Earthly things will pass away but the heavenly is eternal. Sing or read Psalter 54.

Mark 7:31-37  
Jesus did many miracles while He was on the earth. After some of these, He told the healed not to tell any man. He told this man as well, but the man and his friends could not hold in the good news. What about us? We have been the recipients of the greatest miracle ever. We have been healed from the ravages of sin. Do we hold in the gospel? Christ does charge us to spread the good news. How can we not obey this command? Sing or read Psalter 197.

Joel 3:1-13  
Even in the Old Testament the children of God were taught to look ahead until the time of Christ’s final coming. Verse ten is very interesting. There is a verse in Isaiah which says the opposite. and many world leaders like to use it to show what will happen if all the world looks for peace. This verse shows the reality for the church. God’s people will face oppression in the days to come. We do not have to despair according to verses 16-20. God will fight for us and takes us to the new Jerusalem. Thanks be to God! Sing or read Psalter 181.

Matthew 9:27-38  
Jesus used His miracles to gather His people to Him. Blind, deaf, dumb, lame, and those with many other infirmities were healed by faith. Jesus not only had compassion for their bodies, but he also had compassion for their souls. He used this opportunity to teach His disciples and us the truth that laborers are needed in the kingdom. Are you praying for this great work? Are you searching your heart to see what God’s will is for you in this area? Sing or read Psalter 167.

Jonah 3  
Jonah was called to preach to the people of Ninevah. He had to proclaim the gospel to these people. A huge revival went on led by the king. True, most of the repentance was lip-service only, but there were God’s people there. and God’s word never returns to him void. God’s people repented and God’s anger was turned from them. We must pray that God’s word may be preached in all places so that His people may hear His word and repent. Sing or read Psalter 198 especially stanzas 1, 2, 6, and 7.
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| **Jonah 4**  
Jonah was not pleased when God did not destroy the city. So God had to show Jonah that His work was more important than Jonah’s desires. We, too, need the same admonitions. We must learn that the will of God concerning His kingdom work is more important than our own desires. We must realize that God calls His people from every tribe, tongue, and people. We must be enthusiastic about such work wherever it is to take place. Sing or read Psalter 200. |

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| **Philippians 3:7-13**  
In the first six verses of this chapter, Paul recounts the things he had done before his conversion. He now realizes that these things were not for his profit. We like Paul must realize that only things that count for gain are the things of Christ. We must know Christ not by our works but by faith which brings us true righteousness. It can be hard for us to realize that we do nothing for our salvation. But that fact is the truth of Scripture. Sing or read Psalter 358 especially stanzas 1 and 2. |

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| **Philippians 3:14-21**  
Young people are you pressing toward the mark? Are you like the marathon runner who is still running hard even after twenty-five miles? Is the mark you press for the high calling of God? Is it to live a life whose goal is heaven? Do you realize that to live such a life has a prize worth gaining? By answering those questions with a yes, you place yourself in the very small company of the people of God. If you say no, you place yourself with the great company of Satan’s followers. Which will it be, young people? Sing or read Psalter 361. |

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| **Joshua 10:7-14**  
Have you ever been through a storm that was so bad that you thought this was the greatest storm ever? You never have unless you were on the battlefield with Joshua that day when God made the sun and the moon stand still and more died with God’s hailstones than with Israel’s swords. Yet as we go through storms, we can be reminded of God’s judgments. For us He tells the consequences of our sins. For the wicked it is a picture of Hell. Listen to God and hear His message in the storms around us. Sing or read Psalter 285. |

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| **Revelation 21:1-7**  
What a beautiful word of comfort is found in verse seven! We are called the sons of God! For what else could we wish? Verse four explains the blessedness of this fact. All our tears will be wiped away; all our sorrows will vanish. We will join with the company of the saints praising our heavenly Father eternally. Let us overcome the evil one and pray for the day of Christ’s return. Sing or read Psalter 170. |

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| **Lamentations 5**  
Jeremiah in this final chapter once more mourns Israel’s state. He portrays their utter hopelessness and despair. He knows that this state was caused by the sin of the fathers. But Jeremiah speaks words of comfort. We can find these in verse nineteen. The Jehovah who had carried out this extreme chastisement would also remember His promise to David. This Jeremiah knew. He would not see it, but he knew the day would come. We, too, must know that Jehovah’s kingdom is eternal and He will bring it to pass. Sing or read Psalter 354 especially stanzas 1 and 4-6. |

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| **Romans 5:1-11**  
What a truth is brought forth in these verses! Justification by faith through Jesus Christ. This truth can bring us much happiness and peace in this world of sin and despair. Through this justification we have patience, we experience God’s goodness, and we have the hope of eternal life. All of this is free for the people of God. All of this should bring forth continual expression of joy. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift. Sing or read Psalter 372. |

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| **Leviticus 10:1-7**  
Did you offer strange fire upon God’s altar yesterday? Was your worship not pleasing to Jehovah? If you did, or if it wasn’t you are in danger of the fate of Nadab and Abihu. These men did not want to carry out God’s commands with respect to worship. They felt they could do it their way. God alone is to be glorified in worship. If we worship any other way, we commit the sin of Nadab and Abihu. This admonition should not cause us not to want to worship, but rather it should inspire us to worship in a way that is only God-glorifying. Sing or read Psalter 109. |

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| **Titus 2: 9-15**  
Some of the servants of Titus’s day were slaves who were bound to their masters. To these and to all who work for someone else Titus had to bring the word to be faithful in work. That is the calling for the Christian worker today. Whether you are a student or a worker or both, you must be faithful in your work so that God’s doctrine is adorned. That is a solemn calling to think about as we work. isn’t it? We must please our employers in all things not with eye service but
with well-done work. This will also please our heavenly Father. Sing or read Psalter 385.

