<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words Are Weighty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Nick Kleyn #1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Personal Bible Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praying in Harmony with God’s Will</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirrors, Thoughts, and a Golden Calf</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devotional</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Reformed Churches of the Philippines</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church News</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solus Christus: Salvation in Christ Alone</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Unless we have not been given the ability to speak, it is difficult to go through an entire day without saying a word. Whether we have a very outgoing personality or we are very timid, we talk every day. We use words to communicate our thoughts. That much is obvious.

But do we often consider the great weight that our words carry?

Words are weighty. How?

First, the weight of our words is revealed in the type of words they are. It has been said that idle hands are the devil’s tools. So are idle words. In Matthew 12:36, 37 Jesus says, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” A word that is idle is one that is unprofitable. If we speak certain words that do not profit our neighbor, we should not speak them at all. In this we can see that the type of words we speak are determined by the reason we choose to speak. Two very different vocabularies are in use when we build someone up with our words or when we cut them down.

Consider the contrast between the two vocabularies described in Proverbs 10. “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked” (Prov. 10:11). The words of the righteous are satisfying and refreshing, while the words of the wicked are violent and harmful. “The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom” (10:21). The words of the righteous are wholesome, while the words of fools are empty and lacking. “The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out” (10:31). The words of the just are wise, while the words of the froward are cut short because of their misuse.

With our knowledge of the contrast between the two vocabularies, do we practice using the one and putting away the other? Do we speak in a way that builds up our neighbor, or do we cut our neighbor down with our words? Do we allow ourselves to be entertained by the words of the world as it comes to us through its often profane music, or do we listen to music that is as a well of life (Prov. 10:11)? Is our language in the work-place violent and explosive, or does it reflect a person who is wise and self-disciplined?

Second, consider the amount of words we use. Proverbs 10:19 instructs us that “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.” This brings us to the simple, but often ignored exercise of restraint. The more we talk, the greater the chance we sin. That is not to say that the more talkative people we know are the greater sinners or more likely to sin. Rather, in the excess of words, sin is more likely to abound.

Along with the amount of words we speak comes our realization of how quick we are inclined to speak. Proverbs 29:11 instructs us in this regard. “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” Are we quick to speak, saying whatever comes to our mind as soon as it enters our mind, or do we contemplate what we say before we allow it to exit our lips? The wise man thinks before he speaks. The wise man considers that his words can build someone up or knock them over like a wrecking ball.

Finally, words are weighty in that their ultimate use is in our communication and fellowship with God. Jehovah God is the covenant God who is our friend. As our friend he speaks to us through scripture and the preaching of Christ Jesus, who is the Word of God (John 1). As God’s children we speak to him through prayer and singing. All of this is done with words. What a wonder that in this way we have a direct line with our Father in heaven! Almighty, incomprehensible God has condescended to us, his children, in a way that we can know him.
and understand him and speak with him. Let us always remember this aspect of speech so that it reminds us of its proper use.

My point in writing on this subject is not to cause us to talk less or stop talking altogether. Rather, speak! Speak using language in the proper way with restraint. Speak in a way that reflects wisdom. Speak in order to build up your neighbor. Speak in a way that feeds others (Prov. 10:21). Speak to God in prayer. Speak to God as you bring him your praises. Speak of how the mercy of God through Christ has delivered you. Speak in a way that glorifies the one who gave you the ability to speak.

**Our Goodly Heritage**

**INTERVIEW WITH NICK KLEYN (1)**

It is April 18, 2009, and I am at the residence of Nick and Ina Kleyn in Walker, Michigan

My interest in obtaining this interview is connected with the fact that they are formerly residents of Australia. My purpose is to establish the connection between churches and saints in Australia and the Protestant Reformed Churches. It’s possible that both Nick (NK) and Ina (IK) will contribute to this interview. However, I will begin with Mr. Kleyn.

Mark H. Hoeksema: Mr. Kleyn, can you tell me when and where you were born?

NK: The Netherlands, Sledrect, that’s near Rotterdam in 1940, just as the war started.

MHH: What are your memories of your early years in the Netherlands? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

NK: Well, instances in the war I still remember very clearly. I might have been three years old. But the Germans bombed houses across the road from us. We were standing at the window and the window just shattered. We all rushed into the kitchen, which was in the middle of the house—no windows. Probably the kitchen is only about ten foot by six foot. We hid there. And I can remember very clearly also that the Germans came in the house, surrounded my mother and looking for my dad. My dad was in hiding. He had a special place of hiding in the house, underneath the wash basin. He hid there, and sometimes he hid somewhere else. We went back to the Netherlands and that hiding place is still there (ten years ago).

MHH: Really!

NK: It’s amazing.

MHH: You found the same house and the same hiding place! Why was your father in hiding? Was he in the resistance?

NK: Well, also they would gather up the men and send them all to Germany to work in the factories, making ammunition and that.

MHH: So they were interested in him for his labor potential.

NK: That’s right. And he would have been 30 years, a young man.

MHH: What happened after the war was finished?

NK: Well, my father had a milk route, which is delivering milk and cheese. After the war there was no money in it anymore because he could not buy the milk from the farmers. He had to go to the milk board, and that cut all the profit out. He lost a lot of money in the war because he had to go in hiding. Somebody else had to run the business. So in ’47 he decided to go in the bakery with a partner he met in hiding during the war.

MHH: So he went into the bakery business?

NK: Yes, he did go in the bakery business. But that didn’t work out either because the other owner’s wife apparently stuck the cash in her pocket, and it was never accounted for (laughter).

MHH: So what did he do next?

NK: Well, he tried to be a door-to-door salesman. Even I did, too, because a kid of 9-10 years old could go and try to sell hair-clips or things, little items door-to-door. But that didn’t work. He worked for a rubber factory for awhile. That didn’t work. So he said to Mom, “Let’s go to Australia.” And Mom wouldn’t have it because, you know, she had the family there in the Netherlands. It was very hard for her to immigrate to Australia. But, as things went on, they had nine children. They just kept their head above water. So they decided to migrate to Australia. They migrated in 1952.
MHH: So you would have been 12 years old…  
NK: Eleven, nearly twelve.  
MHH: And where in Australia did they go?  
NK: They went to Western Australia, a place called Armidel, where there were already quite a few migrants after the war. One of the first ones was the Bosveld family, the Slobert family/Bosveld family. By the time we got there, I suppose there was about 12 families there.  
Ina Kleyn: Armidel is a suburb of Perth. It was like eighteen miles out of Perth. Perth is the capital.  

MHH: While we’re on the subject of past history and immigration, Ina, could you tell me a little bit about your history? Where you were born and what your childhood was like?  
IK: OK. I was born in the Netherlands in 1943. I remember all the streets, the way we walked to church—everybody walked to church in those days. The street we were on was called Church Street. We went back two years ago and everything was still exactly the same, except it was a one-way street. It was a cobbled road. Our house was a lord’s house, like one of those big mansions, because Mother had guests and that kind of helped pay for the expenses. My parents were migrating to Australia with fourteen children in 1950.  

MHH: With fourteen children!  
IK: Yah.  

MHH: Wow. So you were actually in Australia two years before Nick was.  
IK: Yes.  

MHH: And you went to the same general area?  
IK: Right. We had a reformation in 1944. Some of the Christian Reformed Church became the Liberated Church, and Nick did, too. Nick lived on one side of the Arnon, and we lived on the other side. And there were all these little branches, but no ministers. So the same minister that served when Nick went to church was also the one that preached for us and had our catechism classes and that. But we didn’t know about that until we came to Australia.  

MHH: So close, and yet so far. But you definitely had the minister in common in the Netherlands.  
IK: Yes.  

MHH: You mentioned a reformation of some sort in 1944?  
IK: Yes. We became what you call the Schilder Group.  

MHH: You did?  
IK: Yes. And Nick’s family did too.  

MHH: What was the reason for this?  
IK: Mainly the baptism, the covenant, and Article 31 of the Confession. We were called the Article 31 Church by the Christian Reformed people.  

