Before we examine the various signs of the times, a few remarks about these signs are in order. We all know what a sign is. It is something that points to something else. For example, road signs give us directions to a destination.

The signs of the end times are similar. They point to the second and final coming of the Lord, and they do so in three ways. We must keep these in mind so that we understand them correctly.

First, they are indicative. They tell us in a general way what must and will happen before Christ comes again. As time goes on, they become increasingly clear and obvious. The signs, as it were, become larger as the end of all things approaches. Today they are very large and clear.

Second, the signs are simultaneous. When we read of these signs in scripture, especially in Matthew 24, we must not understand them sequentially, so that one sign must take place before the next one happens. For example, it is not true that the gospel must be preached to all nations before the signs in creation begin. While it is certainly true that these signs vary in intensity as time goes on, they all work together at the same time to bring the coming of Christ.

Third, the signs are causative. This is perhaps their most important characteristic. We must not understand the signs in a merely formal sense as events that must simply take place before the Lord comes again. It is true that these signs must happen before the end, but this is not their meaning. Rather,
these signs are necessary because they bring or
cause the coming of Christ. How is this true? Because
they destroy the kingdom of antichrist and bring the
kingdom of Christ.

This is why the signs of the end times are nec-
essary. In both Matthew 24: 6 and Revelation 1:11,
referring to the signs of the times, scripture says that
they must come to pass. Herman Hoeksema explains
this (Behold, He Cometh, 8):

This must expresses the necessity of all the events
of this present time from a two-fold aspect. First,
it points us to the eternal and perfect and all-wise
counsel of the Almighty as the ultimate reason
and ground of this necessity. All things are the
unfolding of the eternal good pleasure of the
Most High. They are determined. All things are
determined, large and small, good and evil. But
they are determined not by cruel fate or blind
force, but by the counsel of the all-wise Creator
of all things. When we accept the word of God
and believe that all things must come to pass,
our hearts find rest because they find rest in him.
Second, this must point to the end, the telos,
the final destination of all things: the perfected
kingdom of heaven and its revelation in the day
of Christ. This second aspect is inseparably con-
nected with the first. Because all things have their
ultimate reason and necessity in the counsel of
God, they must come to pass in order to realize
the divine end of all things: the tabernacle of
God with men.

As strangers and sojourners, therefore, we must
know what the signs are and be able to recognize
them.

With all of this in mind, we turn to the sign of the
preaching of the gospel.

The basic idea of this sign is the universal procla-
mation of the gospel of salvation through the atoning
death and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone.

This sign is present throughout the New Testa-
ment, beginning with the great commission (Matt.
28:19–20). It is in obedience to this command that
the gospel goes forth throughout history. This is the
mandate given to the church, and the great and only
calling of the church: preach the gospel.

The spread of the gospel is not difficult to trace.
The gospel was first preached in Jerusalem and
Judea, as we learn from the book of Acts. It soon
spread to many places in the world, including Ethio-
pia through the ministry of Philip to the eunuch and
to Samaria, the historical enemy of the Jews. But its
primary direction was north and west, beginning at
Antioch in Syria, which soon became the center of
the New Testament church. From there it was a short
jump to Asia Minor by means of the missionary jour-
neys of Paul and his companions. It then progressed
to Italy and Rome, the capital of the known world at
that time. From there it spread to continental Europe
and eventually to England. After the discovery of
America, the colonists took the gospel with them as
they spread throughout the continent.

Thus we can say that the general direction of
the gospel was north and west from Jerusalem and
Antioch. At the same time it passed by much of the
world (with exceptions), including Africa, India, and
much of Asia.

There is no doubt that the gospel of the kingdom
must be preached to all nations before Christ comes
again (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10; Rom. 11:25). Many
scriptures teach that a multitude of the Gentiles will
be included in the kingdom (Matt. 8:11; 13:31–32;
Acts 15:14; Rom. 9:24–26).

This does not mean, however, that the command
of the gospel to repent and believe must come to
each and every individual in the nations in which
the gospel is preached. Louis Berkhof (Systematic
Theology, 697–98) explains:

It is impossible to maintain that the words of the
Savior call for the preaching of the gospel to every
individual of the different nations of the world.
They do require, however, that these nations as
nations shall be thoroughly evangelized, so that
the gospel becomes a power in the life of the
people, a sign that calls for decision. It must be
preached to them for a testimony, so that it can be
said that an opportunity was given them to choose
for or against Christ and his kingdom. These
words clearly imply that the great commission
must be carried out in all the nations of the world,
in order to make disciples of all nations, that is,
from among the people of all those nations. They
do not justify the expectation, however, that all
the nations will as a whole accept the gospel, but
only that it will find adherents in all the nations
and will thus be instrumental in bringing in the
fullness of the Gentiles. At the end of time it will
be possible to say that all nations were made
acquainted with the gospel, and the gospel will
testify against the nations that did not accept it.

Berkhof’s last comment is especially important.
According to God’s counsel, the gospel must go to
the ends of the earth with a two-fold result: obedi-
ence to the command of the gospel to repent and believe, or a deliberate rejection of salvation through Christ alone.

So where are we regarding the progress of the gospel (the running of the white horse of Revelation 6:2)?

While we cannot know all the churches and organizations that are involved with bringing the gospel to historically heathen nations, especially those of Asia and India, it is certain that the gospel is going to these nations. We as churches are involved with the sending of the gospel to places it has never before gone.

Our sister church in Singapore, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, is the result of many years of mission work, and is today a strong Reformed church. Singapore in turn is currently involved in the teaching and spread of the Reformed faith in India. We as churches are busy in Myanmar (Burma), a nation that has for centuries been trapped in the vise of idolatry in its most blatant manifestation. The Protestant Reformed churches have also been very busy in the Philippines, where most of the population follows the false teachings and idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church.

As strangers and sojourners in the end times, what is our calling?

It is to be aware of the progress of the gospel, especially as it concerns the labors that we as churches put forth. In this way we are able to recognize opportunities and discern this sign of the times that brings the coming of Christ.

Our calling is also as much as possible to support the preaching of the gospel. In the grand scheme of things, the Protestant Reformed churches are small and from an earthly viewpoint don’t amount to much. Besides, if you check the Acts of Synod, you will discover that mission work is expensive. This makes our support even more important.

So, young people, find any way possible to help and support our mission work.

Christ is coming!

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**Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Jonker (2)**

Mark H. Hoeksema: Now, Aunt Truda [my aunt by marriage to Cornelius, my uncle], you were mentioning and discussing a little bit about the radio choir and about singing in general. Is there anything that you have to add to what you have already said?

Trudy Jonker: I do remember some of the things about the radio choir. We didn’t always have the choir each week, so we sang trios. Lois Kregel, and Ann Bylsma, and myself would sing trios. With my husband I sang a number of times—duets—on the broadcast.

Cornelius Jonker: Just to ad lib a little bit here, I remember the first time Trudy and I sang on the radio. We were hardly done singing and the church door flew open. There came Truda’s aunt, Margerite Hofman. She heard someone singing on the radio and she didn’t know who that was. She was so inquisitive that she burst into the church and found out that it was us. Subsequently, I sang duets with Ed Ophoff on the Reformed Witness Hour, and a few times my sister Thelma, her husband Chuck, and Trudy and I sang mixed quartet on the radio, and I sang with the Men’s Chorus. So we’ve done a lot with that. I served also on the Radio Committee for at least a couple of terms.

MHH: So your life has been in many ways wrapped up with music?

CJ: Very much, and it still is. One little anecdote. I remember when I was quite young, one Sunday morning in church, before the service began, I noticed that my mother and my two sisters were snickering a little bit. I wondered why. And it just seemed that they were having a hard job controlling themselves. Well, I found out after the service that my younger sister
still had her nightie on under her dress. (laughter).

People then, as they are now, were creatures of habit. We always sat about three rows behind the elders and deacons. The ladies all wore hats to church. The Marjo Hat Shop did a thriving business with the PR ladies. But woe to the ones that sat behind the ladies with big brims on the hats. It created a sort of impossible barrier to see the pastor (laughter). In First Church, some of the old men would like to smoke cigars. They did a lot of walking to church. They’d smoke a cigar to church. And, of course, being thrifty Dutchmen, they just sort of put it out a little bit before they entered the sanctuary and place it on a little stone ledge before they entered. Afterward they picked them up again, but sometimes they were a little bit rearranged beforehand (laughter).

MHH: Not to get anyone in trouble, but who possibly could it have been who did some rearrangement?

CJ: I plead the fifth [amendment]. I think there were some rascals in my age category. Speaking of smoke (laughter), I didn’t really get into the inner sanctum of the consistory until later. But, upon making confession of faith at 18, shortly before I went into the army, I entered a room that was long and narrow and smoke-filled. I think others testified to that fact when they came for baptism slips. Thankfully later on, before I became deacon, that situation was remedied with a “no smoking.” (laughter). But there was a lot of smoke in that room.

MHH: They had to smoke in order to deliberate.

CJ: Well, I know that my father was a heavy smoker. He liked cigars at night. But he would smoke during the day. In fact, it was such a crutch that before he could answer the phone or go to the door to answer the doorbell, he had to light up. I thought he was a slave to it. I think it was a contributing factor to his early death at 61. So I was convinced that I had to quit my habit when I was in the army. I smoked when I was in the army, but no more. And I’m thankful that I don’t.

MHH: It certainly has been to your benefit.

CJ: You’re right.

MHH: What other recollections do you have in a general way regarding the life and activities of the church?

CJ: I remember society life. I think I attended David Society (that was the young boys). The young girls, I think, had Esther Society. I might add that the English Men’s Society had a custom to hold a banquet at the end of the season in the spring. They would invite two delegates from each society to attend, and there would be food and speeches. I was one of the delegates from David, and it so happened that my future wife was a delegate from Esther. Providentially we sat across from each other. I had known the family, but I never paid much attention until then. They had plates of a certain type of colored mints that were there for the taking, and she felt obligated to feed me those in profusion that night. To this day I really don’t care for them anymore. But I still love her (laughter). Eventually we dated. Our first date was on a Sunday night at First Church. She had to be in at 10:30. So I dutifully brought her to her home at 10:30. However, her folks were out visiting, so it was a nice opportunity to sit on their front porch until quite a little later. When her folks drove up the driveway, I descended the front steps and drove away (laughter).

I recall one other incident. That was at the close of the service. The minister (I think it was Rev. Hoeksema) announced the closing number. Nothing happened. We looked up to where the organist was sitting. Apparently he dozed off (laughter). So Rev. Hoeksema asked somebody to arouse him, which he did. I think he was quite embarrassed. I won’t mention his name, but I know who he was (laughter). So that was a rather humorous little thing.

Oh, and quite regularly, I remember that Rev. Hoeksema, during the congregational prayer would touchingly confess to the fact that he himself was an unworthy sinner, adding, “Thou knowest it, he knows it, and we all know it.” That just seemed to echo. And he would say that so often. It was a rather endearing phrase.