Malachi 2:1-10 One of the concepts we hold dear is that of the office of all believers. In that concept is the idea that we are priests. We must bring our sacrifices of praise, and we must show mercy to God’s people in whatever way we can. What are we doing with that idea? Are we merciful to all of God’s people, or are we guilty of the sin found in verses 8-10? We confess God to be our Father each day as we pray. Do we confess God to be our Father in our daily walk? Let us pray for God’s help in this matter and carry out our office faithfully. Sing or read Psalter 44.

Micah 7:15-20 Micah confesses that Jehovah is the God of Israel. He then asks God to feed Israel even as he knows that He will. He says, “Who is a God like unto thee?” Why does he say this? He knows that God will forgive Israel’s sin and restore them back into the beauty of covenant life. He knows that Jehovah is compassionate toward His people. Do we have this knowledge as well? Are we confident in the sure mercies of Jehovah even when we fall into sin? We should be, as we read in His word of those mercies. Let us cling to them by faith even as we go about our daily walk. Sing or read Psalter 218 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 6.

Nahum 2:1-13 Nahum had to bring the word of Jehovah to Judah during a very sad time. Judah had been afflicted by many nations. In the first chapter Nahum reminded Israel of God’s goodness and encouraged them to listen to the messengers sent by God. In the final two chapters Judah is told that God is against all wickedness and will destroy all of His enemies who warred against the church. This is our comfort as well. The enemies of God who seem to bring havoc to the church will be destroyed in Hell for their sins against God’s people. Sing or read Psalter 155.

Nehemiah 1 Nehemiah received word that things were not going well in Israel after the return from captivity. He became very sorrowful over this fact. He did not sit and mope over the situation. He wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed to God. Notice his last activity. Isn’t that much different than Esther when she received bad news? How do we react to bad news about the church? Do we care at all? Do we shrug our shoulders over it? Do we wring our hands in despair? Or are we like Nehemiah and fall on our knees in prayer for God’s church? Sing or read Psalter 152.

Deuteronomy 18:9-17 In these few verses we have recorded two feasts that were to be kept by Israel. A key element in both of these feasts was thanksgiving. In the feast of weeks, they were to thank God for the harvest He was giving them. In the feast of the tabernacles, they would remember not only the harvest, but how God had led them through the wilderness to Canaan. They were called to rejoice because God had blessed them. This should be our attitude as well, even as we approach the National Thanksgiving Day. We should rejoice in the blessings, both physical and spiritual, with which we have been blessed by God. Sing or read 378.

I Chronicles 16:1-10 The occasion of this chapter is the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem. In the Old Dispensation the ark was the symbol of Jehovah’s presence. Since the time of Eli, the ark had not been in the tabernacle. Shortly after David became king, he desired that the ark be brought and used correctly. After a first disastrous attempt, the ark was brought to Jerusalem with great joy. David worshiped, appointed choirs to sing God’s praises, and wrote an inspired Psalm to commemorate this event. The main point of this Psalm was that God is good to His people and must be thanked. Is that the main point of our thanksgiving this week? Sing or read Psalter 236 especially stanzas 1-3 and 5.

I Chronicles 16:7-14 My Bible has the note that this is a Psalm of thanksgiving. The first part of the Psalm commands us to thank the Lord. It tells us to call upon His name, to sing His songs, to talk of His wondrous works, and to remember all that He has done. We do this because we are His people. We do this because He is our God. Do you do this, young people, daily? Is God in your thoughts throughout the day and week? Are the songs of Zion heard from your mouths? Do you SING them? Sing or read Psalter 250 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

I Chronicles 16:15-27 The next part of this Psalm of thanksgiving concerns itself with the glorious idea of the covenant. We must thank God for this great benefit. God has established this covenant with believers and their seed. In the covenant He protects us from the wicked world. Because of the covenant we establish schools founded on God’s love. Because of this we are commanded to sing unto Him, to declare His glory to the world, and to show forth His salvation daily. We do this because He is
our God. Sing or read Psalter 262.

**I Chronicles 16:28-30** Will you give unto God the glory due to His name today? Will you bring an offering in thanksgiving even as you worship? Will you worship before Him in true thanksgiving? These are the commands of our reading today. Why must we do these things? We do them because the Lord is good and His mercy endureth forever. Notice the word mercy. We must be thankful for the physical good things from our God, but more importantly we must be thankful for the goodness of salvation. Reread verses 34-36 today as we celebrate Thanksgiving. Sing or read Psalter 376 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 6.

**Numbers 21:4-9** Let us look a little closer at this familiar incident in Israel’s history. Israel rebelled against the leaders God had given them. But worse than that, they rebelled against the way God was leading them. What makes this worse is that this incident comes after the forty-year wandering in the wilderness! But, there is much comfort in this passage as well. First of all we see confession of sin. When God chastised them, they came and said, “We have sinned.” Then we see the way of salvation. In John 3:14 we read, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” What a lesson is set forth for our edification! Sing or read Psalter 142.

**Obadiah 1-9** One of the sins which besets all mankind as well as the individual child of God is that of pride. Pride is the setting ourselves up over God and His commandments. It was pride that caused the building of the tower of Babel. It was pride that caused many rebellions in the wilderness. It was pride that caused Esau to despire his birthright; and later his descendants, Edom, to despise the people of God. It is pride which causes us to put aside God’s requirements in our lives and replace them with our own desires. Verse three speaks to the sin of pride. Even though this is directed to Edom, we can take much instruction from these words of the Holy Spirit. God will bring our pride to naught and along with our pride our desires. We must pray and ask that we be delivered from this great sin. Sing or read Psalter 235.

**Proverbs 21:1-9** In these verses a king by the name of Lemuel is advised not to drink strong wine. The reason given is that it will pervert his judgment as he rules the country. If this is true of a leader, it must also be true of those less able in judgment. This is not to say that alcohol must be left alone altogether. Paul gives Timothy advice to drink a little wine. Wine enjoyed by the believer can be the picture of the joys of salvation. But there are several passages which warn against the misuse of alcohol. As children of God we must use all that God has given us with discretion. The use of alcohol is no different. Sing or read Psalter 322.