MHH: Now, when you got to Australia, what was your church affiliation or church position? What was going on in Australia?  
IK: OK. There’s a book I’d like you to read that explains. My brother wrote it. A Mr. Slobert was there before us. He tried all the kinds of denominations around and was very unhappy about that. And my father was what you call a very strong-minded personality. He didn’t need other people, like some other people do. When we came to Australia, we straight-away had reading services from the Liberated Church sermons.  

MHH: So there were no Liberated Churches established when you came.  
IK: Nothing.  

MHH: You say you had reading services. What happened next?  
IK: Then more migrants came. I remember one time after some migrants came during the week (we always had it [church] in our house) we had it outside in the back yard because there were too many people to fit in, squashed in the lounge even. I remember it was a Sunday morning, and I can’t remember the sermon, but I reckon it was pretty dark sitting outside (laughter) having the service. Then we hired a little church hall after that. And that was the beginning of what was called, in Australia the Free Reformed. Here they call it the Liberated Church. We were always referred to as Article 31.  

MHH: You were meeting, as a group. You had reading sermons. Were you able to obtain a minister?  
IK: We called a minister that wanted to come, but apparently he wasn’t a very substantial candidate. He wanted more money, so he didn’t come. Also, we in Australia had contacted ministers in the Netherlands from the Free Reformed Church, and they would advise every time. But it was only by air mail letters like snail mail, so it was kind of a long time before you got answers. The Lord’s Supper wasn’t served because there was no official minister there. And then they did appoint one of the elders that he could administer the Lord’s Supper
and baptism. Then Rev. Pells came, and was our pastor for three or four years. I loved him. He was so good at catechism classes. He made you smell the pottage that Jacob made for Esau (laughter). All my catechism classes were so vivid. And I tell you, I learned the covenant situation between God and Adam and Abraham. I learned it all by heart. We had to write it down in the textbook. And then I showed your dad [Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema] when he was in Australia. And he said, “Oh, he’s so Arminian!” Then I started thinking about what Prof. Hoeksema said to me. And it was Arminian. But I never looked at it that way, even though all these years I thought it was very Reformed. It was always not a unilateral covenant, it was always Adam’s responsibility and Abraham’s.

MHH: And that’s why he said it was from an Arminian perspective?

IK: I know. But it took your dad’s words for me to think about that in the right perspective.

MHH: But, on the other hand, how could you know, if you had never been taught correctly?

IK: All right. But my dad would never allow the conditional covenant, so it wasn’t to me a condition. He was very strict about that.

MHH: Nick, you were also living in the same area and also a member of the same congregation as Ina, correct?

NK: That’s correct. The church was constituted in 1950 by our dad and Mr. Slobert. It wasn’t official because it was only two families. So they reconstituted it in 1951. Then in 1954 we got our first minister (Rev. Pells). There was still a lot of controversy while he was there. There was a big division in the church. The church was 50–50, some for the minister and others against the minister.

MHH: What was the issue?

NK: It was a personal clash with the minister. Unfortunately he had no sense of humor, so the kids made the worst of it—even picked up his car and put it between two trees so after catechism classes he couldn’t leave (laughter). I suppose you could say they were nasty to him. They were a childless couple, and they even accused things like my brother listening under the window of their bedroom while they were talking at night. There was so much rumor. It was so hard for him to stay. And he got a call in the Netherlands, so he went back, but the church was still divided. Then in ’58 we had a minister-on-loan. He came to try to fix it up. He was only there for twelve months. He said off the pulpit, “Trouble with you people here is you don’t love each other. You ought to love each other and, by the grace of God, things will come right.” And it did come right, after he was there for twelve months. Healed the differences and everything.

MHH: But then he went back to Netherlands?

NK: Yes, he went back. He was only a loan for twelve months. Then through ’96 we got a full-time minister: Rev. Bruining. He stayed there till he retired. He was there for twenty-five years as a pastor. He had family here.

MHH: So, how long did you stay in the area in Western Australia, and how long were you in this congregation?

NK: Well, the Bosveld family had a bit of an issue with the consistory, and so father Bosveld and his family decided to go to Tasmania, which was the other side of Australia, an island, in ’57. I was already interested in Ina, although she was only thirteen and I was sixteen. But anyway, they migrated to Tasmania and I followed in ’62, and in ’63 we got married in the Free Reformed Churches in Tasmania.

MHH: And, what are your recollections of this, Ina?

IK: My father was put under discipline, and my mother was put under discipline because she agreed with my father. And one of my brothers was put under discipline and his wife because she agreed with her husband. My father said the discipline wasn’t correct. Then after back and forth (they were getting advice from Netherlands), they lifted the discipline. But my father said, “This is a public thing. You have to publicly say you’re sorry.” And they wouldn’t do that. My mother, my brother and his wife, they were lifted because they didn’t require that. So my father was kept under discipline. So we went to Tasmania while he was under discipline. And then the minister in Launceston, he worked that right through and they lifted the discipline through the classis in a synodical way.

MHH: So that’s how you ended up…

IK: In Tasmania, yes.

MHH: And Nick followed shortly after.

IK: Yes.

MHH: And then you were married. Tell me a little bit about your life together, as far as where you lived, what you did, what your church situation was.

IK: My father was reading Rev. [Herman] Hoeksema’s and Prof. Hoeksema’s books, so he was sharp about
the preaching. And he kept saying, “The minister used to come to our place so much, and they always talked about the scriptures.” And he said, “You’re not preaching Christ.” So, then they had a division between the minister and my dad. Then my father was put under discipline because he stayed home in the afternoon (he came to church in the morning), and he would look after my sister’s children. He stayed home. And he was always reading Prof. Hoeksema and Rev. Hoeksema’s books. That’s how I see him—lying on the couch Sundays reading these books. So he was shopping in another direction. Then he was put under discipline.

**MHH:** For what reason or on what grounds?

**IK:** On what grounds? That he disagreed with the consistory, so that was the fifth commandment; and the fourth commandment because he didn’t go to church twice on Sunday. So then we started going to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which just started up earlier in 1962. My brother said, “Oh, you should go there; it’s a very conservative church.” And that’s how we became Evangelical Presbyterians. Nick had come in ’62, so he came right in the middle of it. That hurt his mother very much, because he got swayed our way, and he left the Free Reformed Church. If you’re not a Free Reformed Church member, you can’t be saved. That’s how strong they were about that principle.

We married in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in early 1963. My father and he worked for the elders in the church. They had a business together building. So he’d work for one and then the other one would offer for 50¢ an hour, and then the other one would offer him 75¢ an hour. He’d work there a few months, and then the first one would offer him a dollar an hour (laughter). So he was doing that for a while. But the Evangelical Presbyterian Church was made up of different people, like Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists—so very dispensational thinking. They had no idea of the covenant. They didn’t even know what the word covenant really meant.

**MHH:** I’m having a difficult time understanding why your relatives would go there.

**IK:** My father was put out of the church, but he still always went to church. When he was excommunicated, he went to church. And the minister said from the pulpit, “I would like the gentlemen to remove Mr. Bosveld from the congregation,” before we would read the excommunication form. And he didn’t get up. So then he asked the elders. And the elders didn’t get up. So Dad stayed there. Can you see how strong-minded that guy was, my dad? He wasn’t going to be pushed out. In a court of law you can sit when the judgment is read out, why not in church? So then the minister had to read it out with Dad being there.

**MHH:** I guess where I’m trying to go with this line of questioning is, if there was no covenant concept in the EPC, and it was made up of members from diverse backgrounds...

**IK:** All right. But he was preaching about the souvereiniteit (sovereignty) of the kingdoms around Israel. And that’s what he’d base God’s covenant on, like as if God has to get a picture from what was happening. So the whole concept of his preaching was not covenantal at all. My brother Albert took notes, and I said to Albert one day later, “What did you think about that sermon?” He said, “I’ve still got the notes, Ina.” And he showed me the notes. What I remember as a fifteen or sixteen-year-old was never what I hear today in the preaching. Nothing like it. Pastor Rodman was scriptural, but it was more like a Sunday School message rather than the depths of doctrinal things.