MHH: You got married, when?

CJ: We were married June 2 in First Church (a Monday night because my father had to leave the following morning for synod in Iowa).

MHH: What year was this?

CJ: This was in 1947. It was difficult to find dates for marriages, to get the church reserved. So many marriages were taking place with the army boys returning. And so we had a rehearsal on Saturday and our marriage took place on Monday, and my father left the following morning. Rev. Hubert DeWolf was assistant pastor, and he was also my wife’s uncle. This was really before there were rumblings of problems that came to their peak in 1953. So, being my wife’s uncle, he officiated at our wedding.
And I might add, too, that she also had two other uncles that were Protestant Reformed ministers. One was Rev. Peter DeBoer. He had a pastorate out West. And Rev. Leonard Vermeer. Her family was quite well represented in the Protestant Reformed ministerial column. So her mother was a Vermeer. So Rev. DeWolf married Alice Vermeer, and Rev. Peter DeBoer married Gertrude Vermeer. And, of course, Leonard Vermeer was her brother, so there was quite a bit of relation. And that had quite a bit to do with the big split in 1953.

MHH: What do you mean by that? Describe to me the events leading up to 1953 as you see them.

CJ: Well, we were in our early years of marriage, being married in 47. We didn't really have our ear to the ground that much with the rumblings. However, we also subscribed to the Concordia, which was a church publication, mostly produced by the ministers out West. And so there was sort of a running debate between the Standard Bearer and the Concordia on various theological issues: Rev. Petter would studiously look up anything that might support his position on conditional theology. We read that with interest. Then we heard the rumblings. The statements [by Rev. De Wolf regarding conditions] were made, and my father was very much involved because he was in the consistory. He had protests. Then there was a big controversy about the ministers (Kok and DeJong) who went to the Netherlands, which really undermined the position of Rev. Hoeksema and the church.

MHH: Do you think that that was done deliberately?

CJ: I didn't know at the time, but subsequently, I heartily believe it, especially when I read some of the memoirs of Rev. [Cornelius] Hanko when something came out. Rev. DeWolf was asked, “Did you make those statements? If you’d have waited, you’d have had more people on your side.” So to me, that was deliberate.

MHH: It was like evidence of a conspiracy?

CJ: That’s what I believe. Just for what reasons, I don’t know. But we were in the middle of it because my wife’s father, Henry Bastiaanse, was in the consistory at the time.

MHH: In?

CJ: First Church. And all her family was supporting Rev. DeWolf, whereas my family was not. So, that certainly had affect in our own family—my wife and I. We had endless debates and talks, and I remember she wanted to support her family. And I could see that. But I could not go along with it. I remember, she was in church that one Sunday night (First Church) when Rev. DeWolf made his so-called apology. She came back so gratified. She said, “Rev. DeWolf apologized!” I said, “What did he say?” “Well, words to the effect that he’s sorry that you misunderstood his statements.” I said, “That was no apology. That’s really putting the blame on the people, rather than himself.” I think she could see that, but she didn’t want to believe it. And I can understand that. In fact, finally I said, “Well, this is my position. You know it, and it doesn’t do any more good just to rehash constantly. I am staying with the truth.” And the Sunday morning when we first met as a separate group (we had to meet at Christian High School in Grand Rapids—that was the group that stayed with Rev. Hoeksema), it was her turn to go to church and my turn to babysit the little ones at home. I did not know where she was going, even at the time when she was ready to leave. I said to her, “Where are you going?” She said, “To Christian High.” Well, I breathed a prayer of thanks!

MHH: It’s obviously difficult when you remember these things, even though they happened so many years ago. But your wife made the right decision.

TJ: And she is thankful too (laughter).

MHH: And so are the rest of us. It must have been very stressful.

TJ: I had a father who was very spiritual. I thought a lot of him. I know that he was misled by my uncle, who kept saying, “Well, we really mean the same thing.” And he wanted to go along with it. Later on in my father’s life, he went to live near my older sister who lived in Grand Haven. Then later on he came here to the rest home. But she told me that he could see the bad things that were happening in the church, how small the services as far as the sermons were. We at that time were not in the PR church, but he joined our church because he knew things were wrong. It was a very difficult time in my life, and it still is at times, because you lose the closeness to all your relation, even your sisters. You love them as sisters. But there is never that real close feeling when you’re not completely one in the faith. I see in so many of their families where their children have gone astray, and that church does not mean a lot to them. I’m thankful that the Lord led me in the way he did. Both for that reason, but for my own spiritual life, we’ve been one in the faith, and that means so much in your married life.
MHH: But it was very traumatic when all of this happened for the simple reason that it was dividing friends and family.

TJ: Oh, it was. My family was extreme. But it was in most families. There was some division.

MHH: I appreciate those comments. Is there anything else you’d like to mention, Mr. Jonker, regarding either the history surrounding 1953 and some of the difficulties or some of the issues that happened, or some of the positive things? Or are there any other subjects that you would like to speak about?

CJ: Shortly after the split, I was elected deacon. And it was very fulfilling. It was a busy time. I had a young family. At the same time, I was on the Adams [Christian] School Board, and the Radio Committee. I can look back and see where I should not have taken on all those things, because if I’m a member of something, I give it my all. And I know my family had suffered because of it. Now I understand that consistories have different policies. But I had a busy life as a young father. Shortly after I was out of the deacons, I was elected elder. I was the youngest elder. At my very first meeting, I was put in the clerk’s position. So I was a bit terrified. I had the bulletin to take care of and all the minutes. It was such an august meeting that I felt inadequate. But the Lord qualifies too, and it was fulfilling.

The one thing that the clerk did not have to do—and I missed that in First Church—he did not have to serve on committees or go on family visitation.

MHH: He had enough to do.

CJ: Yes, but I wanted that experience, so I did volunteer and I did go along with other elders and ministers at times, and I did serve on some committees. I don’t know if that broke the ice a little bit, but I thought it was quite fulfilling.

I had one little comment when I was elected, right after the congregational meeting. I had somebody tap me on the shoulder and say, “I hope you’re not going to be a 200 percenter.” (laughter). Well, I didn’t quite know what that meant, but I gathered that he just didn’t want me to be too radical. And I hope I wasn’t (laughter).

I know my father was president of the Holland Ladies’ Society for a number of years. It was kind of a pet project for him. At their annual social in the spring, they would present him with a gift—usually some article of furniture, a stuffed chair or end table or something. “Oh,” my mother said, “That doesn’t go with this.” So that really meant that we had to paint the walls a different color or get a different rug (laughter).

Another humorous memory. I remember when Marvin Koerner, a seminary student, and Mae Bylsma were married by Rev. H. Hoeksema. His text was from Proverbs 18:22: “Whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord.” It was hard for Mae to live down that “thing” for awhile. When their first child was born, it was a boy, and his name was really Daniel. But the minister who baptized him read the mother’s name and baptized Daniel as Mae Ruth (laughter).

One other incident at First Church was a wedding of Herm VanDyke and Kaye Bordyn. I had to sing at that wedding. I was in the basement with the wedding party. Mr. Peter Keetsma was the master of ceremonies. The auditorium was filling up at First Church, and Rev.[Cornelius] Hanko was to be the officiating minister, but he wasn’t there. A scheduled consistorial picture had to be taken downtown Grand Rapids, and they scheduled it early because of this wedding. Well, it so happened that the picture was taken, and when Rev. Hanko was descending in the elevator, it malfunctioned and the elevator was stuck between floors. Somehow some of the group got down and he must have told them to call the church. They called the church. I answered the phone, and someone said, “Rev. Hanko is stuck in an elevator downtown.” So I said to the master of ceremonies, “You better go up and have the congregation informed. Maybe you can have them sing some Psalter numbers. I’m going to try to find another minister. Who can I find? I’ll try Rev. Wally Hofman” (he lived maybe eight blocks from the church). I called their home. His wife Verdine said, “He’s home, but he’s working in the garden.” I explained as rapidly as I could. She said, “I’ll have him change and come down.” So, he came to the church after maybe fifteen or twenty minutes. He got his book and he got the names, and he proceeded to go up the steps to the sanctuary. Just the time he got to the top of the steps, Rev. Hanco walked in (laughter) and officiated (laughter). It made the news.

Maybe one of the last ones: When I was a deacon, we obviously had to count the money. There was always an elder present, which is a custom today too. Once in a while Rev. [George] Ophoff (GMO) had to take his turn. We would usually assign a task to him of counting one-dollar bills, of which there was
a copious amount. We would put them in piles of fifty. When he would get maybe in the thirties or the forties, we’d ask him a question. He’d think about it and answer it. But then he’d forget how many dollar bills he had counted. So then he had to restart (laughter). So it happened that he was on this single wad all night. (laughter).

MHH: I can see that happening. When he was asked questions when he got to approximately thirty dollars, could that have been intentional (laughter)?

CJ: I hate to admit it, but it was (much laughter).

MHH: Mrs. Jonker, you mentioned that catechism in the early days of the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches was held in more than one location. What can you tell me about that?

TJ: I, for my kindergarten through the ninth grade, went to Baldwin Christian School. There were many Protestant Reformed people who went to that Christian school. We were quite a few miles from First Church.

MHH: Where was Baldwin Christian School located at the time?

TJ: It was on the corner of Baldwin and Fuller, which was about a block from Fulton Street, NE. We had our catechism after school, once a week, and usually, if I remember the teachers, they were students of our seminary who would teach us the catechism lessons. If I remember, I had Blankespoor, and I had DeWolf. We had a number in our classes. They would have more than one class for different age groups, but that was to keep us from having to go so far to First Church to catechism.

MHH: Which today is probably not a great distance, but in those days, if you had to do it on foot, it was a considerable distance.

TJ: It was.

Matthew Kortus

Saying Thanks to God and Our Neighbor

This month we celebrate the national holiday known as Thanksgiving Day. While certainly Thanksgiving Day represents a good opportunity to express our thankfulness to God, we recognize that our whole lives ought to be filled with thanksgiving. God has given us many good physical and spiritual gifts as expressions of his love. The Bible instructs us to respond to God’s love by loving him in return. We express our love to God, in part by saying thanks to him, both in prayer and in song. Furthermore, we express our love to God by loving our neighbors, which includes, as this article will highlight, saying thanks to them whenever we have opportunity.

As Christians, we are often reminded, and rightly so, that our whole lives should be characterized by thankfulness. That is, we do not reserve being thankful to only the fourth Thursday of November. Instead, we give thanks on a daily basis for all we have. This implies that we have much to be thankful for. Indeed we do, for God showers us with many spiritual and physical gifts that we undeservedly receive. For these gifts we owe our thanks to God, the giver of every good gift.

Above all, we thank God for the unspeakable gift of our salvation (2 Cor. 9:15). God sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, into this world to earn salvation for his people through his death and resurrection. By his perfect work we are freely given the remission of sins and Christ’s own righteousness. We are most thankful for our salvation and the many spiritual benefits that flow out of it.