**Psalm 147:12-20** One idea that we forget easily is that it is God who sends all kinds of weather. We are quick to say it is raining or snowing or sunny. We forget the words of this Psalm which tell the truth that by the words of God’s mouth the winds of summer or winter send for all kinds of weather. We must remember this when the tornado destroys our home or farm. We must remember this when the flood waters cause us to evacuate from our homes. We must remember this when the snowstorm alters our plans or even strands us. All of these things are in God’s hand and are done for our good. Let us constantly look at the weather and say with the Psalmist, “Praise ye the Lord.” Sing or read Psalter 402 especially stanzas 1, 3, 5, and 6.

**Ruth 1:1-5; 19-22** Young people, are you tired of the church in which God has placed you? (I am assuming that you are in a church where the Word is purely preached. If you are not in such a church, you should be tired of it.) Does something want to make you leave your church? Is it a possible husband, wife, job, or a dislike of the way the church does things? If this is true of you, consider Elimelech and Naomi. Because of a famine in Israel, the picture of heaven, they left the church. While there, all of the family died except for Naomi. When Naomi returns, she realizes that Almighty’s bitter dealings with her were because of her sin. She even wished to change her name. Do not fall into this temptation, covenant young people. Hold fast to what you have been taught and receive the blessings of Jehovah. Sing or read Psalter 228.
Personal Evangelism II

by Rev. Arie Den Hartog

When we talk about doing "personal evangelism" what should we really be doing? What precisely is our calling as Christians? That is the question we want to address in this installment.

Personal evangelism is not giving little sermons, little talks about Christianity to people. We leave preaching sermons to the official ministry of the church. Furthermore, it is quite unrealistic to imagine that many people in the world today would be willing to sit down to listen to a little mini-sermon from us. Personal evangelism is not presenting "four spiritual laws" to people. Besides the fact that the commonly used so called four spiritual laws are rather thoroughly unbiblical, it is doubtful whether the gospel can be presented to a person in a short, superficial, very general, summary form. Personal evangelism is not done by going house to house and knocking on doors. Though this is a popular method of evangelism it has been proven to be the least of all effective. Talking to a complete stranger about the gospel is difficult and usually not very significant. All we have to do is imagine our own response to some complete stranger who knocks on our door. Personal evangelism is not merely passing out tracts and literature, though sometimes giving a person a good piece of literature to read can lead to some further contact with that person.

Personal evangelism is talking about the truth of the gospel with people whom we meet in the daily course of our life. The vast majority of situations in which we meet people in our life are casual and brief. There is little opportunity to speak with them in any significant way. It usually creates a strained attitude in people to begin talking out of the blue, so to speak, about Christianity. People are usually quickly turned off by this and feel so uncomfortable that this hinders their receiving anything you say. Though I have seen Christians in my life who have the gift to direct conversations with people very quickly after they have met. In some cases at least this has been admirable. It has shown to others what is absolutely uppermost in their mind and life and the great urgency of the spiritual questions of our life. It can sometimes happen that we are sitting next to a person on a bus or plane that the opportunity arises to talk to them about the truth of the Lord. Such opportunities are rare however.

In the main, personal evangelism is talking to people with whom we have more extensive and significant contact. It is talking with those who are our relatives and friends, with whom we have a long standing tie. It is talking with those who live next door to us, those with whom we go to school and those we work with every day or maybe engage in a regular sport activity with. It is a tragedy if we have for weeks and months and even years had contact with a persons and never so much as said one word to them about our faith in God and the truth of the Lord we believe.

Personal evangelism is actually talking to people about the truth of the gospel. That takes a lot of courage and initiative. But that is exactly what is required. If we have never done that in our life then we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Personal evangelism means that we get over the natural fear, uneasiness, timidity and unfamiliarity we have about doing this kind of thing.

There are of course all kinds of different people that we live with every day. There are those who belong to our own church with whom we are one in the faith and with whom it should be easy for us to talk about spiritual matters and the great truth of God we both love. There will also be those from other churches than our own whom we work with whose faith is quite different than ours is and in many areas we believe not according to the scriptures. There will be those who are nominally Christians but who do not live at all as Christians. In our American society the majority of people probably fall into that category. There will also be those who are completely indifferent to any semblance of religion. And finally there will be plenty of people in our apostate society that are openly antagonistic to Christianity. They will be quick to ridicule and mock anything we say about Christianity.

Those who are antagonistic to the Christian faith will often hate any attempt at talking about Christianity. They will simply refuse to talk about any spiritual aspect of life. They will try to change the subject immediately or they will try to put you off by mocking and ridiculing you. In doing personal evangelism we
must be ready to bear this and not be discouraged by it. This is part of the shame and persecution we must bear for the Lord's sake. In many cases talking to such people is "casting pearls before the swine." Especially if they begin to mock and blaspheme when we try to discuss the truth of God with them, we soon will not continue; often it is even wrong to continue. The Lord may give us the proper opportunity to give a warning to such of the judgment of God that is upon the life of the ungodly. But unpleasant encounters with open and defiant ungodly men ought not to discourage us from ever talking about spiritual matters with anyone outside of the church. It is possible that even an ungodly man will sometimes be willing to discuss spiritual things though not from a genuine spiritual interest. Furthermore we know not what the Lord may do through our testimony to the openly ungodly.

If we make it common practice to have spiritual conversations with the people we meet in our daily life, we might also be surprised that some are willing to listen and discuss things spiritual. In rare cases we might have the opportunity to speak of the very basic and simple things of the truth of God and the Christian faith to someone who does not at all know the Lord or is far from the truth in his life. We ought to be able to do this. Personal evangelism is not just talking with people who already know the Lord. It includes talking with those who do not know the Lord.