**MHH:** You’re talking about Rodman who was pastor in the EPC?

**IK:** Yes. And then we had some contact with the Protestant Reformed—years later—and they gave us the Standard Bearer. They sent a bundle up, which was to be distributed amongst the people, and they did distribute them. But they had a thing in there about the covenant, which our people didn’t agree with. So we never ever got it again.

**MHH:** So now you’re in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Pastor Rodman is the minister. Where, when, and how did you come into contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches and specifically the Standard Bearer?

**IK:** We moved away from Launceston (quite a few families did), to northwest coast, just past Burnie, which is about two hours’ drive west from Launceston. We had a farm there. We went for awhile to this church that has separated from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, through Pastor Turno. What was that all about? That was all about money—not properly sustaining the ministers when they didn’t agree with them. You have to remember, these were just all new people, and as soon as something didn’t work out for them, they just up and out. We could never understand it. They even at one time said to us, “Well, why didn’t you just get out?” But now, looking back, that is very typical of
new converts. They have no accountability like you have here in this little church.

Then we called Pastor Fisk, through help from the Protestant Reformed. And then there was a Miss Martin. She lived in Launceston. She went there for the church. She was disillusioned about it all, because it didn't go well there for a long time. She came and visited us on the farm, and she said to me, “Do you get the Standard Bearer?” I said, “Well, we used to, but we don’t know how to get that.” She said, “Oh, I’ll get it for you.” So she got us back on the Standard Bearer and Beacon Lights. On the back of the Standard Bearer there was a whole series of Gideon sermons by Prof. Engelsma, Rev. Engelsma at that time. So we ordered [the tapes]. What I liked about it, there was no singing or anything on it, and they were an hour long. We were only used to thirty minutes or twenty-five minutes. Our elders did a lot. We had Rev. Fisk there for four years, and then he left. We had elders come to the pulpit from Launceston because we didn’t have a consistory ourselves. We had John Driscoll and then another elder from Launceston that made up the consistory. Then John Driscoll was put down from office through apostasy. So that was another breakdown. We got back on the Standard Bearer, and the next one I ordered was the whole series on the Lord’s Prayer, by Rev. David Engelsma. And then Saturday night we had a phone call from Launceston, from the elder, who said, “I can’t make it tomorrow, can you do something else.” I answered the phone, and Nick was out on the farm. I said, “Well, I just got these sermons this week from Rev. Engelsma. Can we use one of them?” And he said, “Yes, go right ahead.” So we sat in church and listened to “Our Father which art in heaven,” the first one on the Lord’s Prayer. And you could drop a pin. Everybody listened the whole hour. That was a long time for people that are only used to half-hour. And they said, “We want more of this.” So that’s how we started to play the Protestant Reformed [tapes].

To be continued...

Convention Discussion Outline Jacob Maatman

EFFECTIVE PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Read Psalm 119:97–104. In almost every verse of this psalm the psalmist speaks of God’s word, law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, or judgments. But these words are not limited to the ten commandments, although they are certainly included. Rather, in this psalm the psalmist praises God’s word—the Holy Scriptures. For us, who live in the New Testament, all of these words stand for God’s word from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

Consider the psalmist’s devotion to the study of the Bible: “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (vs. 97), “…thy testimonies are my meditation” (vs. 99). He hid God’s word in his heart (vs. 11) and said, “I will not forget thy word” (vs. 16). God’s word was delightful to him (vs. 103); it was the rejoicing of his heart (vs. 111). In sum, the psalmist loved to study God’s word. Do we love to do the same?

Luther said, “The devil is a greater rascal than you think he is. You do as yet not know what sort of fellow he is and what a desperate rogue you are. His definite design is to get you tired of the Word and in this way to draw you away from it. This is his aim.” Alas, how often are we drawn away from it, whether by the devil, the world, or our own flesh! How often do we grow tired of reading and studying God’s word on our own!

But this is God’s word—God’s word to us. How shall we not then read it? This is God’s word to us as a body, as a church. And, this is God’s word to us as individuals. We each, personally, stand in a covenant relationship with our God and Father. He has made us his sons and daughters. What child neglects his father’s word to him? No, the child who loves his father listens to him when he speaks. Our Father has spoken to us in his word. Let us hear Him, by studying the Bible.

Beginning question
1. What are some challenges when it comes to personally studying the Bible, both challenges from within and challenges from without?

The need for personal Bible study
2. Why do we study the Bible? Why do we need to study the Bible, personally?
3. Think about the connection between our physical health and physical food and drink. God
has appointed food and drink to be the means whereby we are nourished physically. What happens to a man who neglects to eat and drink? Apply these thoughts to our spiritual health, to our faith, and to the study of the Bible. How is it that studying God’s word is a means that God uses to strengthen our faith? Consult John 5:39 and Luke 24:27.

4. Is personal Bible study all about us? What is a purpose of personal Bible study that we too easily overlook? Consider Psalm 86:12.

5. In Psalm 143:10 we read, “Teach me to do thy will.” What is the importance of personal Bible study for Christian living?

The method of personal Bible study

6. The topic of the discussion is effective personal Bible study. What are some ineffective ways of studying the Bible?

7. What is the difference between reading scripture and reading scripture with understanding? What are some ways to study the Bible with greater understanding? What does it mean that scripture interprets scripture? How can the context help us understand a passage?


9. Some practical matters to consider are the time, place, and plan of personal Bible study, as well as length of passage. Discuss these and other practical matters.

10. When we study the Bible personally, it is necessary to apply what we are reading to ourselves. What does this mean?

11. Luther said, “He who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it; then he finds life eternal without fail.” Discuss the importance of finding Christ in personal Bible study in light of Jesus’ statement in Luke 24:27.

12. In John 6:45 we read, “And they shall be all taught of God.” In Psalm 119, the psalmist prays to God, “Teach me,” nine times, and prays, “Give me understanding,” five times. What does this tell us? On whom must we depend in our personal Bible study? Discuss the connection between personal Bible study, prayer, and the Holy Spirit.

The blessing of personal Bible study

13. Discuss the blessing of personal Bible study in connection with John 17:3.

14. Revisit #3, and now discuss the blessing of personal Bible study.

15. Discuss the blessing of personal Bible study in light of 1 Timothy 6:3.

16. Discuss the blessing of personal Bible study in light of 2 Timothy 3:16.

17. What is the blessing of personal Bible study pointed out in Psalm 119:97-104?

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Convention Discussion Outline Matthew Kortus

**PRAYING IN HARMONY WITH GOD’S WILL**

1 John 5:14–15 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

Scripture teaches that God hears and answers prayer. But does that mean that we can ask God for whatever we want and expect to receive it? Of course not. 1 John 5:14 provides an important qualification: if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. But that raises more questions: What is God’s will? And how do we pray according to his will?

Regarding God’s will, it is necessary to distinguish between the will of God’s decree and the will of God’s command. Doing this does not mean that God has two wills; God has one will. Nevertheless, scripture uses the word will to refer to both God’s decrees and his commands.

For example, Ephesians 1:5 refers to the will of God’s decree: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,
accordance to the good pleasure of his will.” God wills (decrees) everything that happens in our lives. In other words, he sovereignly determines the whole course of our lives. The will of God's decree includes all that has happened in history and all that God will still accomplish.

In contrast, Matthew 7:21 refers to the will of God's command: “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.” Here, God's will refers to what we ought to do as men and women. God's commands reveal to us his will for how to live. For example, the Ten Commandments are a part of the will of God's command.

The Meaning
1. God hears and answers our prayers when we pray according to his will, that is, when we pray in harmony with his will. Can we know the will of God's command? If so, how? What does it mean to pray in harmony with the will of God's command?
2. Suppose a young Israelite man intended to marry a pagan woman. He then prayed that God would bless his marriage. Could he expect God to hear and answer his prayer? Why or why not? See Nehemiah 13:23–31. How does this apply to us today?
3. In addition to praying in harmony with the will of God's command, we must also pray in harmony with the will of his decree. But, can we ever know the will of God's decree? How can we be guided by God's counsel as Psalm 73:24 states?
4. 2 Samuel 12:16 indicates that David prayed for his sick son. Did he know God's will as he prayed? How did the will of God's decree influence his prayers? Read through verse 23 of the chapter.