To show us the bounty of these spiritual blessings, we are also given many physical gifts. We refer to these physical gifts as our daily bread. These include the gifts we commonly associate with our “daily bread,” such as the food and drink that sustains our bodies as well as our clothing and shelter. But as
Lord’s Day 50 of the Heidelberg Catechism indicates, our daily bread refers to all things necessary for the body. Everything we possess that supports our earthly life is a part of our daily bread. We are thankful for all the physical gifts that we receive.

God gives us these spiritual and physical gifts as expressions of his love for us. The Bible consistently teaches this truth. For example, John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son…” God’s love is a giving love. From our perspective, the gifts we receive serve as tokens or proof that God loves us.1

In response to God’s love and the gifts he gives us, we are called to love him in return. We express our love to God by showing our gratitude. In other words, we love God by living a life of thankfulness. We express this thankfulness in part through obeying the law God has established for his people. In addition, while obedience represents a concrete way of expressing thanks, we should remember the importance of also saying thanks.

We say thanks to God both in our prayers and in our songs. Children often learn from a young age to pray after meals, “Lord, we thank thee for this food and drink…” This recited prayer helps children begin a habit of saying thanks to God. As young people and adults, we should develop and cultivate this habit of saying thanks to God in our own prayers, for as this article has discussed, we have received much from the hand of God; therefore we ought to say thanks.

In addition to prayer, we say thanks to God in the songs that we sing to him. The psalms, and by extension the Psalter, are filled with words of thanksgiving. By singing these words from the heart, we express our gratitude to God. Therefore we are glad for opportunities to sing songs of thanksgiving, whether we sing at school, in church, or within the home. Through singing we give thanksgiving to God, and thereby show our love to him.

To summarize thus far: God gives us many good spiritual and physical gifts as expressions of his love. We in turn love God and express our thanks to him, not only through obedience, but also by saying thanks to God in prayer and in song.

Importantly, since God loves us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:11). This is in harmony with the Ten Commandments being divided into two tables: one concerning our relationship to God, the other concerning our relationship to man. The summary of the law recorded in Matthew 22 also expresses this same truth: we are called to love God and love our neighbor. Now if part of loving God consists of saying thanks to him for all the gifts he provides for us, then part of loving our neighbors ought to include saying thanks to them as well. In other words, part of showing love to our neighbor includes saying “thank you” to others. Therefore, while Thanksgiving Day reminds us to say thanks to God, let it also remind us to say thanks to all those whom God has placed in our lives.

Just as our calling to say thanks to God implies that we have much to be thankful for, so too the exhortation to say thanks to our neighbor implies we have much to be thankful for. Indeed we do. Children and young people, this starts with our parents. They have made many sacrifices on our behalf to raise us both physically and spiritually. From our infancy, our parents have changed our diapers, taught us how to use a spoon, wiped away our tears when we crashed our bike, washed our grass-stained clothes, allowed us to borrow their car, and gave us independence as we earned their trust. From a spiritual point of view, our parents teach us to pray, pay the tuition for our Christian education, go over our Catechism lessons with us, discipline us when we sin against God, pray for our spiritual welfare, provide counsel when we start dating, and encourage us to confess our faith. Our parents do all of this on a daily basis because they love us. We should say thank you.

In addition to our parents, we should say thank you to our siblings. We can thank our siblings for explaining the rules to a game, sticking up for us on the playground, giving us a turn on the computer, driving us to school, and being a godly example to follow.

Outside of the home, we can thank our teachers not only for their hard work, but also for their patience with us. We can thank our pastors for teaching us catechism and making God’s word understandable even to the simplest of minds. We can say thanks to the parents of our friends who let us come over, use their house, and eat their food.

Outside of our circles, we can thank the waitress

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1 By this paragraph I do not wish to imply that good gifts in themselves are evidence of God’s love, and thereby imply a type of common grace. Rather, in writing to elect believers, I remind the reader that everything we have (or don’t have, for that matter) comes to us out of love from God.
at a restaurant who brings us our food. We can thank the mechanic who fixes the car we need to get back and forth from home and school.

Both within the home and church and outside of them, there are many people to whom we owe a word of thanks. These are just a few concrete examples to help make this article practical for all of us—from elementary-age boys and girls, young people in their teenage years, to adults living at home or on our own. Each one of us ought to express his love and thanks to God by saying thanks to others.

By faithfully saying thanks to our loved ones and neighbors we enjoy two important benefits. First, saying thanks to others represents a concrete way in which we serve God. By saying thank you to others whenever we have opportunity, we show love toward them. In showing love toward our neighbor, we express our love and thanksgiving to God, who first loved us. Thus, saying thanks out of true love for others represents the fruit of our faith, whereby we are assured of it.

Second, if we are busy saying thanks to each other whenever we have opportunity, we will have little time left for sinful speech toward others. By reminding ourselves to express our gratitude to others, we will forget to say unkind and unloving words about one another. By employing our voices to express our appreciation to our parents, we will have no breath left for speech that is disrespectful, rude, or unpleasant. Constantly telling others “thank you” makes us less likely to tell lies, rumors, and hurtful stories. Filling our vocabulary with words of gratitude will help eliminate words of bitterness, jealousy, and hatred. Therefore, saying thank you represents an example of replacing the old man of sin with the new man of righteousness.

Now that November has come, we look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving Day. It will provide a break from school and an opportunity to spend time with family. In addition, this holiday reminds us of our need to lead lives of gratitude toward God for his love in providing us both our salvation and our daily bread. We pray that God will give us grace to express our thankfulness in both prayer and song on a daily basis throughout the year. I pray this article reminds us all also to thank our parents, siblings, pastors, teachers, and the many others whom God has placed in our lives.

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Young People in the Life of the Church

As a young person, I sometimes find myself asking questions like, “How am I benefiting the church?” or, “Are young people like myself important in the life of the church?” Even at a young age, we have been taught that each member of the church is important in fulfilling God’s purpose. Each one of us is a part of the body of Christ, but we all perform different functions. The young people are the foundation for the future of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), and their place in the church is vital for continuing the truth through the lines of generations. The way in which young people are involved in the church is important for their growth in the knowledge of God and also for the future of the PRC.

Throughout our years in the instruction of God’s word, it has been our goal to become confessing members of the church one day. This will come at a different time for each young person, but our calling right now is to study the scriptures so that we can achieve that goal. The way in which we are involved in the church today allows us to grow in our faith so
that one day we will be leaders of the church ourselves. Without this foundation, the truths that have been taught for generations would fall farther and farther away. “He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word [which] he commanded to a thousand generations” (Psalm 105:8).

There are a number of ways in which the young people are encouraged to participate in the life of the church. By attending catechism and going to Young People’s Society, we are fulfilling our purpose in the church to grow in the knowledge of God. In order to teach the Protestant Reformed doctrines to our own families one day, we must go through the proper instruction. As young people, we willingly have to attend such societies because we know that it is of our benefit to study the word of God.

Through these societies, we have the privilege not only to study the scriptures, but also to do so with fellow believers. It is important that the young people of the church come together to discuss their thoughts and opinions about the word of God and to learn from each other. By discussing the word of God together, we are also forming a bond with one another that will continue into adulthood. The discussion we have with one another now is only the beginning of our study of the word with the members of the church. We will grow spiritually from the knowledge of fellow believers and with the support we have for one another.

By forming strong friendships within the church, we will develop a close-knit congregation of the next generation, in which we will continue to carry out the Reformed faith. Having friends within our own body of Christ will benefit us in the future when we become leaders of the church ourselves. We have to form a unity that will enable us to preserve the doctrines that have been manifested in us.

Just as it is our calling to have fellowship with one another through societies, we can also fulfill our purpose in the church by willingly attending church services. The PRC is set apart from many other churches today because we have two services on Sunday instead of just one. We see the importance of dedicating our whole day to the praise of God. In our modern society, it is more common to go to one service, so that there is more time to do other activities for the rest of the day. However, the young people of the PRC have been taught that hearing the gospel is the way in which we can be spiritually fed, and without it our lives would be empty.

As young people, it is easy for us to want to follow the ways of others, and that can lead us to think that it is acceptable to stray from dedicating the Sabbath to God. Without seeing the importance of keeping the Sabbath, the future of the church is at stake. The young people have to see the importance of keeping the Sabbath day holy, so that future generations will live in the same way. We can be confident in knowing that God upholds his church through his sovereignty. Matthew 7:21 tells us that we must live according to the will of God, and not live according to our own. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

As young people of the PRC, we have a responsibility to grow in our understanding of the truth so that one day we can teach our own children the doctrines that have been manifested in our lives. We may not feel as if our involvement in the church is important; however, we are the foundation for future generations and the ways in which we participate will help us to be leaders of the church in our adulthood. Our actions in the life of the church now will help us to strengthen the church when we are leaders ourselves.

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“press toward the mark…” (Philippians 3:14)

**Wisdom Cries**

Read Proverbs 8:1–21

Throughout Proverbs, wisdom is personified, and wisdom speaks. Wisdom is an attribute of God, his “knowledge of all things and his wonderful ability to do all things for his own glory” (Doctrine According to Godliness). The Hebrew word for wisdom is feminine: that’s why wisdom is personified as a woman throughout Proverbs. Ultimately wisdom personified is Jesus Christ himself.

Wisdom is one of God’s communicable attributes. It is an attribute that he promise to give to all those who ask it of him in faith (James 1:5–6). “Wisdom for us is knowing how to do everything for the glory of God” (Doctrine According to Godliness). Wisdom is the ability to apply God’s word correctly in our lives. How does God impart wisdom to us? Through Christ, the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 1:23–24, the inspired apostle Paul declared, “But we preach Christ crucified…unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Christ applies the word to us through the work of his Holy Spirit: “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (Prov. 1:23). Do you heed wisdom’s words?

Sing or pray Psalter #322.

**Wisdom’s Banquet**

Read Proverbs 9:1–12

Proverbs 9 teaches that the woman Wisdom has built a grand house, a house fully supported with seven pillars. In her home she has prepared a feast, and she sends her maidservants to call for guests. They summon those who lack understanding, and at her banquet Wisdom imparts instruction to them. Does this remind you of other Bible passages? Jesus’s parables about the feast that God prepares are recorded in Matthew 22 and Luke 14. He bids many simple to his banquet, parables about the feast that God prepares are recorded in Matthew 22 and Luke 14. He bids many simple to his banquet, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool” (v. 19): “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (v. 20): “The tongue of the just is as choice silver…” (v. 21): “The lips of the righteous feed many…” (v. 22): “Wisdom for us is knowing how to do everything for the glory of God” (Doctrine According to Godliness).

Sing or pray Psalter #329.