One of the best opportunities to talk about the Lord is in connection with the misery and wretchedness of broken and sinful lives that people live in. Our world is full of such misery and wretchedness. We may not take a callous attitude towards all this. We must show ourselves to be a caring and compassionate people. We are called to be full of good works in our life. We are called to show the love and mercy of Christ in very practical ways to our neighbors. We are to do this first of all to the household of faith but we ought to show this attitude also to our unbelieving and ungodly neighbors. It is not for no reason that our Lord when He preached also performed most of his miracles of healing. He had compassion on men. He healed the sick, made the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. Of course do not have the power of the Lord to perform miracles in our day. We do have the calling to follow the example of our Lord in showing compassion and concern to our fellow man. This ought to be a distinguishing mark of the life of every Christian. Some of the best actual personal evangelism is done with people to whom we show genuine, practical love and concern in our life. Our world is full of people in great trouble and sorrow. We know and believe that the Lord is the ultimate answer to that trouble. We do not mean that in a superficial and Arminian way according to which some tell people "accept the Lord and all your troubles will be over." We believe that in the absolute profoundest sense of the word, man's great misery and trouble is due to his sin and his only hope is salvation in Christ Jesus. If we are a cold and heartless people or a people who are always making trouble with our neighbors, personal evangelism will be impossible.

Many of the people that we work and live with profess themselves to be Christians. Some of them may even go to church regularly. Many belong to churches that have great doctrinal differences with us. Among such there may be children of God. Our calling to such is by the grace of God to help lead them to a more perfect understanding of the truth of God. Doing this will require the deepest humility on our part, and great patience and perseverance. In some cases our speaking to such people may rather quickly lead to a great doctrinal debate. And of course when there are doctrinal differences, these differences ought to be discussed and not just ignored. Christianity involves doctrine. There is not true Christianity without doctrine. We are not faithful witnesses when we take the approach with people from other churches that we will talk only about the "lowest common denominator" and agree to avoid any areas of Christian truth where we have differences. We have a calling to people who hold to what we believe are false doctrines. We may not take the approach that all churches are basically alike and that it does not matter so much what one believes as long as they are generally Christian.

The Reformed faith is a rich and glorious faith that is consistently Biblical and preeminently God glorifying. As Reformed Christians we ought to know and love the Reformed faith in its beautiful distinctiveness in our age of great apostasy. Our personal evangelism ought to include talking with others who call themselves Christians about great truths such as sovereignty of God, predestination, limited and definite atonement and the truths of God's covenant of grace. We need to be able to talk about what we know and believe to be the truth of the Word of God. We need to be able to do that in a loving and humble way without conveing pride and arrogance and an immediate condemnatory attitude especially to those who are fellow Christians. We need to develop skills and proper spiritual attitudes to speak persuasively and zealously about the distinctive truths that we believe. We need to be able to simply and plainly show the truth of the Reformed faith from a thorough knowledge of the scriptures.

Let me close this article by emphasizing that personal evangelism includes inviting people to our church. There is far too much supposed evangelism that ignores almost entirely the church of Jesus Christ. God's people need the church and the ministry of the Word. We believe that the preaching of the Word is the chief means of grace whereby God brings His elect to salvation. The preaching is also the chief means through which the Lord will have His people instructed and strengthened in the faith. Simply put, Christians need the true church of Jesus Christ. One
of the greatest aspects of personal evangelism is inviting people, encouraging people to come to church with us. By no means will we always be able to encourage people to come along with us, in fact only very rarely. Yet this is not something we forget. This is our goal and this we believe is good.

The First Work in the Order of Salvation - Regeneration: A Radical Change

by James Laning

We, the children of God have all undergone a radical change. We have been regenerated. And to be regenerated is to be born again, born from above; it is to be resurrected from the dead and to be changed into a new creature. Could any change be more radical than this? Only God, the omnipotent and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, could perform such a wonderful work. We did not help Him or cooperate with Him in any way. He did it alone. The glory for it belongs entirely to Him.

To be regenerated is to be born again. Until this happens we cannot even see the kingdom of heaven. And if we cannot see the kingdom, we cannot believe the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). Therefore, this work of regeneration must be first in the order of salvation.

To be born again is to be born “from above.” This is literally what we read in John 3:3. And to be born from above is to be born of God. When God regenerates us, we become His children. Now, as a child of God, we are free from the bondage of sin and are unable to live in sin any longer. You see this in your own life, do you not? Are you not grievously bothered by your sin? Well, sorrow for sin is the first manifestation that you have been born of God (I John 3:9). The devil likes to point to your sinful flesh and say, “You cannot fight against this flesh of yours; why not just give in to it?” When this happens you must remember that you are a regenerate child of God, born from above, and are no longer in bondage to sin.

Not only is regeneration a rebirth, it is also a resurrection from the dead. By nature we are dead in trespasses and sins. When God resurrects us, He infuses new spiritual qualities into us (Canons III & IV/11). To infuse means to pour in. Before you were regenerated, you were like a decaying corpse in a casket. When God regenerated you He reversed that decaying process, poured His Spirit into you, and you became alive.

We see a beautiful picture of this in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. When Christ stood outside the open tomb and cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth,” He was calling this new life into existence. And accompanying His Word was the quickening Spirit, which caused Lazarus to come to life.

Likewise there was a time in your life when you were spiritually dead. Then our Lord came to you and called, “Come forth.” This Word of God, which is always effective, penetrated deep down to the center of your being and translated you from death unto life.

What an amazing, radical change!

In addition to being a rebirth and a resurrection from the dead, regeneration is also a recreation. Someone who is in Christ is said to be a “new creature” (II Cor 5:17, Canons III & IV/12) This new creation is not a creation out of nothing, but rather a renewing of what is already there. We read of this in Titus 3:5:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Although this is a radical change, it is not a change of essence. When you were regenerated, you did not change from a man to an angel, or anything like that. You did not receive a new soul in the essential sense of the word. Rather your soul was renewed. You died about six thousand years ago, when you
were in the loins of Adam. But now your soul has been renewed, your spirit is alive again, and you once more bear the image of God.

What an astonishing, radical change!