The Method
5. How might you use scripture reading to make your prayers more in harmony with God's will?
6. Can we use the Lord's Prayer to pray in harmony with God's will? What about the promises of God in Scripture?
7. It is proper and good to pray about things such as a dating relationship, a potential job, and college plans. How might you pray in harmony with God's will when seeking direction concerning these things? In what ways does God reveal his will for the future?

The Blessings
8. What are some of the blessings of praying in harmony with God's will?
9. How will the truth of 1 John 5:14-15 impact your prayer life?

Idolatry Jennifer Knott

MIRRORS, THOUGHTS, AND A GOLDEN CALF

Remember the story of the golden calf and the people of Israel? Exodus 32 tells us how the people of Israel became impatient waiting for Moses to come back down Mount Sinai. They wanted a god they could see, so Aaron had them melt their gold and make a calf. They worshipped this calf by singing and dancing and burning offerings to it (vv 6, 18–19). As a child, I remember being appalled by the actions of the Israelites; after all, had not God just delivered them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians? And now they were worshipping an idol—worshipping something other than the one, true God, all the while Moses was on the mountain with God? Being shocked at their actions was a right response. However, now as an adult, and especially as a woman, I realize that while I do not worship a golden calf, I worship many idols, many things that take the place of my worshipping God, especially those connected to what I look like and what I wear.

Standing in the checkout line at Meijer, I see on the magazines the airbrushed celebrities wearing the latest designers, who are supposed to be my ideal for what to look like. When I turn on the television, I see advertisements for weight loss, for fitness regimes, and for food, all of which are supposed to encourage me to be healthy, and I see
When I open social media, I see articles about what we look like takes center stage, so to speak, what I can physically see: what the world around God and what he has done for me, I think about me. Please note here that I am not saying being healthy is, there will your heart be also.” Another ouch. If I think only of myself and what I look like, or be focused only on what I wear, that will be where my heart is, not where it should be: seeking the kingdom of God FIRST (v. 33).

In order to seek the kingdom of God first, I obviously cannot think about myself. What then should I think of? Philippians 4:8 answers that: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” The result of thinking of that instead of myself? Peace (v. 9) and contentment (v. 11). That peace and contentment do not come from being super skinny or fit or wearing the latest designer clothing; it comes from thinking on God and his word. What a comfort!

Being healthy and dressing well are not bad things. But when I stand in front of my mirror and think only about what I look like or how I am dressed, I am no different from the Israelites begging Aaron for an idol they can see. Neither they nor I are seeking first the kingdom of God; we are/were seeking our own happiness. Being aware of this idolatry in my life makes me want to work that much harder to remove it. To do that, of course, I need to be in the word and in constant communication with the author of that word. My whole goal is really summed up in Proverbs 31:30: “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” I pray for the grace to be that kind of woman, and I pray for you to be that kind of young person.

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Judgment for the Oppressed
Psalm 103:6 declares, “The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.” And in Isaiah 1:16–17 Jehovah commands his people, “Cease to do evil...learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Deuteronomy 24 is a list of laws instituted to protect the poor and the oppressed in Israel.

Consistent with that theme, verses 1–4 regulate divorce and remarriage, protecting women whose husbands carelessly put them away. The very need for such a law proved “the perverseness of that nation, which could not be restrained from dissolving a most sacred and inviolable tie. Meanwhile the [Pharisees] improperly concluded from their impunity that that was lawful, which God did not punish because of the hardness of their hearts; whereas they ought rather to have considered, agreeably to the answer of Christ, that man is not at liberty to separate those whom God hath joined together” (Calvin). Many Christians today demonstrate the same perverseness and hardness of heart regarding the sanctity of holy marriage. Are you convicted of the Bible’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage? Sing or pray Psalter #125.

Does God Care About Oxen?
Does God care about oxen? Yes, so much so that in Deuteronomy 25:4 he commands: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.” But the apostle Paul extends the principle of that command—the laborer deserves his wages (Luke 10:7)—to ministers of the gospel. “Doh God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?” (1 Cor. 9:9b–11).

Paul’s application of the law regarding oxen is instructive not only regarding your pastor—“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14)—it also teaches us how to approach all the O.T. civil and ceremonial laws, many of which may seem bizarre and fastidious to us. When considering a particular O.T. command, ask yourself, What principle is at the heart of this law, and how does that principle still apply in my life? Sing or pray Psalter #40.

A Peculiar People
We considered yesterday that although the Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws are no longer binding on God’s people, the principles that they set still apply to the Christian life. There was another reason Jehovah gave his people the commands that he did: he had chosen them to be his peculiar people. He wanted them to live differently from the wicked nations around them. Israel was to be set apart, holy: “And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath joined together” (Calvin). Many Christians today demonstrate the same perverseness and hardness of heart regarding the sanctity of holy marriage. Are you convicted of the Bible’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage? Sing or pray Psalter #125.

All the People Say “Amen”
Moses had already ordered the ceremony that was to take place on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal after Israel entered Canaan (Deut. 11). Now he lists the blessings and curses that the Levites were to read in the narrow valley that separated the two mountains, a location that acted as a natural amphitheater. Six tribes were to stand on verdant Mt. Gerizim, the mountain that represented blessing; the other six on arid Mt. Ebal, which represented cursing. Though they had heard the law before, in this ceremony Israel was given
opportunity to humbly, formally consider the repercussions of obedience and disobedience. And lest any thought he might escape the curse by avoiding incest, bestiality, or some other gross sin, the reading included this statement: “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them” (v. 26). To that all the people were to say, “Amen.”

The tribes that would stand on Mt. Gerizim were descendants of Leah and Rachel, free women, not children of their bondmaids. In Christ, Abraham’s seed, we too are children of the freewoman Sarah (see Gal. 4). “We are delivered from the law…that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6).

Sing or pray Psalter #83.

August 12  Read Deuteronomy 28

All These Curses
Deuteronomy 28 continues with the list of blessings God’s people would experience when they walked in obedience. Then Moses lists a remarkable number of curses that God would send upon the Israelites if they refused to keep his commandments. And what terrible curses they are! It’s striking to read this chapter knowing that even this lengthy list of terrible curses did not deter Israel from breaking God’s law over and over and over again. Even though God’s people haven’t entered Canaan yet, Moses even foretells their captivity.

How do we compare to Old Testament Israel? Consider with me the list of sins at the end of Romans 1: unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispering, back-biting, insolence, pride, boasting, inventing evil things, disobedience to parents, foolishness, covenant-breaking, lack of natural affection, ruthlessness, and lack of mercy. Those who do such things, scripture declares, hate God. And, though they know God’s judgement, “that they which commit such things are worthy of death,” they not only do the same, but they also take pleasure in the sins of others. Is the threat of eternal hell enough to dissuade you and me from breaking God’s law? Sing or pray Psalter #123.

August 13  Read Deuteronomy 29

The Incomprehensible Searcher of Hearts
Deuteronomy 29:18ff describe the man who turns away from Jehovah to serve idols. Like all sin, his sin originates in his proud heart. Jehovah vows he will punish that man by sending all the curses Moses had listed upon him. If the sinner didn’t experience all those curses in this life, he would in eternity, for Jehovah would “blot out his name from under heaven,” separating him, a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction, unto evil (vv. 20–21). Do we vainly imagine that there are things in our hearts that God doesn’t see or will excuse?

We are unable by searching to find out God unto perfection (Job 11:7), for, as Deuteronomy 29:29a declares, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.” But though our God is infinite and incomprehensible, he is knowable, for he has chosen to reveal himself. “Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” Why has he revealed himself? “That we may do all the words of this law.” Do our lives show forth the praise of him who has formed us for himself? (Is. 43:21) Sing or pray Psalter #212.

