AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1987
FAITH’S PREREQUISITE
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EDITOR'S NOTES
by David Harbach

Our secretary, Carol Kortering, has resigned her position due to conflicts with her working schedule and her business in other church responsibilities. The staff is sorry to see her leaving because Carol has been a gifted secretary who has kept on top of the many aspects of secretarial work and yet provided good insights into producing many of the issues of the Beacon Lights. We sincerely thank her for her zeal and labor of love. We also find joy in wishing her the richest of God’s blessings in her life.

Marcia Van Baren, the subscription manager for the state of Michigan has also resigned her work. She too is busy with many other responsibilities, which is usually the case with all of the staff. As she has established her new priorities her job as subscription manager must be taken off the burner. We extend our deepest appreciation for her work and pray that God will bestow His richest blessings on her. Her replacement will be Lisa Van Koeving who is already very familiar with the workings of the staff. We are thankful that Lisa is willing to be the subscription manager to the Michigan area and ask that God will continue to give His sustaining grace to her.

Our treasurer, Doug Dykstra, has informed us that there are many extra copies of the Beacon Lights from the last couple of years stacked away in his room. We have decided to provide these extras for only the cost of mailing them to you if you can use these for worthwhile causes. Of course they are free if you pick them up or make other no-cost arrangements.

We welcome to our staff of associate editors, Mr. Bruce Jabaay from Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. We have lacked a third associate editor for more than a year and look forward to many future articles from Bruce.

Rev. Heys writes about the fifth point of truth - glory - in his series on 1 Corinthians 1:30 & 31 with this issue. He is also now the third writer for the rubric, From the Pastor’s Study. We apologize for not putting his June/July article for that rubric in the last issue. His article will be found in this issue.

The secretary to the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee, Mr. Mike Rau, provided us with three essays written for this year’s theme: The calling of a minister/teacher to instruct in light of Hosea 4:6. We have included two articles for this issue; the third article will have to wait for a future issue. We thank the Scholarship Fund Committee for providing these articles.

And in keeping with the same vein, the staff is always willing to receive an article that is edifying to young people even though it is not written by one of our staff writers. Our Readers Respond, we think, is the rubric that fills in part the need for you to put down on paper your thoughts regarding important issues. Whether you have questions or answers we need to hear from you!
By night Nicodemus came to see Jesus.

It was not night simply in the natural sense of the word. Plainly Nicodemus was in the dark about certain truths.

What Nicodemus was concerned about, we are not told. We may be sure however that he was seeking light about something that troubled him greatly.

But Jesus did not even give him the opportunity to ask a question. Was He not too rude and abrupt? No! We read that Jesus answered him and this was after Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." In love Jesus answers Nicodemus.

And Jesus' answer to this statement is, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This reveals that Nicodemus, and we, must be taught about the matter of what is absolutely essential, if one is to see the kingdom of God. The incident revolves around the matter of faith. Jesus speaks of seeing and Nicodemus had spoken of knowing. Faith is both knowing and seeing the things of God's kingdom. And what faith requires is the wonder of being born again. Without it one will never see the kingdom of God at any time or to any degree.

Now that kingdom of God is elsewhere in Scripture sometimes called the kingdom of heaven. Jesus does that in His sermon on the kingdom—which is a better name for it than the sermon on the mount—and often when He began a parable. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same reality but from different points of view.

When it is called the kingdom of God, it means the kingdom brought into being by God and existing for His glory. It is the kingdom ruled by God and wherein all points to God and glorifies Him. It is the kingdom where God is all in all. As the kingdom of heaven it is this same realm from the viewpoint of its beauty and blessedness for us, because there we have intimate, covenant fellowship with God in a realm of everlasting blessedness and happiness.

Faith is a certain knowledge and an assured confidence. To have faith is to be able to see that kingdom and believe that it does really exist. It means to believe and be assured that you are a citizen in that kingdom. And even as seeing a certain beautiful mountain scene is to enjoy it, so seeing God's kingdom is knowing its beauty and wanting to live in it fully.

Now the main truth that Jesus teaches Nicodemus and us here in John 3:3 is what is required, what makes it possible for us to see that kingdom and enjoy its blessings, and then be
absolutely sure that it exists and that our citizenship is in it. The truth Jesus teaches us here is that being born again is the prerequisite to faith. Being born again, in other words, is required before there is any possibility whatsoever of having faith that there is such a kingdom, and that we belong to it. Faith is not a prerequisite to entering the kingdom. Being born again is the prerequisite to having faith that there is such a kingdom for us.