Most people today refuse to believe that such a radical change has taken place in anyone’s life. These are people who deny that man by nature is spiritually dead, totally depraved, incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. Some of them say that man by nature is perfectly well; others say that he is only sick. And some may even speak of man’s need for regeneration. But to them a regenerated man is one who has merely made a small change in his thoughts or his actions as a result of some emotional preaching or someone’s amazing testimony. None of them believe that such a radical change has happened in anyone’s life.

But you know that such a change has happened in your life. For God’s Spirit witnesses with your spirit that you have become a regenerated child of God.

Regeneration is also referred to as a washing. We read of this also in Titus 3:5. Although physical washing does not translate us from death unto life, spiritual washing does. This is because we used to be spiritually covered, not with dirt, but with sin - a deadly poison which instantly killed us; we have been spiritually washed, not with water, but with the blood of Christ which has quickening power.

This radical change takes place in the heart of the elect sinner and is analogous to a heart transplant. God Himself makes this analogy in Ezekiel 36:26: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

The heart is the center of your existence from a spiritual viewpoint. When God speaks of your spirit, he is speaking of your soul, particularly from the viewpoint of your soul’s relationship to God. The unregenerate are spiritually dead and do not have a covenant relationship with God. Their mind and will are only concerned with the things of this earth. But we who are regenerated have a living spirit and are joined with God through Christ in a covenant relationship. This is why you find within yourself the desire to do the will of God and to think on things above.

There has been some debate in Reformed circles as to how regeneration takes place in the life of the elect sinner. The question has been whether God works regeneration through the means of the preaching of the gospel, or not. Those who say that regeneration does take place through the preaching are said to believe in “mediate regeneration.” Those who say that it does not are said to believe in “immediate regeneration.”

To answer this question, we must recognize that regeneration can be viewed in a broader and in a narrower sense. In the narrower sense, regeneration is viewed as the initial act of God whereby He goes into the very depth of a sinner’s inner existence and translates him from death unto life. This is sometimes called the planting of the seed of regeneration. For most of God’s people, it takes place while they are still in their infancy, or even before they are born. But it can take place at any time. Contrary to the claims of the Arminians, an individual cannot know precisely when this change has taken place in his or her life. For it is an immediate work of God. It takes place not by means of the preaching of the gospel, but solely through what 1 Peter 1:23 calls “the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” This cannot be the preaching of the gospel, for there will be no preaching of the gospel in eternity. This description is only true of Christ. Christ is the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. It is through Christ alone, not through Christ and through the preaching, that a person is regenerated in this narrower sense.

In the broader sense, regeneration includes the sprouting of this seed into the entire conscious life of the child of God. This seed sprouts forth also through Christ. But the preaching of the gospel stands in close connection with regeneration viewed in this broader sense. For without the preaching of the gospel no one can come to conscious faith. So although regeneration is immediate when viewed in the narrower sense, there is a broader sense in which it can be viewed as being mediate.

But whether we speak of regeneration in the broader or in the narrower sense, we must confess that it is entirely a work of God’s sovereign grace. And He does this work with a specific goal in mind. God does not desire simply to bring us back to the state and condition we were in before the Fall. God desires to exalt us far above that, and to make us share in His own glorious life. We, along with Adam, needed to fall so that we could be regenerated. For only someone who has been regenerated and ingrafted into Christ can partake of the heavenly life that can be found only in Him.

And we who have become regenerated can be sure that we will never lose this new life. For regeneration is rooted in election. We have been regenerated solely because God chose to regenerate us. We cannot know why it pleased God to choose us, but we can know and we do know that He will never change His mind. For the almighty, sovereign, and loving God is also unchangeable. Oh, what a comfort it is to know that our whole, regenerated life rests entirely in Him!

All praise be to God for this wonderful work of regeneration! What a radical change God has wrought in our hearts! It is miraculous and incomprehensible, and yet it is true. Our Lord Jesus Christ is come, and He is come with the express purpose that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly!
A Dialogue between Sapientia and Deludius: in which the Doctrine of Scripture is Discussed

by Nathan Brummel

Narrator: It is a cloudy day in West Michigan. Two college students are preparing to walk through a game preserve and are discussing their classes. Both are students at Calvin College and they are walking through the preserve directly across the East Beltline from the college campus. The name of the first student is Sapientia, and she is a philosophy major. Her walking partner is Deludius, and he is a Theology major at Calvin. Let us drop in on Deludius and Sapientia as they discuss some religious issues.

Sapientia: How are you doing today, Deludius? I hope things are back to normal after those huge mid-terms we just survived.

Deludius: I am doing just great. My mid-terms were all manageable. I am glad that I did not have to write a paper for one of my mid-terms like you did.

Sapientia: It wasn't that bad; my prof only wanted a five page paper.

Deludius: That's not so bad I guess.

Sapientia: Well, it would not have been so bad, except I wrote on a controversial topic. I argued that contemporary theology as it is practiced by Higher Critics leads to relativism in Biblical interpretation.

Deludius: Wow, pretty big words that you used there for a girl!

Narrator: At this point, Sapientia pushes Deludius into a small stream that runs parallel to the path that they are walking on. Deludius gets his foot wet.

Deludius: Great, now my foot is wet! Let's see if you like being wet!

Narrator: Sapientia now runs ahead down the path, stopping on a small bridge going over a stream. Deludius, walking onto the bridge, catches up with her.

Deludius: Let's see if you understand what those big words mean. For starters, what is a Higher Critic?

Sapientia: Are you implying that you don't know what a Higher Critic is?

Deludius: No, I am just testing you.

Sapientia: People are called Higher Critics if they interpret the Bible in a different way from what Protestants have done in the past. Critics can be very radical or they can be conservative. Radical Critics claim that the Bible is not inspired by God in any way. Conservative Critics think that the Bible is infallible. By this they mean that the primary message in the Bible is correct. They believe that the Bible is made up of the ideas of human writers and the ideas of God, which are interspersed. The human writers at many times disagree with what is correct. There are conflicts in theology between the different writers of different books. The conservative Critics are what my paper was about.