August 14  Read Deuteronomy 30

Choose Life
Jehovah had foretold his people’s disobedience and their subsequent captivity. Now in Deuteronomy 30 he predicts their repentance, his compassion, and their return. He promises that he will circumcise their hearts (v. 6). This “circumcision of Christ” is the work of his Spirit and distinguishes the true Israel of God: “he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart…” (Col. 2:11, Rom 2:29).

Moses then emphasizes the accessibility of God’s law. Unlike the gods of the heathen, who were shrouded in superstition and capriciousness, Jehovah had clearly revealed his will and the rewards of obedience (life) and disobedience (death). But does Moses imply that the Israelites are capable in and of themselves of keeping the law? After all, he enjoins them to “choose life.” No. Moses points to Christ and the work of his Spirit (see John 5:46). So Paul rightly applies this passage to the gospel, “the word of faith, which we preach” (Rom 10:8). Does the grace of Christ, which reconciles you freely to God through the forgiveness of your sins, also instill in you the obedience of righteousness? Sing or pray Psalter #109.

August 15  Read Deuteronomy 31

Trust Not in Man
Moses formally appoints Joshua as his successor in the first verses of Deuteronomy 31. He knows well the great burden of leading God’s people, and so he twice encourages Joshua, “Be strong and of a good courage...” (vv. 7 and 23).

Although their leader and mediator was now a different man, the Israelites would continue their journey
and enter the promised land, for the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promises do not depend on the men whom he appoints. The word that goes forth out of his mouth always accomplishes what he pleases, for the work belongs to him and to his Christ (Isa. 55:11). People of God, let’s not place our trust in pastors or teachers, authors, or speakers. No matter how gifted or godly the leaders that God gives us may be, all are sinners and “go the way of all the earth” (1 Kings 2:2). It was Christ who was crucified for us and in whose name we were baptized (1 Cor. 1:13). He is the One who will be with his people always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:20). Sing or pray Psalter #400.

August 16  Read Deuteronomy 32

The Word and Song

In Deuteronomy 30 Moses emphasized how near God’s word was to his people. How often would all the people hear that word? Once every seven years (Deut. 31:10–11). How much more accessible is God’s word to us, who have multiple Bibles in our homes (and even on our phones), the indwelling Holy Spirit, and faithful preaching twice every seven days! “If the ancient people were left without excuse, unless they kept in the right way…our stupidity must be worthy of double and triple condemnation, if we do not make progress in the Gospel, wherein God has opened all the treasures of His wisdom, as far as is sufficient for salvation” (Calvin).

How would God ensure that his people would not forget his word? Moses taught them a song, a song that would “testify against them as a witness,” a song that would not “be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed.” Most of Deuteronomy 32 is that song. Words put to music are better remembered. What songs do you teach your children? Young people, what songs fill your heads and come off your lips? You’ll remember those songs! What will they testify about you? Sing or pray Psalter #241.

August 17  Read Deuteronomy 33

Happy Israel

God appoints leaders among his people to equip them, minister to them, and edify them (Eph. 4:12–13). Moses was such a leader. He understood and meekly modeled this teaching of our Lord: “Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:43–44). It’s fitting, then, that the final thing that Moses does before he dies is pronounce a blessing over God’s people. After addressing each of the twelve tribes directly, he addresses the nation as a whole, referring to them as “Jeshurun,” the dear people of Jehovah. “None is like unto your God, Jehovah,” Moses declared. “He surrounds you with his care. His protection of you is eternal and all-encompassing, above—‘who rideth upon the heaven in thy help’—and below—’underneath are the everlasting arms.’” But all the blessings Jehovah rains upon his elect pale in comparison to the blessing of salvation. And so Moses ends with this exclamation, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD!” (v. 29).

Does the knowledge of your salvation fill you with such surpassing joy? Sing or pray Psalter #393.

August 18  Read Deuteronomy 34

By Faith Moses

Throughout scripture, Moses is associated with the law. But “the law of Moses” could justify no one, including Moses himself (Acts 13:39). As Hebrews 11 teaches, it was by faith that Moses chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:24–28). By faith he also considered the reproach of Christ more valuable than any earthly treasures. Though Moses never entered the land of Canaan, God’s just chastisement for his sin, by faith he received the greater, heavenly reward that he sought.

Moses died on Mt. Nebo and was buried there. Interestingly, Jude 1:9 notes that Michael the archangel disputed with the devil about his body. Calvin notes, “Although the cause of its concealment is not stated, still it appears to have been God’s intention to prevent superstition; for it was usual with the Jews, and it is a custom for which Christ reproves them, to kill the prophets, and then to pay reverence to their tombs (Luke 11:47). It would have, therefore, been probable that, in order to blot out the recollection of their ingratitude, they would have paid superstitious veneration to the holy prophet, and so have carried his corpse into the land, from which the sentence of God had excluded it. Timely precaution, then, was taken, lest in their inconsiderate zeal the people should attempt to subvert the decree of heaven.” Sing or pray Psalter #27.

August 19  Read Psalm 91

Israel’s Blessed Security

In Psalm 90:1 Moses declared, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place...” Psalm 91 speaks of the blessed security of those that dwell in that “secret place of the Most High.” Jehovah was his people’s shadow from the
heat of the wilderness and the fortress to whom they ran when under attack. He saved them from the traps of their enemies and from “the noisome pestilence,” that is, deadly or destructive disease. In recalling Jehovah’s great goodness to Israel, the prophet Isaiah would write, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Is. 63:9).

Psalm 91 doesn’t teach that no harm will ever come to God’s people. Rather, it teaches that Jehovah is always with his people in trouble (v. 15). Just as God delivered the Israelites from bondage, sustained them in the wilderness, and gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, so he has redeemed us, will shepherd us through this valley of tears, and will usher us into the heavenly Canaan. Do you rely on him so entirely that you “have no doubt but he will…make whatever evils he sends upon me…turn out to my advantage”? (HC, LD 9). Sing or pray Psalter #163.

August 20 Read Joshua 1
Day and Night
In Joshua 1 Jehovah repeatedly encourages Joshua with the same words Moses twice used in Deut. 31. To Joshua belongs the daunting task of leading Israel into the promised land and engaging in battle “seven nations greater and mightier than thou” (Deut. 7:1). What will ensure his success? Not the size of his army; not his own military expertise: only his obedience of God’s law. He had to be strong and courageous to “observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.” And what would ensure his obedience? Continual meditation: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Fellow Christian, we are daily engaged in an epic battle against “the rulers of the darkness of this world” and “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Do you ready yourself to fight with regular mediation on God’s word? Sing or pray Psalter #71.

August 21 Read Joshua 2
By Faith Rahab
Forty years earlier, Joshua had been one of the twelve spies whom Moses had sent to Canaan. Along with Caleb, he had given a faithful report: “The land…is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us” (Num. 14:7-8). Now, like Moses before him, Joshua sends spies to Canaan, but he sends only two, and he directs them to a specific city: Jericho.

There the spies encounter a prostitute named Rahab. The question inevitably arises: Was Rahab’s lie justified? No. As is common throughout scripture, this historical narrative includes no moral commentary. Elsewhere God’s word teaches, “He that speaketh lies shall perish,” and “A righteous man hateth lying” (Prov. 19:9 and 13:5). Lying is a deed of the old man, which we must put off (Col. 3:9–10). Rahab was not justified by her works—not by lying, nor by hiding the spies—but by faith. Her faith, a gift of God, compelled her to receive the spies with peace and make this confession, “The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath” (v. 11). Sing or pray Psalter #112.

August 22 Read Joshua 3
Go After It
After the spies return, Joshua orders the people to relocate to the swollen banks of the Jordan River. Once the entire camp has relocated, “the officers” instruct them regarding their crossing: when they see the priests bearing the ark, they are to reverently “go after it.” That’s it. At a later time, Joshua will explain what will happen when the priests enter Jordan, but first all he says is, “Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (v. 5). Israel had to follow in faith, for they had “not passed this way heretofore” (v. 4). Likewise, we know not what will be on the morrow. Let’s follow the LORD in faith, as Israel did.