**In the Multitude of Words**

Read Proverbs 10:1–22

There’s a recurring theme throughout this passage (v. 8): “A prating fool [a fool of lips] shall fall” (v. 10): “A prating fool shall fall” (v. 11): “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked” (v. 12): “Hatred stirreth up strikes; but love covereth all sins” (v. 13): “In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found” (v. 14): “Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction” (v. 18): “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool” (v. 19): “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise” (v. 20): “The tongue of the just is as choice silver…” (v. 21): “The lips of the righteous feed many…”

Sing or pray Psalter #386:1–4.

**Don’t Trust in Uncertain Riches**

Read Proverbs 11

This passage is peppered with warnings regarding wealth. We who live in one of the wealthiest societies the world has known would do well to take heed: Prov. 11:4: “Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. Proverbs 11:16: “A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong [violent] men retain riches.” Proverbs 11:18: “The wicked earneth deceptive wages” [ESV]: “but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.” Proverbs 11:24–25: “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” Proverbs 11:28: “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”

1 Timothy 6:17–19: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Sing or pray Psalter #329.

**Look Well to Your Herds**

Read Proverbs 12:1–14

The other day my son and I went to a pet store and bought a frog. Before we left, I signed my name on a line marked “parent.” We were also subjected to an emotionally-
charged appeal on how to ensure the quality and longevity of our frog’s life. I walked out shaking my head.

That being said, we take good care of our new pet. We do so because God’s word has bearing over every part of the Christian life, even how we care for our animals. “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Prov. 27:23). The godly man has pity on God’s creatures: he understands that they, along with the rest of the creation, groan and travail because of man’s fall into sin (Rom 8:22). Jehovah’s tender mercies are over all his works (Ps. 145:9). So “Balaam was checked for beating his ass,” and “the law took care for oxen” (Matthew Henry).

“A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (Prov. 12:10). Unbelievers worship the creature rather than the Creator they were made to praise; nor do they long for the day when creatures too will be delivered from the curse.

Sing or pray Psalter #405.

Only by Pride

Read Proverbs 13:1–11
Are you at odds with someone? Perhaps there’s tension between you and your spouse. Maybe there’s strife between you and your parents or you and a child, co-worker, or fellow church member. What’s the source of that trouble? Proverbs 13:10a offers a succinct, straightforward answer: “Only by pride cometh contention.” In Philippians 2:3 we are commanded, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” We are to have the mind of Christ, who “made himself of no reputation,” and humbled himself to the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is our peace (Eph. 2:14). “Without Christ we should not know God, we could not call upon him, nor know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Prov. 27:23). The godly man has pity on God’s creatures: he may hide themselves (Job 34:22). This knowledge is terrifying to them because of Jehovah’s righteous evaluation of man’s heart: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” They know that he searches hearts “even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 17:9–10).

But those who love Jesus Christ respond to the knowledge that their heavenly Father is omnipresent and omniscient this way: “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it!” (Ps. 139:6). They make this their prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23–24).

Sing or pray Psalter #384.

Where No Oxen Are
Read Proverbs 14:1–19
Yesterday afternoon I went downstairs, a load of laundry under my arm, only to find that the basement that I had helped tidy that very day was in the later years of its life. In what do you think of time and money you now have to pursue your own interests? Extended vacations? Wise Solomon says this about the elderly saint: their grandchildren are their crowning glory. Do you view your children’s children that way? Perhaps you don’t have any grandchildren of your own. The church’s

At Peace with Your Enemies
Read Proverbs 16:1–16
How do we reconcile Proverbs 16:7—“When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”—with Jesus’s words in John 15:18–20: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you…”?

What Proverbs 16:7 teaches is that when we walk honestly toward them that are without (1 Thess. 4:12), our actions will not incite conflict even with unbelievers. After all, there is no law against the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23). We will still be hated by those who hate our Lord, but when our ways please him, he will bring to shame those “that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (1 Pet. 3:16–17).

Sing or pray Psalter #253:1–6.

Crowning Glory
Read Proverbs 17:1–12
Some of you who read these meditations are in the later years of your life. In what do you take delight? Retirement? The amount of time and money you now have to pursue your own interests? Extended vacations? Wise Solomon says this about the elderly saint: their grandchildren are their crowning glory. Do you view your children’s children that way? Perhaps you don’t have any grandchildren of your own. The church’s
children belong to all of God’s people; they are evidence of his faithfulness to his promises: “Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel” (Ps. 128:5–6).

Young men, young women, and children, what do you consider to be your greatest resource in your life at present? Your strength? Your beauty? Your energy or your lack of responsibilities? If you answer that way, you answer incorrectly. Proverbs 17:6 teaches that “the glory of children are their fathers.” If you are privileged to have godly parents and grandparents, do you thank God for them? Do you treat the elderly saints in your congregation with the honor that is their due? They are your crowning glory.

Sing or pray Psalter #134.

**November 18**

**Individualism or Individuality? Read Proverbs 18:1–16**

Proverbs 18:1 is constructed awkwardly in the KJV. I found this paraphrase helpful: “One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgement.” We live in a society that is increasingly individualistic. The scriptures condemn individualism, a philosophy that makes self the center of “an enclosed world of personal self-interest.” Such a person doesn’t heed the wisdom of others or of God’s word. In short, individualism is idolatry. But the Bible celebrates individuality: we’ve each been given our personality and talents. Why? So that we can employ and develop those gifts for the good of fellow members of the body of Christ. Christians must not isolate themselves: we are created—and called—to live in community.

Verse two is related: “A fool does not delight in understanding, but only wants to show off his opinions.” In contrast, those who love Jehovah desire wisdom. They desire understanding so that they may better praise God and bless others. The prophet Isaiah confirmed this when he said, “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isa. 50:4a).

Sing or pray Psalter #354.

**November 19**

**One Who Acts Hastily Read Proverbs 19:1–16**

Proverbs 19:2 describes a person who abounds with enthusiasm. That’s good, right? After all, the Bible warns against complacency: we’re called to be zealous (Rev. 3:19). But the eager man to whom Proverbs refers lacks knowledge, and without knowledge, his zeal produces sin. Such a man is like the Jews, of whom Paul said, “They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). Those people were condemned because they sought to merit their own righteousness with God.

The following texts verify that the one who acts hastily sins: “He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Prov. 14:29); “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Prov. 18:13); “A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent” (Prov. 28:20); “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 29:20). Brothers and sisters, “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit...” (Ecc. 7:8–9).

Sing or pray Psalter #40.

**November 20**

**Thriftiness or Theft? Read Proverbs 20:1–14**

You don’t hear the expression “Cleanliness is next to godliness” much anymore, but it seems to me that it’s been replaced in the minds of Reformed Christians with a new idiom: “Thriftiness is next to godliness.” Indeed, how many of us haven’t stopped to the level of the buyer in Proverbs 20:14: we dispute the price of an item with its seller, pointing out all of its defects and his inaccurate assessment of its value. “It is naught, it is naught”—that is, “This is worthless, it’s worthless!” But later we’re sure to share our bargain with anyone who will give us an ear. Getting a “good deal” is the epitome of Christian stewardship, right?

We forget that as Christians we are stewards of more than the money that God has given us. We are stewards of the time and the talents that he has given as well. Above all, we are stewards of the gospel, of the “mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). So the next time you’re tempted to haggle for a bargain, consider this: will you be squandering an opportunity to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ because your thriftiness borders on theft?

Sing or pray Psalter #305.

**November 21**

**Nothing Neutral Read Proverbs 21:1–12**

The Hebrew word translated “plowing” in Proverbs 21:4 in the KJV is rendered “lamp” in certain other translations. The ESV, for example, reads, “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.” Ultimately, the verse means the same thing. If haughty eyes and a proud heart are the lamp that guides the wicked, even his plowing is sinful, for, as we read in Proverbs 21:2, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.”

“Two things are required to make an action right. One is that it be lawful in itself. The other is that it be done with a right motive. If the thing done is itself wrong, no motives can make it right. On the other hand, the thing done may be right in itself, but the motive which governs us may be wrong, and so the act may be sinful because the motive is sinful” (William Plumer). Therefore the unregenerate man is incapable of doing anything good—or anything morally neutral. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5). So “there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out” (Prov. 24:20).

Sing or pray Psalter #334.

**November 22**

**Train up a Child Read Proverbs 22:1–16**

In Shepherding a Child’s Heart, Ted Tripp writes that children “must be trained to understand and interpret their behavior in terms of heart motivation...The focal point is the heart of the child that is called to submission to God’s authority. The goal of correction is not simply to modify behavior, but to bring the child to sweet, harmonious, and humble heart submission to God’s will that he obey Mom and Dad.” He also writes, “The child trained in biblical obedience [and the parent, who knows how difficult that godly training is!] is better able to understand the gospel. The power and grace of the gospel is most deeply understood, not by those who never face their biblical duties,
but by those who do.”

Fellow parents, are you overwhelmed by a needy newborn or toddler? Perhaps a straying teenager causes you anguish of soul. Whatever this day’s need may be, let it be like a strong current that bears you to the ocean of divine love (Spurgeon). There you will find the grace we so desperately need to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Sing or pray Psalter #215.

He Will Not Die
Read Prov. 23:1–14

Today my two-year-old son hit his little brother so hard that he fell to the ground, wailing. Almost immediately, his eyes met mine, and he began to frantically insist, “No, Mom, no Mom! I don’t need a spanking, Mom!” This is typical: whenever he knows that he deserves discipline, he carries on as if a spanking will kill him. I dare say most children act this way at one time or another. That kind of behavior can make us parents question the God-ordained method of disciplining our children: the rod and reproof. It’s as if God anticipated our concerns and says with a smile, “If thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Prov. 23:13). No, in fact, “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (v. 14). “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). So “chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18). For “the rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15).

Sing or pray Psalter #215.

Rescue Those Ready to be Slain
Read Proverbs 24:1–12

Since we moved to Colorado, we’ve had more people knocking on our door, and I’m not referring to the family and friends who’ve come to visit. No, now that we live in a more populated and more diverse demographic, we meet a variety of people looking to witness to us: Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists… When I close the door behind them, I often marvel: it’s remarkable what some people are willing to sacrifice for the sake of a lie. What am I willing to sacrifice for the sake of the truth? Do I truly care about those who are being drawn away to eternal death?

But perhaps the emphasis of Proverbs 24:11–12 is not on the second death, but the first. In that case, the millions of unborn who have been slaughtered in our country come to mind. As I write, another undercover video about Planned Parenthood has just been released. With regard to abortion, there’s not one of us that can say, “But I didn’t know about this!” We have a duty to speak up and speak out against this great evil. If we don’t, we sin, for, “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Sing or pray Psalter #113:1–4, 11–12.

Clouds and Wind Without Rain
Read Proverbs 25:1–14

Proverbs 25:6–7 warns us not to brag about ourselves before the king. It would be better that the king call us into his presence than that we be demoted because we’ve presumed a position that isn’t ours. Those who boast of themselves tend to exaggerate their abilities: such a person is like clouds that blow over a desert but don’t deliver rain.

Though they knew the scriptures, the scribes and the Pharisees didn’t heed this admonition. They loved “the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues…” Jesus warns us not to follow their example: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23). “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3). To that man the King of heaven and earth will say, “Come up hither.”