Deludius: So what did you claim was wrong with these Critics? It seems to me that I agree with the conservative critics. After all, there are many errors in the Bible.

Sapientia: I think that there are also errors in the Bible, but I think that they come from errors which were made in copying and translating the Bible, not because they were written by the original authors. The view which you are defending is one which also supports the doctrinal beliefs of Liberalism.

Deludius: So what is Liberalism?

Sapientia: When one talks about Liberalism in a religious setting with a capital 'L', one is referring to the doctrinal views of the Higher Critics. The doctrinal positions of the liberal Higher Critics is usually what is being referred to when one speaks about Liberalism. These doctrines include the view that Christ is not the son of God, that the Bible is entirely the work of man, and that there was no actual blood atonement.

Deludius: It might be the case that theologians use these views to defend such views; I hold to the view...
that the Bible includes errors, but this does not lead me to deny the fact that Jesus is God.

Sap: But listen to this argument which I gave in my paper. I argued that if it is the case that the Bible includes the word of man and the word of God interspersed, then it is impossible to conclude what is the word of God and what is the word of man.

Del: One second we are discussing whether the Bible has errors and now you switch to claiming that the Bible has the words of God and the words of man if the original manuscripts or the first copies of the Bible included errors.

Sap: Well, it follows that if the Bible has errors in the original copies, then these errors must have come from men.

Del: I guess that you are right.

Sap: When I talk about the Bible containing the words of God and the words of man, I am referring to the doctrinal position that the Bible is infallible. I mean infallible in the sense which it is defined by certain of my profs in the Religion department. They define infallibility in the sense that the Bible contains the ideas of men and God interspersed. The ideas of men often contradict what is in fact the word of God. The Bible, they claim, is correct with respect to the general ideas presented in it. However, the details in the books are not inspired. The redemptive message is infallible, not all the facts or claims.

Del: So you think that Paul is not being sexist when he claims that women can not be in church office.

Sap: Before you get all emotional, let me explain what infallibility is!

Del: I know what you mean, I think. I am majoring in Theology here at Calvin after all. I have had my share of classes. And you are right, this is the way that my professors have generally defined the nature of biblical inspiration. For example, they will argue that many of the miracles recorded in the Bible are attempts at deluding the people. Instead, many miracles can be interpreted to be stories about actual scientifically explainable events.

Sap: OK, you agree with me about how infallibility is defined in the intellectual circles we are in. Now let's distinguish this from inerrancy. Inerrancy differs from infallibility in that this doctrinal position claims that the autographs of the Bible are wholly inspired by God. All of the facts and the details were correct.

Del: Are you implying that you support this position?

Sap: Yes, I do.

Del: Why?

Sap: Like I was saying earlier, in my paper I argued that if the Bible was infallible then we would not be able to figure out which were the words of man and the words of God.

Del: Why should that be the case?

Sap: Because when you read the Bible you would have the views of men and God mixed together. Christians would need some sort of shared objective criterion in order to figure out which words were God's.

Del: I agree that they would need a shared criterion. Why can we not say that this shared criterion is God giving His Spirit to His people so that they would grasp which was His word?

Sap: I suppose that is possible, but God has not done that.

Del: What do you mean, God has not done that?

Sap: Looking at the Higher Critics, they disagree over many doctrinal points; therefore, they do not have any shared basis for understanding what are God's ideas.

Del: It is true that they do not have shared beliefs, but neither do people who believe in inerrance.

Sap: I guess you are right. Many people believe in inerrancy who disagree with each other about Calvinism and Arminianism, infant baptism, divorce and remarriage, and many other things.

Del: Then according to the standards with which you were evaluating infallibilists, then inerrantists also do not have a shared criterion.

Sap: Well, I would say that all inerrantists do not have a shared criterion, just those whom God saves and gives the ability to know the truth.

Del: So the shared criterion is not the inerrant Bible; instead it is the work which God does in the mind of the Christian.

Sap: I guess that you are right!

Del: So you were incorrect in arguing that if the Bible was infallible, then people could not choose the word of God from the word of man.

Sap: Why would that be?

Del: Because the actual writings of the Bible are not the shared criterion for finding out what is truth. Instead it is God opening the mind to truth that is the shared criterion for knowing what is the case. Therefore, the Bible can be infallible (involving the ideas of man) and yet the Higher Critics could have shared criterion for finding truth because of the fact that their minds were opened up so that they could know what was truth in the Bible.

Sap: You are right, but that is simply not the case.

Del: What is not?

Sap: Higher Critics do not share any criterion. For they disagree with each other on many subjects.

Del: But remember, we showed earlier that just because people disagree about truth, this does not prove that there is not a trustworthy criterion at work. For inerrantists disagree on doctrine, yet they believe that there is a shared criterion for finding truth, yet they do not all have this shared criterion completely. God gives some Christians more truth than others. And this would apply to the infallibilists as well as to the inerrantists.

Sap: I guess you are right. If God was to make the Bible infallible, then surely He is the sort of Being who
would provide a way for people to find out which was His word and which was man’s.

Del: That is exactly what I have been trying to prove. It is wrong to assume that if God made the Bible infallible, that he would not provide a method of interpreting and finding truth. Inerrants and inerribilists both assume that God wants to get His will across to man. Therefore, they both assume that if God inspires a book in a certain way, then He definitely would provide a way of communicating the truth in it to His people. And your argument was denying this.

Sap: I guess you are right. That argument against Liberalism and their doctrine of scripture does not work.

Del: Wow, let’s take a break from all of this heavy thinking. Let’s go out on that wood balcony overlooking that gorgeous pond.

Sap: What a view! See the ducklings swimming hurriedly after their mother!

Del: They are such cute little things!

Sap: You are a lot like those little ducklings following mother duck in that your theology so closely follows that of some of the more liberal theology pros at Calvin.

Del: Thanks a lot! And by the way you haven’t given me reason for thinking that my ‘liberal’ view of the doctrine of scripture is wrong yet.