Jesus certainly is speaking here of entering into that kingdom. He means much more than merely to see it from afar. We can and do enter it while we are still on earth in this life. We enter it the moment we are born again. We do not always see it the moment we are born again. John the Baptist was born again, that is, had the life of that kingdom of heaven, even before he was born physically, or else he would not have leaped in his mother's womb when Mary, carrying the Christ-child came and greeted his mother. But we are in that kingdom the moment the life of that kingdom comes into us. In fact, if you take the two Greek words of born again, you have the verb "born" and the adverb "from above", that is, out of heaven. We have to be in the kingdom before we have faith, before we can see the kingdom and believe that there is such a kingdom.

We deal therefore here with a prerequisite that only God can fulfill. Jesus is not telling Nicodemus what he must do, but what God must do before we can see the kingdom of God. Who, of the billions of people that were born into this world came because of what they did? Which one was born into this life because he asked for it or wanted it? You cannot be a born-again Christian by asking for it. You have to be born again, or you do not want to be a citizen in it, for you cannot even see that there is such a kingdom.

Young people listen to what Jesus says and not what men like to preach. No one is saved because of conditions which he fulfills. Salvation from beginning to end is God's work. We act, enjoy salvation, praise and thank God for it. But listen to what Paul says in Romans 11:36: "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things." We give God nothing. He gives us everything that we have. Salvation from beginning to the end is His work. No one gets anything from God because he first gave something unto God. He caused our earthly hearts to beat before we were even conscious of the need for it. God is always first and never has to wait for a creature to do something.

You must hold on to this truth and preserve it in our churches in the ages to come. Our churches came into being and were set apart by God in His grace to defend and preserve this truth. Being born again, being brought into the life of His kingdom God fills the prerequisite for us to have faith and to enjoy the blessings of that kingdom through that faith. Faith is not the condition, the prerequisite for entering the kingdom. God does NOT promise every one of us that if we believe then He will save us. He has to begin salvation in us, that is, cause us to be born again, before we can believe. Jesus says that very plainly to Nicodemus. HOLD ON to that truth! Keep our churches in pure doctrine!

There can then also be no free offer to all who hear the preaching of the gospel. Those not yet born again, those in whom God has not already begun the work of salvation, cannot see
the kingdom, and therefore cannot want it. Would the all-wise God be so foolish as to offer, sincerely offer salvation to those who have no spiritual life? No man is foolish enough to offer anything to a dead man. It dishonors God to say that He does something that foolish.

Man does not help the almighty God. God has no temporary grace that comes to an end when man does not accept His offer. Read Malachi 3:6: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Except God causes spiritually dead sinners to be born again, unless He fulfills this prerequisite, these sinners cannot see the kingdom, will not want it and will not believe that there is such a kingdom.

Faith is not a prerequisite to salvation but a part of it that is God's gift to us. Look at Ephesians 2:8-10. We are saved by grace, not by works which we perform. Listen to this: "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Did you notice that we are created unto good works and thus unto faith? Our act of believing was before we performed it, ordained by God so that we would walk in it. It was not an act we created, we brought into being, we presented to God, and whereby we fulfilled a condition so that now He could do what He wanted, namely, save us.

Embrace this truth of God fulfilling the conditions, the requirements of our faith. Preserve it, by God's grace, in our churches in the years to come.

Dear Christian Friend:

Christian greetings from South Holland!

May we have the privilege and pleasure of introducing you to GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION.

There is nothing in this pamphlet which is "according to man" (Gal. 1:11, 12). It seeks to glorify God as the "author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). In contradistinction to much of present-day religion which is based on the OF MAN position, this pamphlet courageously and unashamedly proclaims the OF GOD position (Rom. 9:16); a truth which causes the heart of the believer to rejoice (Rom. 11:36), who has nothing in himself of which to boast.

Our pamphlets are distributed free of cost since this is part of the work which we as an Evangelism Committee deem a privilege to do. Our desire is to give wider distribution to it beyond the sphere of our own congregation, with the hope and prayer that "the word of God (be) increased" (Acts 6:7a).

Cordially in Christ,
THE EVANGELISM COMMITTEE
Responsibilities of Conception:

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY:
TO TRAIN SPIRITUALLY

by Mrs. Brands

Parents are called by God to train their children in the principles and practice of wisdom. Children must learn the wise way to walk in all areas of life.

No area of life is exempt from this training. Money? It must be used wisely! Friendship? It must be formed wisely! School subjects? Labor? Your future vocation? Keeping a bedroom orderly? Every area of life must be walked wisely!