Later, Joshua details the miracle that Jehovah will perform. This parting of the waters of Jordan serves as an earnest of their possession of the land. “And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites…” (v. 10). We’ve also been given an earnest of our salvation: Christ’s Holy Spirit. By that Spirit we walk by faith, not by sight, and confess, “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Ps. 138:8a). Sing or pray Psalter #307.

August 23 Read Joshua 4
What Mean These Stones?
In Joshua 3:12, Joshua had commanded that each of the twelve tribes select a man. In Joshua 4 we discover
why. These twelve men would each carry a stone from the riverbed to its bank. There they would use the stones to erect a monument, a sign that God himself commanded. The monument would attest to Jehovah’s faithfulness in parting the Jordan River, though the stones themselves could not speak: that would be the duty of the parents. Joshua also set up a corresponding monument in the middle of the riverbed. The instruction of the children may have gone like this: “Dad, what is this tower of stones?” “Well, son, do you see the those few stones over there, in the middle of the Jordan?” “Yes, I think so.” “Those stones are the top of a monument that’s identical to this one. At that spot the priests stood with the ark of the covenant while the rest of us crossed over on dry land.”

This instruction of the children had a two-fold purpose (v. 24). First, “That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty.” And second, “That ye might fear the LORD your God forever.”

Sing or pray Psalter #212.

Read Joshua 5

August 25

The Battle of Jericho

Joshua 6 begins with a parenthetical statement, as it were: “Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.” Hebrews 11:31 describes the inhabitants of the city as “them that believed not.” So they were not permitted to dwell in the land of rest, but perished.

The captain of the Lord’s host instructed Joshua regarding the battle with Jericho. Israel’s remarkable victory would clearly demonstrate that “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people” (Ps. 3:8). Matthew Henry succinctly summarizes the battle this way: “Wherever the ark went, the people attended it. God’s ministers, by the trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the followers of Christ in their spiritual warfare. As promised deliverances must be expected in God’s way, so they must be expected in his time. At last the people were to shout: they did so, and the walls fell. This was a shout of faith; they believed the walls of Jericho would fall. It was a shout of prayer; they cry to Heaven for help, and help came.”

Sing or pray Psalter #5.

Read Joshua 6

August 26

Lust, Sin, Death

Joshua 7:1 contains a spoiler alert: Jehovah was angry with Israel, for one of them—a man named Achan—had trespassed, taking from Jericho that which God had reserved for himself alone. Achan’s sin is typical of all sin. It began as lust in his heart. That lust was fueled by his eyes. “When I saw,” Achan confessed, “then I coveted” (v. 21). Immediately those things that Achan thought would give him pleasure burdened his conscience: he furtively dug a hole beneath his tent and buried them there, evidently resolving to enjoy them after some time had passed. Achan’s sin affected many. The family members who were complicit in his crime died with him, thirty-six men who were oblivious to his trespass died in battle with Ai, and all the nation of Israel suffered reproach, along with the great name of Jehovah God.

In summary, sin begins as lust. That lust is fueled by the eyes. The sin brought forth burdens the soul, affects many, even some who know nothing about it, and brings reproach upon the people of God and the name of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Are we conscious of these things when we’re tempted to sin? Sing or pray Psalter #325.
**August 27** Read Joshua 8

The Ambush and an Altar
Israel dealt with Achan’s sin, and Jehovah turned from his fierce anger. Now Israel must engage Ai in battle again, but they are fearful. Knowing this, Jehovah graciously commands an attack by way of ambush, rather than a full-front assault, and, as further incentive, he promises his people the spoil. Inevitably the question arises, “Is an ambush consistent with Jehovah’s righteous character?” Calvin comments that this question “originates in gross ignorance…Those are considered the best commanders who accomplish more by art and counsel than by mere violence…If war, then, is lawful, it is beyond all controversy that the usual methods of conquering may be lawfully employed.” Joshua obediently demonstrates that he trusts in God, not his own skill as a warrior, as he stands with his spear upraised for the duration of the conquest.

Then Joshua obeys the command to build an altar and read the law at the feet of Mts. Ebal and Gerizim (see Deut. 11 and 27). Why must the altar be constructed of unhewn stones? Some conjecture that “the hand and industry of men” corrupt the worship of God. Calvin states that “the divine intention simply was to prohibit the perpetuity of altars.” Why didn’t God want this altar to last? Because he would shortly have all men worship him on the one altar in Jerusalem, the altar that pointed to the one sacrifice of our Lord. Sing or pray Psalter #43.

**August 28** Read Joshua 9

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding
The high priest in Israel wore in the breastplate the Urim and Thummim, which were used to determine God’s will. When Moses publicly confirmed Joshua as his successor, Jehovah had said, “[Joshua] shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in…” (Num. 27:21). In stark contrast to that declaration, Joshua 9:14 states, “And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.” The evidence that the Gibeonites presented seemed consistent with their story, so Joshua and the princes made a league with them without consulting Jehovah through the high priest.

What decision(s) do you face at present? Have you gone to Jehovah in prayer about it? Have you consulted his faithful guide, the holy scriptures? Do so, and do not follow the roads signs of your own sight, your own intellect, or evidence presented by the world. Sing or pray Psalter #232.

**August 29** Read Joshua 10

Jehovah’s Victory
Commentator Matthew Henry perceptively applies the first verse of Joshua 10 this way: “When sinners leave the service of Satan and the friendship of the world, that they make peace with God and join Israel, they must not marvel if the world hate them, if their former friends become foes. By such methods Satan discourages many who are convinced of their danger, and almost persuaded to be Christians, but fear the cross. These things should quicken us to apply to God for protection, help, and deliverance.”

Jehovah assured Joshua that he would have the victory over the five kings even before he went to fight. (v. 8). Calvin notes, “Notice that Joshua did not abuse the divine promise by making it an excuse for sluggishness.” We’ve also been assured that we have the victory over the devil, the world, and our sinful selves. That victory has been won for us by Christ, who enlists all of creation on his side. That doctrine should not make us careless and profane, but compel us to exert ourselves with greater zeal. Is that the thankful way in which you live the Christian life? Sing or pray Psalter #264.

**August 30** Read Joshua 11

War and Rest
Jehovah had given his people great victories at Jericho and Ai and over the five kings. Those conquests served to encourage them, for an even greater conflict with a confederacy of kings from northern Canaan loomed. This enemy was “as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many” (v. 4). Jehovah again encourages Joshua and assures him of the victory. (Do you look to him daily for the same assurance?) In some of their conflicts, Jehovah gave his people the victory almost immediately. Against other enemies, they “made war a long time” (v. 18). Either way, God was on their side, and even the duration of the fight served his people’s good. He fulfilled the promise recorded in Deut. 7:22: “And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little…”

“And the land rested from war” (v. 23). “It ended not in a peace with the Canaanites, that was forbidden, but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, remaining for the people of God, into which
they shall enter, when their warfare is accomplished” (Henry). Sing or pray Psalter #121.

August 31  Read Joshua 12

Destroy the Canaanites

Joshua 12 summarizes Israel’s battles. It first mentions Sihon and Og, the mighty kings that Israel defeated before entering Canaan, and then lists 31 kings who ruled west of the Jordan River. Let’s remind ourselves why God used his people to execute judgment on these kings and their subjects. The Canaanites reveled in sexual immorality (see Lev 18). They practiced every abomination that Jehovah hates, including child sacrifice (see Deut. 12:29-32). With the exception of Gibeon, they did not seek to make peace with God’s people but furiously came against them in battle, “for it was of the LORD to harden their hearts” (Josh. 11:20). “It now appears how perfectly consistent the two things are. The Lord commanded Moses to destroy the nations whom he had doomed to destruction; and he accordingly opened a way for his own decree when he hardened the reprobate...The will of God...must be regarded as the principal cause” (Calvin).

How fruitful Canaan must have been, for 31 kingdoms to cluster there! Yet today Palestine is desert country. That’s a testimony, too, to the truth of Jehovah’s word. He had vowed that if Israel forsook his covenant, he would cast them also out of the land and make it desolate (See Deut. 29:23ff). Sing or pray Psalter #392.