Sap: Let’s head back. We still have half of the preserve to walk through. On the way I will tell you why I think that infallibility is wrong.

Del: All right, let’s go.

Sap: One reason I believe that the Bible is inerrant is that a common sense and natural reading of the Bible leads one to conclude that the Bible is inspired in such a way that it is entirely without error in the original manuscripts. I am not ruling out that errors in copying and translation could not have taken place. Although, I think that copying errors probably do not affect any important doctrines.

Del: What is this common sense way of reading like?

Sap: It is the way that we all read things. When we pick up a book and start reading it, we assume that what the author is saying is correct. When I start reading a history book about what took place in the Netherlands in the 17th century I do not doubt that the wars between the Spanish and the Dutch took place. When I read a biography, I assume that what is being said about the person is correct. If, when reading the biography of Herman Hoeksema, I must continually doubt whether these events occurred in his life, I would remain in a very skeptical position concerning what his life was about.

Del: So you are saying that common sense reading assumes that what a writer is saying is reliable.

Sap: Correct. This is the way that we go about finding truth. That is just the way that we form our belief systems. When we are reading a scientific text-

book, we assume that what the writer is saying is the case. If we had to doubt everything we read, we would never have sufficient grounds for believing that much we know is true.

We cannot all go out there and check whether Einstein’s theory of relativity is correct, we have to take his word for it. And not even his word, the words of people who tell us to trust that it is correct.

Del: However, there is a problem with what you are saying. You have not ruled out that we must and actually do doubt some things that we read. In fact, it is important for us to doubt many things that we come across.

Sap: You are entirely correct.

Del: We can doubt things when there is sufficient reason to. We can doubt that the world was created in six literal days when we come across solid proof that humans have evolved over millions of years from lower forms of life. We can doubt that the walls of Jericho actually fell when we have archaeological evidence which claims that the walls were destroyed thousands of years before the Israelites came to Palestine.

Sap: You doubt certain things. That is true. But what is important is that we should only doubt things when there is sufficient reason to do so. That is my critical point. We can only doubt what people are claiming if there is sufficient reason to doubt them. Therefore, the rule of interpreting what a writer is claiming and whether you should believe it or not, hinges on whether there is sufficient reason to doubt the authenticity of the claims.

Del: I see where you are going. You are going to claim that the controversy between infallibilists and inerrants depends upon whether the infallibilists have sufficient reason to doubt the common sense claims of the writers.

Sap: Maybe you are not beyond help. They must be teaching you something here at Calvin.

Del: Look who is talking. You are not even a Religion and Theology major, yet you think that you can stand up to me arguing about theological matters.

Sap: My dear sir, this is a theological matter, but it is also mixed in with philosophical areas, such as epistemology, in which we try to understand how we form beliefs and how we should.

Del: So why is there not sufficient reason to doubt the supposed claims of the Biblical writers?

Sap: Let’s look at what they say. Jesus claims that the Bible is of such a sort that its messages can not be broken. Even David calling the Jews ‘gods’ can not be thrown out as the personal and possibly untrustworthy view of David. Jesus claims that this queer claim, that the Jews are gods is a sure and correct statement. Peter claims that holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. He also claims that prophecy did not come about by the will of man, by their private interpretations; instead, it came by the will of God. Paul, writing to Timothy, claims that all of

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the Bible is inspired. The prophets in the Old Testament continually claim that the word of the Lord came to them. Again and again they say this, and they equate it with God speaking directly to them, as Jeremiah does in Jeremiah chapter 1. So we have Jesus, apostles, and prophets claiming that the Bible is inspired in such a way that the will of man is not the final cause of the origin of scripture; instead, God is in control of the message, sending His will to prophets and guiding the writers so that what they write is His will.

Del: Now the question is, is there sufficient reason to doubt these claims of the biblical writer? And I say that there is. Because the writers contradict each other on doctrinal issues and say many wrong things, it is clear that there are errors in the Bible. We should doubt what they say because of the evidence which we get from critical biblical study and from science. Let’s see you get out of this predicament, Sapientia. Maybe you were named wrong. Imagine someone with such irrational views being named Wisdom!

Sapientia: I shall show you how we together can get out of this predicament.

Deludius: How’s that?

Sap: Are there not many religious who believe in inerrancy and claim that there are no disagreements between the biblical writers?

Del: Yes.

Sap: And do not these inerrantists claim that there is only one mind (God’s) behind the theology in the Bible?

Del: Correct.

Sap: And is it not the case that they can interpret the Bible to their satisfaction so there are not irreconcilable inconsistencies between the different writers?

Del: Yes, they do seem to.

Sap: Therefore, it is rational, if one believes in inerrancy to reconcile apparent differences between writers in order to find out what the one will of God is?

Del: Yes.

Sap: Therefore we should conclude that the inerrantist, given his presuppositions about the nature of the Bible is rational in supposing that the Bible is without errors?

Del: Yes, I guess you are right. I see where you are going. If it is the case that the inerrantist is rational in doing so, even if one might believe like I do, that the infallibilist can rationally build up a theory about the beliefs of the different biblical writers, I would still not prove that infallibility is correct. Instead, it would seem that inerrancy should win the day because of the fact that it is rational for humans to assume what the Biblical writers say, to be true, unless there is reason to doubt. And, it seems that both the inerrantist and the infallibilist can put together coherent theories about the nature of the Bible, yet inerrancy is supported by the shared notion between all humans, that we should only doubt a position if there is reason to.

Sap: Yes, and if it is equally rational to believe in inerrancy as it is to in infallibility, then we should probably go with the view which is supported by common sense. And common sense says that if you can interpret and understand a text in its common, natural, and literal sense, then you should go with that interpretation. Only, if you have sufficient enough reasons to doubt the correctness of this view should you doubt the claims of Jesus, the apostles, and prophets about the nature of the Bible. You should only try interpreting their words in an unnatural or higher critical way, (claiming that these claims are only their personal subjective beliefs) if one can not take them literally.