Wisdom is a spiritual matter. Children are required by God to walk in wisdom before Him. Parents are required to train their children to walk in wisdom. And all of life is intrinsically spiritual. In every area of life we either walk wisely by faith and so glorify God or else walk foolishly in unbelief and exalt the devil rather than God.

To walk in wisdom is a struggle, a warfare. To train a child to walk in wisdom is doubly a warfare. Because we as Christians have two natures, our natures battle with each other. The old man wants to rebel while the new man wants to obey.

This spiritual warfare is true of the adult child of God, who has already fought the battle with sin many years. It is also true of children who have only begun the fight and must learn all about the warfare from scratch. They must learn that there is a battle, there really is!; that the battle is against Satan and his host; what the tools of the devil are; and what are his own weapons against sin and Satan.

And so, parents are required to train their children to be spiritual warriors.

Following are two short stories. They are not factual but are intended to make us think about what it means to be a Christian warrior. We must know this before we can understand how parents should be training us. Read these and decide which is the better allegory of a Christian warrior.

STORY 1: JOHN IN NIGERIA
John was an American whose parents were missionaries to the black people of Nigeria. As he grew up, he was surrounded by black people, learned their language, learned their customs, ate their food. Although he was a white child, he identified with the black children and thought of himself as black.

STORY 2: JENNIFER IN AMERICA
Jennifer was a Nigerian child whose father was an ambassador to the United States. Her mother and she accompanied him to the United States and often took part in his work as ambassador. They attended many meetings with him, met many other ambassadors and met Americans by the hundreds. They had meals with the President of the United States. But, always, they retained their Nigerian identity. They
wore the Nigerian loose robes and turbans, preferred the Nigerian beans, rice and yams, and loved best the traditional Nigerian dialect with which they had grown up. Always, their hearts were back home with their own people in the land they loved.

Now, looking at these two stories as allegories of a Christian warrior, which story best illustrates a Christian in this world?

Answer: Without question, it is the second story, of Jennifer and her parents in America! This is the picture of a Christian pilgrim.

It is true that the first story may better picture an effective missionary. To be a good missionary, a person must lay aside all cultural differences, forget the color of the skin, and identify with the people to whom he ministers. . . though never to the point of adopting new and foreign sins. John’s identification with the black people, his love of them, was a good missionary quality.

But the second story is the one which illustrates Christian warfare in this world. We as Christians live in a foreign country spiritually. Although we associate with hundreds of people, they are not like we are nor we like they. Our home is not this earth but heaven. And although a foreign language is heard by us every day, our language must be different, must be that of God’s special people. Although the world’s customs are inescapable sights, we must have customs peculiar to God’s people. While the world fishes and plays tournament ball games on Sunday, we attend church and keep the entire day holy. Whereas the world swears openly and boldly, we honor God’s Name. The world grins and winks lustfully and jokes obscenely; we keep a guard on our tongues to be holy in speech. The world mocks sin and laughs at all forms of it; we weep when we fall into sin and ask for forgiveness.

Now, none of this is natural. By nature we, like John in Nigeria, identify with the world around us and desire to be like it. But God uses His Word and Spirit to teach us to be different from the world. Within the home, He uses the training of parents in the Word and applies this by His Spirit to teach us to be different from the world around us. It’s not natural!

In what ways do our parents train us to be different, to be pilgrims?

#1. We must SEE in our parents a difference. They read different literature than the world reads (parents, what sort of books do our children most frequently find on our bookshelves and in our hands?) Our parents talk in a way different from the world even when the same topics are discussed. They believe different things. Different things are important. Even though our parents use the things of this world, it is clear that they could easily part with them also, for their hearts are in heaven with the God whom they love.

#2. And then, we must HEAR our parents teach us this difference. They must tell us how to behave as citizens of heaven, must teach us why we behave this way, must explain what we believe and why we believe it. They must know what we are doing and hear what we say and constantly discern whether we do understand and behave as citizens of heaven, giving us encouragement or rebuke and warning as we need it. Such teaching we should be eager to receive, also!

#3. And finally, when we in our natural weakness rebel and want to act like the world around us, our parents
must stop us, doing whatever is necessary to motivate us to behave like what we are, God’s children. They must TRAIN us, insisting on righteousness in every area of life. Although spiritual righteousness is always a matter of the heart, yet God uses external restraints and discipline - combined with Godly example and instruction - to work this internal motivation to righteousness.