Sing or pray Psalter #26.

The God That Formed All Things
Read Proverbs 26:1–12 and Psalm 75

It’s Thanksgiving Day, a day on which we like to concentrate on our blessings, but the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds with today’s date focuses on the interaction of the wise man and the fool. It includes this sober reminder: The great God that formed all things rewards transgressors. (v. 10). What does he pay fools? “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a). Not only does sin merit the first death, but it is rewarded with the second death—eternal hell—as well.

Psalm 75 reminds us that our thanksgiving and God’s just judgment are closely connected. The righteous exclaim, “Unto Thee, O God, do we give thanks,” and our Lord responds; “When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.” The righteous respond by declaring that they will praise God forever. Why? Because “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). He drank the dregs of the cup that was our due.

To those of you who do not believe in Jesus Christ, what does it profit you if you gain the whole world, but lose your own soul? (Mark 8:36). Those of you who have been redeemed, know this: nothing—neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come—shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God, the great God who formed all things.

Sing or pray Psalter #206.

Drip, Drip, Drip
Read Proverbs 27:1–16

Today’s passage ends with an observation: attempting to restrain an argumentative woman is as futile as holding back the wind or clutching oil in one’s fingers. Such a woman is like a leaky roof on a rainy day: drip, drip, drip. The roofs of the houses in Israel were flat: a little leak was a big problem. Similarly, the contentious woman is not only annoying, she’s destructive. Slowly and subtly she tears down the very home she’s called to maintain (Prov. 14:1). The Israelites rested, worked, and slept on their roofs in the summer, but when bad weather came, they resorted to the shelter of the house below. Proverbs 21:9 states that it would be better to live up in a little corner of the housetop, exposed to all kinds of weather, than to live in the stormy presence of such a woman.

There’s a warning to us here, sisters. Weaker by nature, we’re quick to employ the deadly weapon of the tongue. But we’ve been anointed with God’s Spirit, and he works in us the
fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control. May soft, wise, healing words characterize our speech (Prov. 12:18; 15:1–2).

Sing or pray Psalter #343.

**Your Sin Will Find You Out**

*Read Proverbs 28:1–14*

In Numbers 32 the tribes of Reuben and Gad pledge to help conquer Canaan before they return to the land east of the Jordan River. Moses agrees but then cautions, “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out” (v. 23).

“Your sin will find you out.” That’s a terrifying statement, isn’t it? It’s likely that you and I don’t have to look very far to find evidence that it’s true. In spite of that, we’re prone to try to cover our sins up. Our efforts are as worthless as Adam and Eve’s fig-leaf aprons, for “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). Better we heed the instruction in Psalm 32:5: “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Praise God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Sing or pray Psalter #142.

**When the Wicked Rule**

*Read Proverbs 29:1–14*

As I write, Election Day looms. By the time you read this, it will have passed. Several verses in Proverbs 29 contrast righteous and wicked rulers: v. 2: “When the righteous are in authority, the people have peace: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn”; v. 4: “The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it”; v. 7: “The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked considereth not to know it”; v. 8: “Scoffful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath”; v. 12: “If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.”

Regardless of the election’s outcome in your area, it’s safe to say that at present in the United States, mostly wicked men bear rule. We mourn about that, we pray for them, and we also find comfort in the knowledge that “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov. 21:1). Our rulers are instruments in God’s hand to bring about the eternal kingdom of His Son, “The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established forever” (Prov. 29:14).

Sing or pray Psalter #253.

**Enough**

*Read Proverbs 30:1–14*

Agur makes two bold requests in Proverbs 30. First, he asks that God will keep him far from vanity and lies. Psalm 119:29–30 echoes his prayer: “Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.” Agur knows that “every word of God is pure” (v. 5). He doesn’t want to be one who adds to God’s words, one who will later be reproved and exposed as a liar.

Agur also pleads, “Give me neither poverty nor riches.” This is the same prayer Jesus taught us to pray in Luke 11:3: “Give us day by day our daily bread.” It is a prayer that recognizes that “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil…” (1 Tim. 6:6–10).

Are you content with just enough?

Sing or pray Psalter #201.

**Who are Your Companions?**

*Read Proverbs 1:20–33*

In Proverbs 1:11–19 Solomon warns his son not to keep company with sinners. He describes a band of highwaymen who would entice his son to join them. What characterizes these men? They are cruel, and they are covetous. Solomon knows that if his son joins them, they will not be content with only his company for long: they will coajole him to add his money to their shared account as well. Why does Solomon caution his son against joining them? Not only do they “their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood,” the blood and the lives that are taken in the end are their own. Like a net thrown in front of a bird that still goes for the bait and is trapped, so their greed entangles them and brings them to their demise.

Who are your friends? Can you say with the Psalmist, “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts?” (Ps. 119:63). I hope so, for “he that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Prov. 13:20).

Sing or pray Psalter #51.

**Two Paths**

*Read Proverbs 2*

Two paths are presented in Proverbs 2. One path is characterized by righteousness, justice, integrity, and light. It’s a straight path, but it’s also narrow. Besides that, it’s an uphill climb. There is a guide for those who walk this way: her name is Discretion. She leads those who follow her to life and a glorious land. She leads those who follow her to life and a glorious land. The other path is characterized by vanity, lies, and wickedness. It’s a broad path, but it’s wide. It’s easy to miss the narrow gate that leads to it (Matt. 7:14). The second path is more traveled. It’s hard to miss the broad gate that leads to it, and beyond that, the road is smooth and wide. The path winds, and it’s not well-lit, but the one who travels there has plenty of company. The multitude who walk this way rejoice in speaking and doing evil, and they celebrate the wickedness of others as well. Be warned: though the path itself looks pleasant, it leads down to hell, and from there, there is no way back to the narrow path that leads to life.

Proverbs 15:24 (NKJV) reads, “The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below.” Which way are you walking?

Sing or pray Psalter #67.
Sweet Sleep
Read Proverbs 3:21–35
When he was little, one of our sons was scared of the dark. Together he and I memorized Proverbs 3:24: “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.” What guarantees sweet sleep? “Sound wisdom and discretion” (v. 21). Here’s the wisdom that I shared with our son when he was afraid at night: “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber” (Ps. 121:2–3). Not only do wisdom and discretion ensure peace of soul in the dark of night, they also direct the traveler so that his foot does not stumble. Here’s a piece of the wisdom that guides us on the narrow pathway that leads to heaven: “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Psalm 119:35).

The Bible is our record of Wisdom’s words. Whoso hearkeneth unto Wisdom’s words shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil (Prov. 1:33)

Sing or pray Psalter #8.

A Light that Keeps Shining Brighter
Read Proverbs 4:14–27
Our youngest children like to sing “This Little Light of Mine.” Our older children understand Jesus’s words in Matthew 5: “Ye are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” And my husband and I experience the bitter reality that we’ve got a long way to go: adults must still “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). In that way “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

That path is contrasted in Proverbs 4 with the path of wicked: their way is dark; they know not at what they stumble (v. 19). The chapter ends with instruction on how to walk the narrow way that leads to life: with eyes that look straight ahead and feet that do not swerve. So “observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live...” (Deut. 5:32–33a).

Sing or pray Psalter #334.

Rejoice in Your Wife
Read Proverbs 5:15–23
Lord’s Day 41 of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Lord’s Day that treats the seventh commandment—“Thou shalt not commit adultery”—is worded differently than the Lord’s Days that treat the other commandments. Instead of asking “What does God forbid?” and “What does God require?,” Question 108 asks, “What doth the seventh commandment teach us?”

If it were worded more like the others, perhaps it could read this way: “What doth God forbid in the seventh commandment? God forbids all fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking and jesting (Eph. 5:3–4),” “What doth God require in the seventh commandment? Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love” (Prov. 5:15–19).

Sing or pray Psalter #360.

A Reproach Wiped Away
Read Proverbs 6:16–35
Have you ever wondered why Jesus taught that lust is adultery, and then he permitted divorce only in instances of fornication? (See Matt. 5:27–32). On the one hand, he taught that any sin deserves hell, while on the other hand, he seemed to elevate one sin above others.

“While lust, jealousy, pride, and hatred will send a person to hell as surely as their outward manifestations (adultery, fornication, and murder), the physical manifestations are greater sins because of the damage they do to both the person who sins and the ones sinned against” (Christianity Today). Adultery is treachery, violence committed against one with whom you’ve been joined in covenant (Mal. 2:14). It violates one’s own body and the body of another (1 Cor. 6:18–20). It is probably with great sorrow that Solomon reflected on the truth of his own proverb late in his life: “Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32–33).

But there’s hope for the adulterer and the adulteress, as well as the spiritual adulterer and adulteress—and that includes every one of us: “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help” (Hos 13:9).

Sing or pray Psalter #125.

No Peace
Read Proverbs 7
The wicked woman who entices the young man in Proverbs 7 reasons, “I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows” (Prov. 7:14). She is one who cries, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” “True peace is a quietness of heart, soul and conscience that comes from the knowledge that God is not angry with us and that Christ has taken away our sin, so that nothing anymore can separate us from the love of God: And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17) (Doctrine According to Godliness). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit: it’s given to those who walk in obedience to God’s commands: “My son... keep my commandments: for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee” (Prov. 3:1–2). “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (Is. 48:22). “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:13–14).

Sing or pray Psalter #232.
The Man-eating Lion Survival Guide: Being Sober and Knowing the Adversary

1 Peter 5:8–9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflications are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

The text chosen for the 2015 PRYP convention is a survival guide. Survival guides give important tips from experts that are designed to help you stay alive in a dangerous environment. The text is a guide that briefly teaches us how to survive in this world where Satan walks about as a lion seeking whom he may devour. This biblical metaphor indicates how important this guide is to our spiritual survival. Certainly, if taking a safari in the vast savannahs of Africa where lions lurk, you would acquire such a guide and learn how to spot danger, avoid an ambush, and defend yourself. But Satan is a far more dangerous threat. He is the most powerful, persistent, and fearless predator in this creation. Satan is cunning, having developed his craft over millennia, and is an expert at ambush, being invisible to our natural senses. Swift, he prowls the whole earth. Deadly, his den is the pit of hell. And he doesn’t merely crush skulls, rip off limbs, and feast on the bodies of his prey. He devours their souls eternally.

Be sober. This is the first tip taught by our man-eating lion survival guide. Sobriety is the skill of remaining calm, clear headed, and keeping your wits about you at all times without panic in the face of danger. Peter, the expert who wrote our survival guide, knew firsthand the fundamental character of sobriety. For, as our survival guide points out, sobriety is subsequently necessary to be vigilant, constantly alert to the danger of Satan, and to resisting his attacks.