Del: And as you pointed out, we can take them in the literal sense, as conservative scholars have. Therefore, it probably is rational to conclude that it is more rational to believe in inerrancy that infallibility, because the Bible read naturally leads to the belief in an inerrant Bible.

Sap: However, if this does not convince someone that it is more rational to believe in inerrancy, then they could respond that there is sufficient reason to doubt inerrancy. But this is because they do not think that one can rationally reconcile the Biblical writers or reconcile the allegedly known historical facts (from historiography and archaeology) with biblical claims. But this is only because they are probably assuming that the Bible is infallible. And their judgments do not allow them to see that the Bible can be interpreted consistently by Inerrantists.

Del: I think that you are right. There is not sufficient reason to doubt inerrancy, given the statements of the writers. Instead, it is more rational to believe that the Bible is what the authors of it claim it to be. It is natural for humans to believe what they read. And God surely included this in the way that people would correctly read the scriptures. They would read it in the way that we read other books. The way that God made us to read and understand things. And this is by believing what people say in a common sense way. Therefore, it is rational to believe that the Bible is inerrant.

Sap: Look! The sun just came out for the first time this afternoon! The world sure looks like a more lovely place when it shines.

Del: Just as we finish our walk, naturally the sun comes out!

Sap: How ironic.
David's Band

by Rev. C. Hanko

I Samuel 22:2: And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him (David), and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred.

It was a strange band of men that gathered about David at the cave of Adullam. These were volunteers from various tribes of Israel who had heard that David was fleeing to escape the wrath of king Saul. They were men who had become involved in some sort of trouble, men who had accumulated a debt which they could not pay, and men who were out for adventure. From that aspect, not a very promising band of soldiers.

Edersheim in his "History of the Old Testament" makes the following comment concerning these men. (vol. 4, pages 116-117), "Many there must have been in these troublous times of Saul's reign who under such misgovernment would fall "into debt" to unmerciful and violent exactors; many also, who under the present state of things, would, in the expressive language of the sacred text, "be bitter of soul". Of these the more active and ardent now gathered around David, first to the number of four hundred, which soon increased to six hundred (I Sam. 23:13'). Though that may be true, the fact remains that they still appear to be a group of undesirables.

Later, when David was at Ziklag, others joined them. These were men well equipped for warfare. We read in I Chron. 12:2 that "they were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow." Of the Gadites that came to David we are told that they were "men of might, and men of war fit for battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes of the mountains."

After David's single handed victory over Goliath, Saul had made him captain of his army. On the battlefield he had proved to be a man of no mean military ability, who gained many victories over the enemy.

But the situation had changed. Saul was jealous of this son of Jesse. He could not forget that after the battle with Goliath the people had sung, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Moreover, Saul was afraid of David, because he knew that the Lord was with him. What made matters all the worse for Saul was that God was no longer with him. Since he feared that David was candidate for the throne, he had the more reason to put him out of the way.

A few times Saul had tried to have him put to death by subtlety, but when that failed he was determined to go all out to dispose of him. He had even sent servants to David's house to take him for the purpose of killing him. Michal, David's wife, had warned him and he escaped from Saul's hand.

Now as a fugitive in the wilderness, fleeing from his king, he could only appreciate the fact that these men volunteered to join and help him.

They accompanied David as he fled from Saul and when he made incursions upon the enemies round about. In the meantime, they protected the sheep and cattle of neighboring Israelites against marauders. (I Sam. 25:7,15,16).

This insignificant band of soldiers expanded into David's great army after he became king, an army that was noted for its many victories whereby all of Israel's enemies were subdued and the kingdom extended from sea to sea, bringing about the reign of peace in the days of Solomon.

The chief of these men are referred in I Chronicles 12 as "mighty men, helpers of the war". (Compare II Samuel 23:13 sqq. and I Chron. 11:15 sqq.)

It impresses us that this mighty army had such a lowly beginning in a seemingly motley host of undesirables. Trained warriors joined this ignoble band until it became a powerful army that attained great victories for the people of God.

These men are referred to as "David's mighty men", not to place them on an honor roll or in a hall of fame, but rather to show what great victories God attained through them. To us they show what God can and does do.

When we consider the first men that came to David, a comparison with ourselves becomes quite obvious. Churches often have a very lowly beginning,
despised in the eyes of the church world and the world in general. It has been said that the “common folk” have always been the instruments of God to preserve the truth and bring about reformation. Despise not the day of small things.

But how about you as covenant youth who are taking your places as active, living members of the church? “We ourselves also were sometime (aforetime) foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” (Titus 3:3)

Yet God has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, transformed us from children of Satan into His own precious sons and daughters, from condemned sinners, on our way to hell, into heirs of eternal life.

There is absolutely nothing in us that makes us desirable or fit for the kingdom. Yet God gives us a place in His family, privileges us to be soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ, to resist all the onslaughts of the powers of darkness.

As covenant youth you are confronted with the enemy every day. Never has the devil put forth a greater effort, nor had better means to tempt you than in our day. Never have sinful men so defiantly opposed God in blatant wickedness and trampled His law under foot as now. Homes are breeding places of evil, the streets of our cities shambles, one’s life is hardly safe anywhere. Sexual debauchery, murder, rape, and every form of corruption among old and young make up the news of the day.

Even worse is the fact that those in authority condone sins like abortion and homosexuality. When sin is no longer sin in the eyes of the law, the outcome can only be complete lawlessness, the lawlessness that, Scripture warns, will come upon us in the last days.

Never has the world with all her evil lusts and pleasures threatened our homes and lives more than today. Never has it taken more spiritual stamina and courage to fight the battle of faith than at present.

Your most threatening enemy is your own sinful flesh through which Satan and the world lure and threaten. Right now it is most important that you guard yourself from evil and keep yourself unspotted from the world.

Our calling is to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Eph. 6:10b-13

“Though in a lowly station, the service of my God I choose above all pleasures that sinful ways afford.” (Psalm 84:10)