How is such Godly training in spiritual warfare seen in everyday life? Young people, don’t ridicule your parents for every failure, because such training is difficult! Parents begin as young people themselves and have to learn how to train their children through experience. They have to struggle to know how to train you. Ask yourselves what you in a few years might do in these following situations:

**In a one-year-old: Shawn eyes Mama out of the corner of his eye as he surreptitiously drops his spoon to the side of his high chair, a deed he understands is forbidden. . .but oh, so tempting! How should the Godly mother train her little son?**

**In a four-year-old: Alyssa knows stealing is sin and doesn’t really want to steal, but when Mama is out of sight the temptation is too strong and she has to take the forbidden candy. When Mama realizes this some time later, how should she train Alyssa?**

**In a six-year-old: Jon is a first-grader and Mom wants him to do his work well and is glad when she sees him enjoying school. . .but then she realizes that he is frequently comparing himself to the other students and is developing a superior attitude. How can she work to get him to do his best without this wrong attitude?**

**In a ten-year-old: Peter has had to struggle with school ever since Kindergarten and now had developed an antagonistic attitude, refusing to study and hating even to learn his catechism. Because study is hard for him, should Mom let things slide? How can Dad and Mom show understanding and still insist that Peter do his best for God’s sake?**

**In a twelve-year-old: Mary likes the skimpy clothing of her girl friends because it is “so cute” and “popular”. If other Christian parents are allowing this clothing but Mary’s parents feel it is not consistent with the seventh commandment, can they permit her this freedom to decide and still be training her in Godliness?**

**In a fourteen-year-old: Tim believes he is mature enough to spend the evenings where and with whom he pleases, unsupervised. How will a Christian parent train a fourteen-year-old?**

**In a sixteen-year-old: Susan usually obeys her parents but has an invitation to a movie and wants to attend “just one, just once, to know what it is really all about, why it’s bad.” Should a heavenly-centered training allow this “just once”? Why or why not?**

In actual practice, spiritual training cannot exist without basic training in the fundamentals of Christian living, the “means of grace”. These basics cannot be over-emphasized because all practical areas must build on these basics. Three areas of home training are paramount here.

First, we must train in proper use of the sabbath. (I wish I could take an entire 1985 article in the STANDARD BEARER by Rev. Gritters and squeeze
it in right here!) Teaching our children to love and keep the sabbath day must include these things:

Putting enough value on the sabbath to be properly prepared for it. We should quit work on time on Saturday, get enough rest on Saturday night (and probably Friday night also), pray for God’s blessing, and greet the day with longing for it.

Emphasizing the worship services. This means we pray for the minister and office-bearers and the congregation as well as for ourselves. It means we get to church on time - not to spy on others coming in but to meditate and pray, preparing our hearts and minds for worship and listening. It includes - and oh, how vital this is! - a reverent attitude of worship in the fear of God. It includes singing thoughtfully, from the heart, mindful of each word. It includes attentive listening to the sermon (note-taking is not a bad idea.) It includes discussion of the sermon afterwards with an emphasis on believing and obeying God.

Keeping the entire day holy. There are so many proper things to do on Sunday that it takes a spiritually dull mind (yes, which we all have sometimes) to wonder “what to do” on this day. Besides church, there is catechism to teach and to learn. There is preparation for the societies, for which the week never has enough time. We should be working to develop our personal Bible study separate from the societies. There are church periodicals to read. Activities we often neglect but should work more to cultivate are singing and private prayer. And then, watching what we discuss, there should be fellowship with other saints and visiting of the sick and lonely. One form of fellowship is writing letters to fellow Christians and to our missionaries. If we really begin to value and to use Sunday properly, the unfinished activities will spill over into the evenings of the week and make us impatient for the coming sabbath!

Second, we must train in personal Scripture study and prayer. These two are inseparable. Only God’s Spirit can open our eyes to understand and apply the Word...and the first application of the Word is to pray. Either apart from the other will get nowhere.

But it takes emphasis: the parent must train the child in these things! A child may well observe a parent studying Scripture without responding by studying it himself. He may hear a parent recommend personal study but not know how to begin. A parent must work with his children to establish habits of personal Bible study and prayer. Such habits must be taught as both a responsibility and a pleasure, a joyful privilege.

Third, we must promote singing in our homes. As a denomination, our churches rightly emphasize congregational singing rather than choirs or other special music because God is glorified through congregational worship rather than entertainment of the congregation. This personal worship must be found also in our homes. Love of God must find expression in song...by all family members. When we can learn to play a musical instrument, this may be a good aid to us, but the emphasis must be not on the instrument but on singing. God is glorified as our hearts give expression to our love for Him through the words of praise.