Sobriety is a skill that is learned and developed. With regard to survival, it is the skill of knowing your enemy and then knowing how to adapt to that danger. Satan-surviving sobriety is developed by believing and applying the truth of Scripture. That is why our survival guide speaks of being “in the faith,” followed by “knowing.” Knowing Scripture is essential to sort the truth about Satan from fiction. And faith is necessary because Satan is a spiritual creature who is not detectible by physical senses: the spiritual senses of faith must be honed in order to avoid or defend against him.

Sobriety basically consists of what we can call the four Rs. The first is believing that Satan is real. Although most humans have heard of Satan, mankind is generally oblivious or simply dismisses him as a cartoon figure. Satan would like to keep it that way. The Bible teaches not only that Satan is real, but also that he is a glorious creature of God who is given extraordinary gifts, power, and authority that he continues to exercise in the earth with unparalleled experience, intelligence, and determination. The glory given to Satan is the glory of angels. Satan is an angel created by God sometime in the first six days. Angels are spirits. And the glory of angels is the power and authority they are given, more than men, to serve as messengers and agents of God in his work with men (Ps. 8:5). This power and authority of angels is considerable, for it encompasses not only the physical realm but also the spiritual, and includes not only the authority to save but also to destroy.

We are mostly familiar with angels as agents of God to save. They are given to protect his saints in all their ways (Ps. 91:11). Thousands upon thousands make up the armies of the living God (Ps. 68:17). Peter urges us to sobriety partly because he knew firsthand the power angels possess. Peter himself was reminded by Jesus that if necessary he could call on 12 legions of angels for his defense (Matt. 26:53). And Peter was personally delivered from prison by an angel who released his chains, led him out past numerous guards, and through an iron gate.

Angels are also agents of God’s providence—far more than we realize—with power and authority
over such things as the wind (Rev. 7:1). As such, they also serve as agents of God’s judgments in the earth. They are agents of doom, as the destruction of Sodom proves. “We will destroy this place,” they declared to Lot (Gen. 19:13). Not only did angels carry away dawdling Lot, but they blinded the Sodomites and threw down the fire and brimstone that buried the city. This is but a picture that in the day of the Lord, the entire world will be destroyed by angels pouring out the vials of his wrath (Rev. 14 and 16).

This glory of angels is that of rulers. This is why scripture often associates angels with thrones, dominions, and principalities (Col. 1:16; Rom. 8:38; Eph. 6:12), and why it pictures angels as stars (Job 38:7). Stars, given to rule the night, represent the glorious power and authority given to angels to rule (Gen. 1:16). This angel Satan possesses more dazzling power and authority than any other angel. For good reason he is called Lucifer, the bright and morning star (Isa. 14:12), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), and the prince of this world (John 12:31). This power and authority is also indicated by the metaphor of Satan as a lion, which is even commonly regarded as the king of the beasts (Rev. 5:5).

Second, sobriety requires an attitude of respect. The sober survivalist must respect the power and authority Satan possesses even as a fallen angel. Soon after he was created and before the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan kept not his perfect first estate (Jude 1:6), but fell into sin and lured into sin a large share of the angels (2 Pet. 2:4), perhaps a third (Rev. 12:3-4). The threat this posed for Adam and Eve was implied by their calling to keep the garden. But by the instigation of Satan, they also sinned against God (Rev. 12:9). The sin of Adam, Eve, and reprobate angels was the sin of Satan. His sin was rebellion: discontented with his glorious position, he wanted to be God and be free from God (Isa. 14:12ff). If anything ought to gain our respect, it is the power of this fallen angel to cause even such gloriously perfect creatures to fall into sin. If he is able to do this to perfect angels and humans in paradise, what of us?

Sober respect for Satan is taught in two places (2 Pet. 2 and Jude). In both, the ungodly speech and disrespect of men toward earthly rulers is condemned by comparing it to the behavior of the archangel Michael, who did not even speak evil or bring railing accusation against Satan when he disputed over the presence of Moses’ body in heaven. Ironically, to serve his man-eating purposes, Satan teaches mankind to disrespect his rule—to make cartoons, mock, and joke about the devil. But such an ungodly disposition toward the power of Satan indicates one already is or soon will be devoured and ingested under his dominion. Foolish and typically devilish.

Soberly we ought to have respect for the wide dominion of his power. The place Satan walks to and fro is the whole earth (Job 1:7). When he walks, he does so as a prince, with authority not only over a host of mighty angels, but the whole of mankind outside of Christ. Nations, rulers, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places are under his throne (Eph. 6:12). Have respect for the power by which he manipulates, afflicts, and troubles mankind—even disease and death are in his hands. On a single day in a highly coordinated attack, he used Sabeans and Chaldeans and a mighty wind to strip Job of everything he owned. Not only did he kill Job’s family, but in an instant afflicted him with a disease designed to create maximum misery without death. Even Jesus, who has ultimate authority over providence, noted that it was Satan who binds people with their diseases (Luke 13:16). Have respect that Satan even has dominion over our own flesh, whereby he tempts us into sin and ceases not to assault us (L.D. 52).

Third, sober respect for Satan includes recognition of him as our most persistent and dangerous enemy. The name Satan even means “the adversary.” Although we have many enemies who attack us, ultimately there is only one, and he remains a real and credible threat to us in this world. The Belgic Confession teaches that Satan, devils, and evil spirits are so depraved that they are the enemies of God and every good thing, who to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watch to ruin, and by their wicked strategies to destroy the church and even members thereof (Art. 12).

Satan seeks to devour because killing is his only purpose with us. He is the original murderer. He is responsible for the murder of every human being. Those whom he kills and devours, even in hell, are not his friends. He doesn’t love God, and he doesn’t love his neighbor. Not even a bit. He loves only himself. The main object of his hatred is not the wicked, but every good thing. He walks about seeking saints and churches to devour. And he is persistent: he continually walks the earth. For thousands of years he has battled God. For an entire testament he tried to prevent the Messiah. When he came, he stalked Jesus his entire life. He never ceases to exploit any...
opportunity to attack the ministers, elders, deacons, 
teachers, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, and 
children of the church.

Recognize Satan as an expert at his craft. Like a 
lion, he is a master of ambush tactics. He is skilled 
at spotting vulnerabilities. He will use any character 
weakness we have, personality trait or gift we are 
given, and even legitimate needs we have for food, 
shelter, and companionship to trip us up and devour 
us. He loves to attack when we are weak from lack of 
food, money, health, or sleep, as well as from 
lack of prayer or attending the means of grace. He 
is also adept at camouflage. He can infiltrate and 
manipulate souls. A favorite tactic is to get close dis-
guised as friends or associates. He used the serpent 
to get to Eve, Eve to get to Adam, and apostles to 
get to Christ. He can transform himself into an angel 
of light (2 Cor. 11:14) as well as a spouse, minister, 
or teacher. Satan used Peter to try deterring Christ 
(Matt. 16:23), viciously attacked Peter to deny Christ, 
and entered Judas so he betrayed him. Satan even 
mimics Christ, presenting himself as a savior with 
your best interests at heart. He knows scripture better 
than we do, and quotes it. But every word he says is 
a lie used only to confuse, ensnare, and destroy. He 
is a liar and father of the lie (John 8:44).

Last, sobriety requires remembering. We must 
remember in order to avoid despair and to maintain 
hope that we can and will survive in this world with 
Satan. In spite of his considerable power, authority, 
and mastery, we must first remember Satan also has 
limitations and vulnerabilities. Although a powerful 
spirit, Satan is not God. He does not possess the 
incommunicable attributes of God. He is not omni-
present or omniscient. Although swift, he can only 
be in one place at one time. Although highly intel-
ligent, he must learn as we do. And all his power and 
authority are still subject to the power and authority 
of God. The history of Job proved that.

Second, remember that Satan is neither the 
original lion, nor the most powerful and supreme 
lion. That would be Christ, the lion of Judah (Rev. 
5:5). He has already defeated Satan. In fact, Satan 
already knows this. That certainly makes Satan 
more dangerous because now he is desperate. The 
inhabitants of earth are warned to beware, for “the 
devil is come down unto you having great wrath, 
because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” 
(Rev. 12:12). But there is still no need for panic or 
terror, because among our comforts in life and death 
is that our faithful Savior Jesus Christ has already 
delivered us from all the power of the devil (L.D. 1 
and 13). Satan is restrained so that without the will 
of Christ, he cannot hurt us (Belgic Confession 13). 
So certain is the perseverance of the saints, which 
God has abundantly revealed in his word, that it is a 
discipline that Satan especially abhors (Canons 5.15).

Third, remember Christ gives perseverance and 
victory over Satan by faith. That Christ has defeated 
Satan does not imply there is no danger or threat to 
us, so that we may slumber and need not resist him. 
We are members of Christ by faith, so that we may 
fight against Satan in this life (L.D. 12). To fight 
against Satan we must live soberly by faith. If we are 
not constant in watching and prayer, then we are 
not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous 
sins by Satan, but sometimes by the righteous per-
mission of God actually fall into them (Canons 5.4). 
Which is also why, besides remembering our calling 
to live soberly in watchfulness and prayer, we must 
also remember that there is a response that always 
repels Satan: “Yes, I am weak and a sinner, but I 
belong to Christ, who is responsible for my life, hav-
ing died for my sins; Go, take it up with him.” Such 
faith is far more powerful than Satan, because it 
relied upon Christ, the true Lion whom we fear. Be 
sober.

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Editor’s Note

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of 
Singapore will be having their annual Refor-
mation Day Conference on November 9 and 
10, 2015. Pastor Andrew Lanning will be speaking 
three times on The Forgotten Sola of the Reforma-
tion: Solus Foedus.

Why is the covenant the “forgotten” sola? Which 
Reformers taught it, and why was it so important to 
them? What are the deep and practical applications 
for our lives as God’s covenant people?

While we Americans cannot attend, we can 
listen to live streaming of these speeches at https:// 
www.facebook.com/ReformationDayConference 
on November 9 at 7:30 AM and 10:30 PM, and 
on November 10 at 1:30 AM, all American times. 
Please join us!
Spotting the Lion on Safari: Being Vigilant and Recognizing the Threat to Us

When you are travelling through lion country, you must be vigilant. In June 2015, a young woman paid for her lack of vigilance with her life. She was visiting a safari park in South Africa. Reports suggest that she was taking photographs—with the window of her vehicle open. Tourists in nearby vehicles honked their horns to warn her, but she was engrossed in photography. A lion crept up alongside the vehicle, and seeing an opportunity, grabbed the woman and dragged her through the open window. Sadly, nothing could be done to save her—she was mauled to death. This story illustrates the fact that to a lion you are potential prey.

To the devil, you are potential prey. The devil is on the prowl—yes, even at this convention. The devil is hunting us. He is actively seeking an opportunity to devour us. The devil wants to rob us of everything we have in Christ—he desires to take away our peace, joy, assurance, and usefulness in the kingdom of heaven. He wants to make us shipwrecked of the faith. And he wants to do that by tempting us to sin.