September 1  Read Joshua 13

An Inheritance Reserved

The book of Joshua consists of four sections. Chapters 1–5 record the crossing of the Jordan and entrance into Canaan. Chapters 6–12 record Israel’s battles with the Canaanites. The third section, which lists the division of the land, begins in chapter 13. (The final two chapters of the book comprise the fourth section and record Joshua’s final words and death.) Joshua is old, and much of the land must still be conquered. Still, Jehovah commands that the land be allotted among the tribes, which “must therefore have been to them an earnest of certain possession so as to keep them always in readiness for it” (Calvin).

Our Lord told us that he must go away to prepare our place in Father’s house (John 14:1-3). As certainly as he has gone away, so certainly will he come again. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident...” and “wherefore we labour...” (2 Cor. 5:1-9). Sing or pray Psalter #214.

September 2  Read Joshua 14

Caleb’s Inheritance

By lot Jehovah God himself assigned each of the tribes their inheritance. Similarly, he’s assigned you and I our lots in this earthly life and in his heavenly kingdom. Are we content with our portions? They’ve been allotted to us “by the only wise and righteous God,” who “knows what is best for us, and all we have is more than we deserve” (Matthew Henry).

Caleb’s inheritance had been promised him years before. When the ten faithless spies had declared, “The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there,” Caleb objected, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:28, 30). Now, at long last, he is rewarded for his steadfast trust in Jehovah. Though an old man, he would shortly fight and defeat the Anakim in the confidence that just as God had preserved him in the wilderness, so he would be faithful to give him the mountain he had promised for his possession. Sing or pray Psalter #30.

September 3  Read Joshua 15

Home

As a child I enjoyed looking at the glossy, colorful maps in the back of my Bible, but reading the description of each tribe’s portion and trying to picture its location is rather difficult. Consider, however, what it would be like to be among those waiting to learn where their inheritance would be. They were realizing the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise to Abraham: “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession...” (Gen. 17:8). How glad you and I are to arrive home at the end of a long, tiring trip! For centuries Abraham’s children had been living as strangers, slaves, and wilderness wanderers, but soon they would all have a place to call home! Can you imagine their excitement? Their delight pictures in a small way the joy that we will experience when we arrive at our eternal home. Are our hearts filled with longing for that home? Sing or pray Psalter #247.
So Shalt Thou Dwell Within the Land

Joshua 16 ends with this sad commentary on the tribe of Ephraim: “And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.” The verse is strikingly like the final verse of the previous chapter: “As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day” (see also Josh. 17:12–13). God’s people deliberately disobeyed his command to “utterly destroy...the Canaanites...and the Jebusites” (Deut. 20:17). As Jehovah predicted, those Canaanites taught them “to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods” (v. 18). And, consequently, Israel would also experience God’s judgement.

God’s people had to trust and obey to inherit the land. Again and again they fail to do those things. Their failure highlights their need for the One who would not only trust Jehovah perfectly and keep his law, but fulfill it. He is the only way to enter the heavenly Canaan, there to dwell forever. Sing or pray Psalter #100.

The Daughters of Zelophehad Rewarded

In Numbers 27 the daughters of Zelophehad requested of Moses the portion of the land of Canaan that would have belonged to their father, who had died without a son. Now their persistence and patience are rewarded, and they are given an inheritance among the tribe of Manasseh, to which they belonged. Matthew Henry, so adept at finding allegories in the scripture, comments, “Those who take care in the wilderness of this world, to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light, will have the comfort of it in the other world; while those who neglect it now, will lose it for ever. Lord, teach us here to believe and obey, and give us an inheritance among thy saints, in glory everlasting” (Henry).

As you journey through the wilderness of this world, do you take care to lay up your treasures in the heavenly inheritance that awaits? Sing or pray Psalter #203.

The Violent Take it by Force

Most of the Israelites had been living in tents all their lives. Now, they’ve each been assigned a place to call home. But some must still fight to conquer their allotted portion, so they put it off. Joshua reproves their lethargy.

In Matthew 11:12 our Lord Jesus said, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” That text teaches that the elect do not receive the grace that has been given them with lethargy but with “vehement impetuosity.” “Let us also learn from these words, what is the true nature and operation of faith. It leads men not only to give cold and indifferent assent when God speaks, but to cherish warm affection towards Him, and to rush forward as it were with a violent struggle” (Calvin). To the lukewarm church at Laodicea the Lord commanded, “Be zealous...and repent” (Rev. 3:19). Do we heed that command? Sing or pray Psalter #71.

Joshua’s Inheritance

Caleb was not the only faithful spy that Moses sent out. Joshua, too, had given a faithful report, and now, at long last, he also receives his inheritance. Though he was their God-appointed leader, Joshua waited until all the tribes had received their portion before he requested his own inheritance. And even then, Joshua requested a humble portion for himself. His lack of both ambition and covetousness serves as an example for all of us who are leaders, from parents to pastors. We must seek the common good of those we serve before our own private advantage.

Joshua was not the only one who set forth such an example. “Our Lord Jesus came and dwelt on earth, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for man, yet himself not having where to lay his head; for Christ pleased not himself. Nor would he enter upon his inheritance, till by his obedience to death he secured the eternal inheritance for all his people; nor will he account his own glory completed, till every ransomed sinner is put in possession of his heavenly rest” (Henry). Sing or pray Psalter #305.
God’s church is a catholic or universal church in every nation, tribe and tongue of the earth. Each nation has its particular sins and evil culture. God calls us all to separate ourselves from those things in our particular lands which are in rebellion against his word. To each part of his church (in America, in the Philippines, and wherever else) God extends the call to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).

By the power of that call in the preaching of the gospel and by the power of God’s almighty, sovereign grace, we “come out.” But still the church in this world is always a remnant, “as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city” (Isa. 1:8). Therefore God in his grace also uses other means to empower us to be separate. Because the church is a mere remnant battling the wickedness in whatever land she has her existence, God also gives us the help and encouragement of true, fellow believers wherever they may be in the world.

As Paul requested the Thessalonians to pray for him and his fellow preachers of the gospel, so the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines request the prayers of the PRC in America, also the young people of the PRCA. Because we are one in the Reformed faith, we can mutually encourage each other and pray for each other. To help you do that more knowledgeably, this article hopes to supply you with a deeper knowledge of the churches and mission work in the Philippines, and of the particular culture, circumstances, and struggles in which God has seen fit to place this part of his church.

There are presently three congregations in the Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines: Berean Protestant Reformed Church, Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church, and the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan.

Many of the original members of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church came from the World Wide Church of God, a cult that denied the Trinity and also promoted Old Testament practices, such as a seventh day sabbath and the Old Testament feasts. God’s effective word called them out of that and brought them along a pathway directed by him to the Reformed truth as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity. Rev. Vernon Ibe is the pastor of the Berean PRC which now numbers 25 families. The church has approximately 15–20 young people and young adults.

The Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church has its background in the Foursquare Gospel Church, which is an Arminian and Pentecostal denomination. Again, God in his sovereign grace and according to his way and time for them, called them out of that denomination. The congregation previously numbered in the hundreds, but as it began and continued on the path of reformation under the preaching of Rev. Leovy Trinidad, many of those members fell away. The congregation now has 13 families, with approximately 10 young people and young adults.

The Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan began as a congregation in the Jesus Our Hope for the Nations Ministries denomination. These are Pentecostal and Arminian churches. By various means, God brought PRCB’s pastor, Rev. John Flores, to see the truth, and as he learned he also taught his congregation the Reformed faith. According to God’s providence they eventually left their previous denomination, also losing many members along the way, and became a Reformed church. They number 17 families, with approximately 15 young people.

Rev. Daniel Kleyn and the other pastors and office bearers of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP) are involved in the denominational work of these three churches.

Currently the Classis of the PRCP is working toward establishing sister church relations with the PRCA.

* Pray that God will prosper this process, so that the power of the truth to unite Christ’s church throughout the world may be demonstrated.

The Classis of the PRCP is also working toward the goal of having their own seminary in Southeast Asia.