Actually, singing is an extension of our speaking. Were a home to lack all musical ability - which is so rare I have never seen it - but if in that home God
were still adored and spoken of with reverent training of the children, then that Godly speech would overcome the absent singing. For true singing is, at root, adoration of God in language. Its value lies in its ability to aid our hearts to be lifted up to God, as well as in the value of the words which can be more easily memorized and recalled in melodic form. Take away the love of God and the value of the words, and music is void of spiritual value, a mere, empty, aesthetic achievement.

In summary, then: Christian spiritual training begins with the basics of Christian living and applies this to all of life. The parent has the awesome responsibility and privilege to set an example, to instruct, and to train each member of the family in each area of life to serve God, walking in holiness before Him.

Check your home. Does this training, though weakly, occur there? And, even when it hurts your pride and dignity, are you thankful for such training? Are you as young people conscious also that you must be preparing yourselves to train your own children in just a few more short years? For it is in this way, the way of parental training applied by God’s Spirit to the heart, that covenant children grow up in Godliness as citizens of that better country by faith. In this way God’s children grow up to be wise.

THINGS DON’T JUST HAPPEN
— Esther L. Fields
Things don’t just happen to us who love God,
They’re planned by His own dear hand.
Then moulded and shaped, and timed by His clock,
Things don’t just happen, they’re planned.
We don’t just guess on the issues of life,
We Christians just rest in our Lord.
We are directed by His Sovereign will,
In the light of His Holy Word!
We who love Jesus are walking by faith,
Not seeing one step that’s ahead.
Not doubting one moment what our lot might be.
But looking to Jesus, instead.
We praise our dear Saviour for loving us so,
For planning each care of our life.
Then giving us faith to trust Him for all,
The blessings, as well as the strife.
Things don’t just happen to us who love God,
To us that have taken our stand,
No matter the lot, the course, or the price,
Things don’t just happen, they’re planned.
"The Calling of a (Protestant Reformed Christian School) Teacher to Instruct in Light of Hosea 4:6"

by Kristin W. Engelsma

Having the knowledge of God is of extreme importance, for without this knowledge, the people of God are utterly destroyed. God’s own people come to lack this knowledge because they openly reject it instead of diligently striving toward it.

The truth of Scripture which makes known who God is constitutes the knowledge of God. It is the Truth that God has graciously revealed to us in the Protestant Reformed Churches - the pure, sound Reformed Faith set down in the Three Forms of Unity. This Faith glorifies God as Triune, sovereign, holy, and gracious in Jesus Christ. We have this knowledge only as a gift of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit uses teaching and hard study to give the knowledge of God. The knowledge of God, then, is an intellectual knowledge of God along side of love and fear for Him - it combines the mind with the heart. Those who possess both aspects - and therefore the true knowledge of God - will show themselves as such in two ways.

They will, firstly, worship God rightly and will not turn away from Him as the Israelites turned to the idols (vs. 12ff).

Secondly, they will serve Him by obeying His law in their lives and not fail to do this as the Israelites did (vs. 1, 2).

The teachers of Israel were to blame for Israel’s rejection of the true knowledge of God, because they were not faithful in their teaching. Calvin writes: "God then does here, in the first place, attack the priests...for teaching prevailed not, as it ought to have done..." (Commentary on Hosea 4:6).

The children suffer because of this dreadful failure of the adults and teachers. The church is cut off by God in their generations when they reject the truth of God’s Word. When, however, this truth and knowledge is correctly taught and passed along from generation to generation God continues His covenant with His people.

Because of this the Church must make as its top priority the teaching and imparting of the knowledge of Truth and of God to the people. The main means of God to give this knowledge is through the preaching of the ministers.

However, in the covenant, the faithful teaching of the children by parents and school-teachers is also necessary. What a responsibility is thus laid upon the Christian school-teachers. Through their teaching the children must come to a correct worship of God and keeping of His commandments. They must grow academically and also spiritually.

In himself a teacher is unable to correctly carry out this calling. Only
when he turns to God Himself can he begin this awesome task and complete it in such a way that God continues His covenant with the believer's children.

by Greg Holstege

How many examples are there in the Bible where the people of Israel who, through their lack of knowing and understanding the laws of God, have suffered afflictions and troubles sent by God. There have been countless times where this has happened especially during the period of judges. The people were not instructed properly and, as a result, found disfavor in the eyes of God exactly as described in Hosea 4:6.

Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge of the laws of God has not only affected the Church in the Old Testament times, but throughout history, even to the present day. We, as the Protestant Reformed denomination, have seen this to be the case. The origin of the Protestant Reformed Churches came about in 1924 due to improper instruction of the doctrines of truth which we so dearly love. The split of 1953 again is another example of a rejection of the proper knowledge of God and His ways. The results of both of these times have been dramatic to the Church of Christ.

I am deeply afraid that there is a threat in our churches today. There is a serious lack of the proper knowledge, even a rejection of some of that knowledge that could lead to the serious implications found in Hosea 4:6, "...because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee... seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

We have many outstanding Protestant Reformed teachers in our schools today that are delivering that truth of God to their pupils in the classroom. However, there is still a need for another generation of Protestant Reformed teachers to carry on that instruction so desperately needed in the classroom, whether it be biology, government, economics, or even history, which I intend to major in and teach to future generations of God's children in our schools. It is my intention to carry out that proper instruction and knowledge of God and heed the warning given by God to Hosea.

"... profane men... celebrate free-will and our natural faculties, because they have never tasted what... supernatural life is... ."
— John Calvin, Commentary on Ezekiel (3:24)

"True religion is distinguished from false imaginations by this peculiar mark, that God Himself prescribes what is to be done."
— John Calvin
HERE WE GO!

by Dirk Westra

Here it is, society season again. Wasn't it just yesterday that we adjourned young people's society for the summer? It almost seems like it. Now it is time to give up an hour of your time every Sunday and sit it out. But why do you go to young people's society? Is there a really good reason?

We've all heard the reasons for not attending: "The leader does all the talking in our society; he never gives us a chance." Or this: "There are three or four people in our society who do all the talking." "Society is so boring; I don't get anything out of it." Are you facing another society year of this?

Well, that's not the way things have to be, nor is it the way that things should be. But what is the purpose for belonging to a society and attending the activities? To answer that question, I'd like to show you the purpose for belonging to a young people's society, your contribution to that society, and the benefits of attendance.

Do you attend society just to please your parents? I hope not. You realize that there must be a deeper purpose, don't you? The constitution for the society to which I belong reads, in part, like this: "The object of this society is to study the Word of God, and also subjects and problems of a religious and social nature, in the light of the Word of God." Sounds pretty straightforward; perhaps a little boring. But that is the purpose for society. The peripheral activities - the parties and Christmas caroling, the fundraisers and special programs - give us an opportunity to be with the same people we're with week after week in society, but in a more relaxed setting; these activities, however, should never overshadow the main purpose, namely, the study and discussion of the Bible.

So, what's your role in all this? Obviously, the discussion isn't meant to be a spectator sport. Participation is essential. I've heard many comments like the one quoted above about the leader who runs the show singlehandedly, but I have yet to hear a society leader say he wishes young people were in society to be seen and not her.

In order to contribute something worthwhile to the discussion, you should be prepared. For Bible discussion, this means studying the passage in question, its cross references, commentaries on the passage, Bible dictionaries and the like. At a young people's convention a few years ago, the leader of one of our discussion groups gave us this rule of thumb: you should study two hours for each hour you will spend in discussion. The knowing looks which we young people gave one another told him that we didn't buy his idea, although I realize now that it was sound advice. I've led discussions at retreats and conventions, substituted for my own society leader, and also taught Sunday school. My experience has taught me that those who come prepared (you can spot them in your society) contribute the most.
and the most worthwhile material.

Unfortunately, my experience has also taught me to come prepared to deliver a lecture the whole length of what is intended to be a discussion. Be assured, the plight of the “discussion” leader who does all the talking is usually not self-imposed.

In light of all this, what is the benefit of taking an active part in young people’s society? Couldn’t we benefit just as much by studying the Bible on our own? But be realistic: do you study on your own? I know that without the motivation of a group discussion, I’m much less inclined to study. Furthermore, in spite of the amount of study you may have put in, someone else is likely to surprise you with a new insight into the same passage.

Does this mean that we should skip society when we haven’t prepared? Not at all. Those who haven’t prepared may learn something from the discussion. Those who have prepared, however, will find the discussion more enjoyable and more profitable.

In closing, let me offer a few suggestions for studying and discussion. One society of which I’m aware uses a discussion format like this: each verse of the Bible passage is assigned to a different member of the society, who must explain the verse, following which the leader asks for commentary from other members, then adds his own thoughts. You might give this a try in your society. In our society, the topic for the after-recess program is announced one week previous to the meeting at which the program is presented. This gives all the members opportunity to study the topic beforehand. If your society is studying a book of the Bible which is comparatively difficult (Revelation, for instance), you might consider using a study guide or discussion outlines written for that particular book. On the individual level, you might find it useful to take your own Bible along to society, especially if you have a Bible with such study helps as maps, a dictionary, cross- or chain-references or a concordance. This also allows you to jot down notes in your own Bible for later reference.