This world is the devil’s territory. Peter says that he “walketh about.” We cannot avoid walking through the devil’s territory, because we cannot avoid living in the world, but we can be vigilant as we walk through it. We do not want to be caught taking a photo—or, God forbid, a selfie, with the lion!

Peter urges us to be sober, be vigilant. My subject is vigilance. The word translated “vigilant” means “Be wakeful!” or “Be watchful!” The opposite of vigilance is sleepiness, drowsiness, or carelessness. Pay attention; be alert; keep your wits about you; do not let your guard down! If you fall asleep, the lion will find you easy prey. If you become distracted, the lion will creep up behind you and devour you when you least expect it; if you wander off by yourself, the lion will welcome you as an easy meal. Similarly, if you are not vigilant, the devil will maul you, and, but for God’s grace, the devil will destroy you.

The main reason for fatalities in wildlife parks is the tourists’ lack of vigilance. Many tourists underestimate the power of the lion—the lion does not look dangerous. It looks like a big cat. The lion only looks dangerous when it bares its teeth and reveals its claws, but by then it is too late. Once the lion has roared, it has its prey in its power. Amos 3:4 asks, “Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?” If you hear the lion roaring beside you, it may well be the last thing you will ever hear! If you hear the devil roar, you are already defeated.

What can we learn about the devil as we observe the lion?

First, both are stealth predators. The lion does not have the speed or the stamina to chase prey at speed. What the lion lacks in speed, it makes up for in stealth and cunning. This is true of the devil. He works best when you do not notice him. Satan rarely roars, because that would give away his position. Instead, he is the master of deceit.

Second, the lion is an opportunistic predator. Most predators are opportunists, for it takes time and energy to hunt. That is why many predators look for an easy meal—for stragglers or weak specimens. If a lion is hunting a herd of wildebeest, he does not pick a fight with the largest adult male with the strongest horns. He will look for the weaker specimen. Why, reasons Satan, risk fighting the fully armed Christian, when a drowsy, poorly armed Christian presents himself instead?

Since the devil is an opportunist, we must not give him an opportunity.

The first enemy of vigilance is presumption. The devil attacks a presumptuous soul, because presumptuous souls do not watch.

Perhaps the two best examples of presumptuous souls, whom the devil grievously mauled, were Samson and Peter. Samson presumed that if he kept living in sin, God would do nothing about it. Samson in his presumption was not vigilant, and the devil’s roar can be heard in Delilah’s triumphant cry, “The
Philistines be upon thee, Samson!” (Judges 16:20). Peter presumed that, even if the other disciples denied Jesus, he never would. The devil’s roar can be heard in the servant girl’s triumphant accusation, “Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee” (Matt. 26:73). Neither Samson nor Peter watched and prayed, for they did not feel the need.

The second enemy of vigilance is to be foolish enough to give the devil an opportunity. “Neither give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). When you are foolish enough to open your car window in a safari park, do not be surprised when the lion drags you through the open window. When you are foolish enough to open your soul to the devil, do not be surprised when he takes advantage of you. All of us have a besetting sin. For some, it is pride: the devil is looking for an opportunity to exploit your pride. For some, it is lust: the devil is looking for an opportunity to inflame your lust. For some, it is anger: the devil is looking for an opportunity to turn your anger into violence. Those sins are slow and progressive. Slowly they take over your soul and your life. Little by little, slowly and surely, the devil creeps up on you, and, when he has you in his sights, he roars, and pounces on you as a cat on a helpless mouse.

There are several ways in which we give place to the devil.

Prayerlessness gives place to the devil.

Young people, do you pray? Are you learning to pray? Prayer is the source of our strength. At the convention, are you praying? Do you spend all day in the exciting activities of the convention, and then collapse exhausted into bed at the end of the day without prayer? Make it your practice to spend quality time in prayer. It is no accident that often the call to watch is accompanied in scripture by the call to pray.

Second, a neglect of the means of grace, which means a neglect of public worship, catechism, and private Bible study, gives place to the devil.

Scripture is your spiritual food. If you encounter the lion without proper nourishment, you will not fare well. Scripture is your sword. If you encounter the lion without that weapon, the lion will tear your defenseless soul into pieces. The devil will do everything he can to trick you into laying down your sword so that he can devour you. Jesus caused the devil to flee by applying scripture. But if you come with your own wisdom, you are facing a lion with a toothpick or a spoon. How will you put the devil to flight with the scriptures, unless you know the scriptures? And how will you know the scriptures—the right verse, the right truth, and the right application for each temptation—unless you attend diligently to Bible reading, catechism, and the sermons?

Third, a neglect of the communion of saints gives place to the devil.

When traveling through lion country, there is safety in numbers. The lone gazelle is easy prey for the lion. When you wander away from the other saints, you expose yourself to the attacks of the devil. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:12–13). When you are having difficulty watching, there are in the church others who watch out for you. They see the enemy approaching, and they call out to warn you; but if you have wandered off out of earshot, how shall you hear?

Fourth, an indulging of your lusts and a feeding of your sinful nature by worldliness gives place to the devil. If you are enamored with the world, the devil has you in his sights. He looks for an opening through your senses (especially your eyes and ears). Many souls he has ensnared by offering them attractive bait. What is he presenting to your senses?

There is one final thing to consider. Do not become so frightened by the devil that you forget Christ. The vigilant believer keeps his eyes on Christ. There is a healthy fear of Satan, but there is also a morbid, obsessive fear of Satan. Christ is mightier than the devil. The devil is like a roaring lion, but Jesus Christ is the lion of Judah, and Christ’s roar terrifies Satan. Christ defeated the devil at the cross. He defeated him in the wilderness, when he refused to yield to temptation. He defeated him in Gethsemane, when he consented to take the Father’s cup. He defeated him at the cross, when he refused to come down from the cross. And he defeated him in the resurrection, ascension, and session at God’s right hand.

Therefore you are not in danger as long as you stay close to Christ. If you do fall, and if you have been mauled by the lion, run to Christ. He will restore you. He will bind up your wounds. He will forgive you, for he died for you.

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Satan’s Modern Day Assault and the God-ordained Remedy

There is, as you have been told, nothing like a lion’s all-out charge—the speed, the power, the sheer ferocity.

If you happened to be taking a tour of Africa, and you decided to wander off into a lion-infested area without proper precaution or protection, especially into an area where a known man-eating lion was on the rampage, leaving the walled native compound for a morning jog, you would be counted by the natives to be nothing but a fool: “Where are you going, sir?”

“Oh, for my morning jog.”

“Have you not heard that there are confirmed reports that the man-eater known as Diabolis is back in the area, and that some mutilated bodies have been found?”

“Oh, I am sure the reports are exaggerated. The bodies were found miles from here, were they not? I will not be gone so long.” And off you go, thinly clad.

As the natives close the gate behind you they would shake their heads, and one would say to the others, “Well, let’s make plans for his obituary. What shall we write? ‘Mr. Sam Vander Smith will be sadly missed by family and friends. He went missing two days ago, not returning from his morning jog. Funeral arrangements are pending. When his body is found in some ravine or thicket, at least what is left of it, his friends will be notified for his memorial service.’”

If to wander off without proper precautions or weaponry into a lion-infested area known for having lions with an appetite for human flesh is the definition of a fool, how much more so to wander about this devil-infested world without taking into consideration that greatest of all predators, Satan. A case can be made that he is the third greatest being in this whole universe, the first being Almighty God, then our exalted Lord Jesus, and third, Satan, whose appetite for the souls of men is insatiable and well documented.

The apostle Peter, who knew from sad experience Satan’s overwhelming power and evil describes him as a “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Without disputing what the two former speakers stated—that lions commonly roar after they have fed, indicating they have eaten their full, my experience is that they also roar when they are hungry and in a feasting mood.

Admittedly my experience is limited, based as it is on my visits to Singapore. There they have what is known as a Night Safari Preserve. Members of the church have taken me there a number of times with various PR church delegates. They take you around 8 PM so that you can be in the preserve when the keepers feed the big cats in various habitats. The feeding takes place about 9:45. You know it is time to feed the big cats because the lions begin to roar. It is not such a loud sound, but it is a low rumbling that is unmistakable, carrying to the farthest reaches of the park. It is a sound that can only come from a good-sized creature with a large chest cavity. One can tell they are impatient for their food. The sound is impressive.

Such a beast is a picture of Satan with his appetite for the souls of men. Not to fear this devil, not to take him and his realm into consideration every day as you venture out into the world is the definition of a fool.

I make reference to Satan and his realm, which is to say, his reality.

One of the things that distinguishes us as Christians from most of secular society these days is that we still maintain that there is a realm other than just the physical; there is also a spiritual, invisible realm inhabited by spiritual beings. That is something most deny these days. If you were to attend a secular college, you would find that the professors and the students almost without exception would dismiss such a notion as outdated, putting you in
the category of the uneducated and the primitive: “An invisible, spiritual realm, indeed! Do you believe in ghosts too?”

This is a deception of Satan himself. He would just as soon let you not believe that he is real, but that he is just an old wives tale, because if you do not believe he is real, then you take no precautions; you are completely vulnerable, and he can take you unawares and feast on your soul at his leisure.

Do not forget that if Satan is not real, then neither is God. But if Satan is real, then so is God. Satan knows the two realities hang together, and he would just as soon convince you there is no God. Satan’s great design is to destroy your relationship with God. He would have you believe this whole business of being a Christian is a great waste of time. There is no spiritual realm. You have no enemy to fear, nor do you need this God of which so many speak.

Young people, you are living in an age in which society is bold and brazen as it never has been before, a society whose leading educators are bold to say, “God is dead!”

That is of recent vintage, stated only in the last 100 years or so. Before our modern era men were willing to live as if there was no God, but they did not dare say, “God is dead.” They feared judgments of God if they dared speak such blasphemy. No longer.

When men say “God is dead,” they do not mean that once God existed, but now he has passed away. They want to maintain that there never was a God. What they are talking about is the concept of an almighty God. By the phrase ‘God is dead’ they are asking, “Who needs the concept of God anymore?”

In order to explain the unexplainable in a pre-scientific age, man did.

There were these great earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that suddenly broke loose, destroying great cities, or tsunamis that washed away whole villages, or great famines and terrible plagues that swept through populations. “What was the cause?” they asked. It must be the great deity is angry. These events happened randomly, it seemed. It must be there is some great power who makes these things happen from time to time.

But that was then. Now man can explain all these occurrences by natural scientific laws inherent in nature. We even have the cause of diseases figured out. Who needs some involvement of God to explain these things?

So God is dead. Meaning, the concept of God has outlived its (his) usefulness. The survival of the human race does not depend on some God and his benevolence. Man says, “We do not need a god anymore to figure all these things out or to plead with him to spare us, nor do we need you miserable, interfering Christians talking about him all the time. So, you scientific simpletons, cease speaking about him, or we will silence you!”

So Satan is working in this ungodly scientifically-minded world to remove all mention of God from the scene, and like a lion he seeks to intimidate you and me if we do not comply.

The threat and intimidation of the ungodly is Satan’s roar.