* Pray that God will give us grace not to “despise the day of small things,” as there are already small steps being taken to obtain this goal, according to his will.

* Pray that God will direct committed young men
to become ministers of the gospel in the churches here.

The churches in the PRCP are small in size. Many in them are new to the Reformed faith. Sometimes the number of men available for office is limited.

* Pray for wisdom for the current office bearers.
* Pray that God will continue to give godly, faithful men to the PRCP to serve in the offices of elder and deacon, so that God’s people may be fed in the green pastures of his word and may dwell in peace and safety in the congregations.

In the Philippine culture, as in North America, the structure of the family is under attack. In America, divorces and remarriages are the order of the day. While in the Philippines divorce itself is not prominent (because of the presence of the Roman Catholic Church) there are still many broken marriages, separated couples, and couples living together without marriage. A problem unique to the country of the Philippines is that in many marriages one or the other spouse works overseas to supply the financial needs of the family. This can have devastating effects on marriages and on the family and therefore, if practiced in the church, is also a danger to the church.

* Pray that the families of God’s people here may be aware of the wrong practices in their culture and may stand firm against the devil's onslaughts in this regard. Pray that God will give them grace to maintain godly marriages and homes.

As young people in the PRC in America, whose families have been in the church for generations, we can take it for granted that our families are united as one in the church, and that our parents (and grandparents) are godly examples to us. But on the mission field it is often the case that God has called one or two family members out of darkness into his marvelous light, but not others.

* Pray for the children and young people who do not have godly parents to guide them, that they may stand firm.
* Pray for the men and women whose spouses are unbelieving, that they may have the grace to be an example of Christian piety to their unbelieving spouses, and remain diligent in teaching their children the ways of God.
* Pray that God will convert the unbelieving spouses, if it is his will.
* Pray that God will help the fathers to be faithful, strong leaders of the home, that mothers may train up their children in the fear of the Lord, and that children learn the ways of God from a young age.

As young people yourselves you can have a special prayer for the PRCP young people united to you by faith:

* that you and they stand against the temptations of an evil world.
* that you and they find godly mates, united with you in the truth of God’s word.
* that you and they establish solid Christian homes and marriages that serve, under God’s blessing, the continuation of the covenant in the generations to come.
* that you and they prepare yourselves for the time when you will be the leaders, fathers, and mothers in God’s church.

Besides the work with and of the PRCP federation, the PRC in America is pursuing a lot of other mission work in the Philippines. We have a number of other groups that we are working with, so that, if it is God's will, they may one day become organized into congregations and join the federation of the PRCP.

On the mission field there is so much that needs to be taught. The Reformed faith is all-encompassing. There is not one area of our lives that it does not touch. God's word rules (or ought to rule!) not only what we believe, but also all of our church life, all of our family life, all of our work, school, and pleasure. New converts (and we too!) need to be taught to “stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein” so that they (and we) may “find rest for our souls” (Jer. 6:16).

* Pray for wisdom for Rev. Kleyn in teaching these things, that they may be taught in a timely manner, in the right order, and in the right way.

Provident Christian Church in Manila is a group started by a man from the Brethren denomination 24 years ago. By means of Reformed men on the internet and also a Reformed Baptist pastor who assisted them for a while, God has led them on a pathway toward Reformed and continuing reformation. We have been working with them for the past three years. They have a deep love for the doctrines of TULIP and ask many questions. The group numbers 40–45 members, including also a good number of young people and young adults.

* Pray for the members of Provident, that they, with us, continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—in the Reformed truth and life.

Once a month we travel to Bacolod City, where
Rev. Kleyn teaches Reformed doctrine to a group of 15–20 people. The main contact in the group there is a family we have known for many years. They were members of a Reformed Church in Bacolod, but by God’s grace, see many wrong practices and beliefs in that church. Their heart’s desire is that a Protestant Reformed Church may be started in Bacolod.

* Pray, that the Lord will add to the group there “such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47)—men and families who are committed to the way of truth and eager to learn.

Rev. Kleyn also teaches classes to two different groups of pastors, one in Metro Manila, the other in Sipalay on the island of Negros.

There are many other contacts who buy our books, request occasional speaking or preaching, and others who keep in touch via email. There are also outreach groups that the congregations in the PRC in the Philippines are working with.

* Pray that the work in all these places and groups may prosper under the Lord’s guidance and according to his will.

* And pray for another missionary, or even two, if it is God’s will. The PRC in America has been calling for a second missionary for 1½ years now. The need is urgent and the work great. Pray that God will lay it on the heart of a man to come and help spread the gospel in this part of the world.

Brethren, pray for us! Pray that God’s will may be done, that his cause may be advanced, and that his kingdom may come in our hearts, in the church, and on the mission field until the day of our Lord Jesus’ return. Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

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Sharon is married to Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary to the Philippines

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**Church News Melinda Bleyenberg**

**BAPTISMS**

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Mark 10:14

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Lauren Jay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Laurie DeJong—Crete, IL

Megan Sue and Marci Jeana, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Jessica Kamminga—Georgetown, MI

Elijah Levi, son of Mr. & Mrs. Robbi & Rachel Velte—Georgetown, MI

Miles Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Emily Kuiper—Georgetown, MI

Brody Craig, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig & Angela Feenstra—Grace, MI

Anson Mitchell, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig & Angela Feenstra—Grace, MI

Claire Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Stefan & Kaley Bodbyl—Hudsonville, MI

Remi Jade, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy & Lisa Kortering—Hudsonville, MI

Jonas Barnabas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Samuel & Anganeta Watterson—Limerick, Ireland/Ballymena, N Ireland

Quinley Taye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dylan & Lisa Hoekstra—Loveland, CO

Oliver Edwin and Owen Steven, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Austin & Lisa Potjer—Redlands, CA

Henry Allen and Lillie Sue, twins of Mr. & Mrs. Keith & Pam Wynia—Sioux Falls, SD

**CONFESSIONS OF FAITH**

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32

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

Kelsie Kleyn—Byron Center, MI

Kate Lubbers, Joel Moore—Crete, IL

Daniel Kuiper—Edgerton, MN

Kent Ferguson, Sam Huizing, Rebecca Marcus—Edmonton, AB, Canada

Kennedy Kaptein, Abigail Miedema—Georgetown, MI

Trevor DeVries, Kaelyn Allison—Redlands, CA

**MARRIAGES**

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

Mr. Daniel Gritters and Miss Amber Scholten—Byron Center, MI

Mr. Joel Kryscheld & Miss Caitlyn Bruinsma—Peace, IL

Mr. Ryan Gritters and Miss Hannah Spiersma—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Gerrit TerAvest and Miss Victoria DeYoung—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Tunis VanBaren and Miss Kayla Kooima—Randolph, WI
Once three debtors were put into prison because they owed the king a lot of money and couldn't pay.

A man marched to the cell of the first debtor and said, “I have paid part of your debt, but you still have to pay the rest of it.”

The first debtor waved at the dark prison cell around him. “How am I supposed to work off my debt in here? I can't earn money while in prison.”

And because he couldn't earn any more money to pay off the rest of his debt, the first debtor stayed in prison.

A man shuffled to the cell of the second debtor, held up a bag of coins, and said, “I have some money here, and I would be willing to pay your debt. I think I have enough. All you have to do is open the door to your cell. I don’t want to force you into anything.”

The second debtor waved at the dark prison cell around him. “How am I supposed to open the door to my cell? I don’t have a key.”

And because he couldn’t open the door to his cell, the second debtor stayed in prison.

A man strode to the cell of the third debtor, unlocked the door, and swung it wide open. “I have paid your debt. You are free to go.”

The third debtor shook as he tried to stand, but he was sick from his time in prison. The man picked him up, carried him from the prison, and took him into his own home. The third debtor, now a free man, was so thankful that he gladly served his rescuer for the rest of his life.

Because of sin, we are all debtors who can't pay even a part of our debt to God. Christ is the only one who can pay our debt, and he is the only source of our salvation. Reformers like Martin Luther fought for this truth that salvation is found in Christ alone.
Holding forth the word of Life
Philippians 2:15-16

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