As you return to (or begin) society this season, remember the words of Paul in II Timothy 3:16 & 2:15: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The Psalms are balanced, they are free from all onesided emphasis. They have stood the test of time. Let us hold on to them, love them, glory in them, sing them heartily, and never, never apologize for them or be ashamed of them. They are our heritage, a part of the tents of Shem that God has planned and prepared for us to dwell in to His glory and our own good.

— Johannes G. Vos
THE BELIEVER'S HEAVENLY GLORY

by Rev. John A. Heys

There is so much, young people, that we do without giving much thought to it. There are also acts which we perform because of an on-the-spur-of-the-moment emotion that comes over us. There are deeds which later on we regret, call silly and wish we had not done. But with God it is so different. All that He does, and all that He causes His creatures to do, takes place because of eternal, unchangeable thought and desire. All happens according to His counsel or plan which He has with Him from eternity. This is true of all that happens in heaven, but it is just as true of all that happens here on this earth, whether it takes place in only a split second of a moment or stretches over a long period of time.

At this time we are going to consider in this article the profound, deep reason in God's mind for making Christ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption unto us. Remember that we are considering the five points of truth Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31. There we read: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption: That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

We already considered the four points in verse 30, namely, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Now we have the fifth element of glory. Plainly the point made here is that God made Christ unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption in order that the glory might be His. He does all this to glorify Himself. That is the profound, the awesome reason for what He did in Christ for us, and why He sent Him into our flesh. And into this truth we ought to delve a bit at this time.

Let us then first of all consider what glory is. Then we can understand what it means to glory and to glorify. As far as glory is concerned, it must be said that it is the radiation, the shining forth of virtue. Where you see virtue, you see glory. Or, if you will, where you see beauty, you see glory, that is, true beauty which manifests itself in virtues. Thus in the wisdom God gave him - and that wisdom was glory for him - Solomon wrote in Proverbs 20:29, "The glory of young men is their strength; and the beauty of old men is the gray head." When you see that virtue of strength in a young man, you see his glory. His glory is the radiation, the shining forth of this virtue of strength. The same idea we find in Jesus' word in Luke 12:27, where we read, "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

In these passages glory is presented as the radiation, the showing forth of strength and beauty. Solomon had glory, but not the glory that the lilies have in shape, color, texture. Solomon had riches, wisdom, treasures of gold
and silver, fine raiment which all displayed, radiated that which men call good and valuable. Yet he could never obtain the graceful lines of the lily, nor reach such whiteness, the sign of purity.

But we are dealing now with the glory of God; and Scripture is full of the revelation of His virtues and thus of His glory. Thus in II Thessalonians 1:9 we read, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." Here the virtue of power is presented. In John 2:9 we read of Jesus manifesting His glory by performing miracles. In this instance it was making wine out of water. In Luke 2:14 we read of the angels saying - There is no proof that they sang - "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (A better translation would be" . . . to men of good will.") They were referring to the birth of Jesus and the virtue of love on God's part, as well as His wisdom and power, to provide us with a Saviour. "Peace on earth" surely radiates, that is, causes His love to shine forth to His people.

In Jeremiah 9:23, 24 we find this interesting statement: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

Here we not only find many virtues mentioned, but also the glory of the child of God wrought in him by God's glorious works. If you know God, you have the glory of heavenly knowledge. If you know Him in Christ, through Whom He exercises His lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness, you have the glory of heavenly knowledge and wisdom. You shine with such virtues, which are God-given virtues to you. Very few Jews saw that when Jesus was here on this earth. They instead blasphemed Him, accused Him of blasphemy as well, abused, mistreated Him. They did not know God, and they did not see the glory of His virtues as the God of our salvation.

But Paul in I Corinthians 1:31 speaks not of glory as such, but of glorifying. He speaks of him that glorieth, not has glory. And to perform the act of glorifying is to be active in radiating, causing to shine forth the virtues of another. It is awfully close to praising. It is an act of the tongue whereby we give expression to God's virtues. But it also is an unexpressed thought of the regenerated mind. We glorify God in our silent as well as in our spoken prayers.