How do we respond to this deception that neither God or Satan exist?

A certain English author of the early 1900’s, who claimed to be religious though not a Christian, made a profound statement. He declared, “If there is no God, nothing matters. If there is a God, nothing else matters.” How true.

If there is no God, then nothing matters really—how you live, what you say or do. You are not going to be held accountable for what you choose to do anyway. Nothing anyone does is of any lasting importance in the end. It’s all going back to dust.

But if there is a God (the God of scripture), then nothing else really matters. Where do you stand in respect to him? Do you please him or do you not? Do you have his approval or do you not? It will prove to be the difference between life and death in the end.

But Satan would have you believe there is no God and no Christ, his Son. So, do not worry. There is no final standard of right or wrong, good or evil, not even whether or not you abort infants, whether you decide to exterminate the Jews or let them live. It all depends on what the majority of society prefers and thinks is good at the moment.

So the only real question that faces you as young people of the twenty-first century is whether you are going to insist on your outdated Christianity with its miserable condemnation of others’ life choices, or be a contributor to society and conform yourself to the thinking of our age. The choice is yours. Continue to be one of these non-conformist, confrontational Christians every time you open your mouth, or go along with the program and prove to be of some value to society in its search for peace and unity and happiness. What will it be?

That brings us to the heart of this speech.
As we have said, Satan’s great aim is always to turn you from God and destroy your relationship with God if he can, but at the same time he wants to get you to conform to society and its perspective on things. Social conformity is the great theme of the ungodly and the educational leaders these days, so that everyone, whether one claims to be a Christian or not, thinks and acts the same. To bring that about Satan uses social pressure. He brings the pressure of society to bear on all its members, but especially he brings it upon you as Christian young people, pressuring you to adopt its way of life and its assessment of worth and value.

What is of particular concern to us is that Satan is doing this by means of a growing emphasis on bodily looks, style, and appearance—the body beautiful. This has become more and more the emphasis of the age—self-worth measured by appearance, by bodily shape, form, and looks. It is a society preoccupied with this, and wanting you to be preoccupied with this as well, because if you are, it is good for the business of the fashion industry.

I want to remind you of what and who governs and is behind the fashion industry these days, namely, the homosexual segment of society. All you have to do is read recent news magazines in which are obituaries of a number of the old original fashion designers, one after the other openly homosexual, men whose young partners claimed they would sorely miss them.

Do not think that the newly approved homosexual segment of society is not having and is not going to continue to have a tremendous influence on every aspect of our society. It is. That one is concerned about one’s looks and appearance does not make one homosexual. You may be as heterosexual as the day is long, but it is the gay mentality that governs the fashion industry with all its models, male and female, many in various stages of undress. Because that is so, the emphasis is going to continue to be on the body beautiful with shape and form. You are going to continue to be subjected to it everywhere you turn in this day and age. Let’s face it: you live in an age with a great emphasis on the visual, and it all feeds the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

The question becomes this: “Do you measure up?” Do you measure up to some idealistic standard in shape and form? If you do not, at least in some approximate way, what are you really worth? What do you really amount to in the assessment of others?

Being fit and trim and attractive is all the emphasis today. And who does not want to be attractive? They are the popular ones, after all.

What you must understand is that Satan is feeding this whole movement. It is part of his assault. To this pressured assault and temptation there are three possible responses, any of which Satan would be pleased to elicit.

The first response that would satisfy him is that you succumb to the pressure and become preoccupied with shape and fashion and form. It dominates ones thoughts and use of time. Much time is invested in buying the necessary cosmetics, shopping for the latest name brands, and spending hours on improving looks and shape and form. It becomes what you are almost always thinking about.

What goes begging? Your spiritual life, of course, and growth in knowledge and fellowship with God. Maybe you do not see shape and form and looks as your strong suit. What a miserable waste of time. But it is these others who get all the attention, and you and others are all but ignored.

How do you react to that? With anger, bitterness, and snarling words that bite and mock and devour, words that are devoid of kindness, anything but Christian. Satan is having his way. You are doing his devouring for him, don’t you see?

Then there is a third response Satan aims at, namely, that of despair. One looks at what others seem to have and envies them. It all seems impossible for self, and as a result one becomes depressed and despairs: “I do not measure up. I have tried. I have failed. Why even go on?” And thoughts of suicide arise. If there is anything that Satan feasts on, it is that: despair.

Let me remind you of something: the three responses to the pressure about appearance and shape and form I have mentioned above are not to be found just in young ladies. They can also be true of young men.

With the great emphasis on looks and shape and form, male appearance is being strongly advertised too. And if you do not have this or that bodily form, do you really measure up? Young men can become preoccupied, and all but obsessed with fitness and shape and form.

I am not saying it is wrong for young men to spend some time in athletic training for strength and stamina. Such can be a good outlet for your excess
energy. The question is, how much time? Is one consumed by it? And, as a result, what goes begging in the morning and evening? What else but one’s devotions and spiritual growth, which also requires self-discipline and time.

Or one can become bitter and sarcastic. The good athletes think they are the top of the heap. Well, let’s knock them off their pedestal by biting and demeaning words—again, a spirit that is anything but Christian and pleasing to the Lord.

Or even despair: “I do not measure up in those areas. I am a failure.” One turns to self-mutilation in various forms. Why not take the next step and just end it all?

Satan is having his way, using society’s vain and empty fleshly ideals to put pressure on you to conform. He is working to disable you in very real spiritual ways.

In our society it is apparent that his diabolical approach is having tremendous influence and results. And you, young people, are his favorite prey.

The question is, how does one deal with Satan’s assault in this area of life, fend him off, and keep him and his powerful influence at bay? The answer is to be found in what many consider to be an outdated and old-fashioned phrase: by being numbered with the God-fearing.

Are you God-fearing, or man-fearing? Whose eyes, whose assessment is most important to you: God’s approval or man’s approval? What means most to you? More to the point, whose disapproval means most to you, God’s or that of others, even your friends?

Let’s understand what is true of the God-fearing. It is this: they do not fear men. Who and what you are is not determined by what others think, but by what God thinks and whether you measured up to what he required of you.

You claim to be Christian young people? Then do not measure yourself in society’s eyes, but in God’s eyes, asking yourself what he requires of you. If you have a good conscience with God, it does not really matter what others think and say.

How do you know what God requires and whether you measure up to his standards?

Young people, do you see what I am holding up here? It is God’s word.

Do you know what God’s word is? Among other things, it is a mirror. This is the mirror we ought to be spending the most time looking into, not the one hanging in your bathroom or in the fitness room.

The world has its mirrors: “Mirror, mirror on the wall; who’s the fairest of them all?” When the world holds up its body-magnifying images, you may well despair.

Rather, put this question to God’s word: “Mirror, mirror in my hand, who is fairest of them all?” The answer will be, “Christ Jesus, the upright one.” Beautiful beyond compare in love and mercy and grace and godliness. How do you compare to him?

Is that not what you and I should really want others to see in us—how Christ-like we are, having his life, kindness, and purity? Of course.

Is he pleased with you? That’s all that matters. You really do not need anyone else’s approval. You have the approval of the Son of God.

So let him be your model and standard. Reflect him. You know what will happen? You will be like Daniel of old, thrown into the lion’s den for refusing to bow to the pressure of Persia and its forbidding him to pray publicly to his God. He did not fear men, and the lions dared not touch him. It was as if he had an aura about him, a force field of power that the lions dared not cross.

So it will be with you. You will have a spiritual aura about you, and Satan, like those lions around Daniel, may snarl and want your soul, but he will be kept at a distance, unable to do you spiritual harm.

Make that your resolution by prayer and Bible reading, and walk out into the world fully armed and prepared. Then the devil himself cannot overcome you. He may roar, but it will be a roar of frustration. He must seek other prey. He cannot control your mind.

Then you will be numbered with the wise, not the fools. You will be one to whom others are attracted, one whose companionship they value for your good words and spiritual worth.

May God so grant. 

Rev. Koole is pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.
Put on the Whole Armor

After Danny finished swinging his stick and practicing his catechism, he came inside, ate dinner, got into his pajamas, and brushed his teeth. When he and his sister Becky were ready for bed, their mom gathered them together for devotions before bed.

“Earlier today, Danny and I talked about being God’s warrior.” His mom said as she opened her Bible. “Just like being a warrior takes more than swinging a stick around, so being God’s warrior takes putting on the whole armor that God gives us.”

“We talked about this in school.” Becky held up her fingers. “There’s the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation, and the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

“Yes, that’s found in the book of Ephesians.” Their mom nodded. “When the apostle Paul wrote about the armor of God to the people living in Ephesus, he was talking about the armor of the Roman soldier. Both he and the Ephesians would have been familiar with Roman soldiers.”

Danny sat up straight. Finally something he did know. “I know about the Romans. They conquered the whole world that everybody knew about, and they had an emperor and big armies.”

“Yes, that’s right, Danny.” His mom smiled at him. “When a Roman soldier put on all of his armor, it weighed about 50 to 60 pounds. It would be tempting only to put on some of the armor to make it easier, just like it is tempting to skip a few pieces of our spiritual armor, but each piece is necessary.”

Danny wrinkled his nose. That Roman armor weighed as much as he did. “That’s a lot of armor.”

“Yes, it was. A Roman soldier had to be dedicated.” His mom put an arm around both of them. “At the time the book of Ephesians was written, a Roman soldier signed up for 25 years at a time, sometimes for even longer. This was at a time when people were only expected to live until they were about 50. During that time, he was encouraged not to marry and not to visit his family. His entire life was dedicated to serving as a soldier.”

“Kind of like how we are supposed to be dedicated to serving God.” Becky said as she leaned against their mom’s shoulder. “It takes up our whole life.”

Questions to Think About:

1. Read Ephesians 6:10-13, Psalm 119:38, and Matthew 16:24 by yourself or with your parents. What does it mean to dedicate our whole life to following God and being a Christian? How is this like being a Roman soldier?

2. Do we carry the burden of our spiritual armor in our own strength? Read Matthew 11:28 by yourself or with your parents.
BAPTISMS
“...that he will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us...the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives.”
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Jorja Sarah, daughter of Mrs. Cherith Carmichael—Ballymena, N Ireland
Max David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nick & Kelly Lubbers—Crete, IL
Molly Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff & Abby Thompson—First, MI
Emily Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin & Nicole Visser—Georgetown, MI
Julia Chung Wei, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David & Lai Yin Baldwin—Hull, IA
Kayla Brianne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bryan & Erika Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI
Emma Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve & Judy Kamps—Southwest, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Mr. Timothy Spence—Ballymena, N Ireland

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Mary Mancusi, Lanae De Jong, Carolyn Van Drunen, Brittany Zandstra—Crete, IL
Justin Gunnink—Edgerton, MN
Megan De Young, Alyssa Lubbers, Mary Grace Schimmel, Travis Miedema—Georgetown, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Glen VanderSchaaf and Miss Janelle Klein—Georgetown, MI