We find an interesting statement in Isaiah 43:21 where we read: "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Doing that is glorifying God. We glorify Him by praising Him. And we praise Him because we see His goodness, that is, His virtues. But take note of the fact, which we suggested in the first part of this article, that God formed His people in order that His virtues, His glory, may be shown forth by the act itself, but also by the mouths and lives of that people. So you have it here in I Corinthians 1:30, 31. Let him that glories display what God did for us in Christ. Then we glory in Him and do not boast of anything we might think we contributed to our salvation. If we
are going to boast of what we have as far as our salvation is concerned, we must boast of what God did. All credit must be given to Him. That is what Paul says here when he states that it is written that he that glorieth must glory in the Lord. ALL the credit for our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption must be given to God. That is praising Him; but it is also glorifying Him. Let him that glories do that! Let him not only say, “O God, how good Thou art!” but also how wise, powerful, sovereign He is as the God of all mercy and grace. As Paul writes in verses 28, 29, “And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence.” He saved us so that His virtues might shine forth, and so that we might say sincerely that He is God, and that there is no God besides Him. He saved us so that with Jonah we might say, “Salvation is of the Lord.” And He did it in such a way that there is absolutely no room for us to claim any credit. Apart from what God did in Christ we have vices and no virtue. We are vile, filthy, foolish and damnable. He gave us virtues so that His virtues, whereby He brought us forth as saints in Christ, might radiate in all our heavenly life which we will receive in the day of Christ.

Yes, we are going to have glory in that day. In fact we have the beginning of it now. God has from the moment we were born again implanted in us love towards Him. He implanted the life of Christ in us. That makes us glorious. It gives us virtues, heavenly virtues. That wisdom, righteousness, holiness and freedom from all our punishment and love of sin, of which Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:30, speaks of our glory.

But it is a radiation of God’s glory. Our glory is a reflection of God’s glory. As God’s image bearers we will be, and in principle already are, spiritual mirrors which reflect God’s glory. The glory we have does not begin in us, is not manufactured by us but is God’s glory shining forth in our lives. This fifth item which Paul mentions in verse 31 sums up the beauty of the four items mentioned in verse 30. Our heavenly glory is that we can and do glorify God.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

You may read the Bible continuously and yet never learn anything by it, unless it is illuminated by the Spirit. Then the words shine forth like stars. The book seems made of gold leaf; every single letter glitters like a diamond. Oh! it is a blessed thing to read an illuminated Bible lit up by the radiance of the Holy Ghost. Have you read the Bible, and yet have your eyes been unenlightened? Go and say, “O Lord, illuminate it; shine upon it; for I cannot read it to profit, unless Thou enlightenest me.” Blind men may read the Bible with their fingers, but blind souls cannot. We want a light to read the Bible by; there is no reading it in the dark.

— Spurgeon
The text now before us in this catholic, general epistle of Jude is verse 14. Of course, it is inseparably connected to verse 15, throughout which the thought continues. Jude's prophecy then is one warning men of the final judgment. But for the space we have, we limit ourselves to verse 14; that is enough for the moment. Therefore, permit the stating of the King James Version with parenthetical additions to bring out a more literal rendering of the text and to round out and enlarge upon the thought:

"And (moreover) Enoch also, seventh from (and including) Adam, prophesied of (to) these saying. 'Behold, the Lord cometh (came) with (in connection with) ten thousands (myriads) of His saints (holy ones)'. "Jude 14."

Here is the statement that apostates from the early days of the world have been foretold, warned, judged, condemned and swept away in destruction. Had Enoch put his prophecy into writing? There is no way of knowing. Divine revelation (holy Scripture) does not inform us. Good books have been lost, but no Scripture. This was, very likely, a prophecy in the line of the oral tradition of the patriarchs from the beginning of the world. At first, the truth was handed on down from generation to generation from father to son. It was not until these last days, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Jude recorded Enoch's prophecy in writing. Thus it was placed within the canon and became verbally inspired Scripture. God in His marvel of providence preserves every bit of that which had become and is God-breathed Scripture.

How do we interpret the "also" of the text? Not as connected to "prophecyed," making it, as Enoch also prophesied along with the great body of prophets: but as connected to "to these." "Of these" is literally, "to these." To whom? To the wicked, ungodly apostates of the generations just prior to the Flood. Peter says that they had Noah as a preacher of righteousness (II Pet. 2:5); Jude says that before Noah they also had Enoch as prophet, the most ancient of the prophets.

Why was it mentioned that Enoch is the seventh from Adam? To show that God's judgmental dealings with apostates is as ancient as the initial generations of men in history, and, of course, to identify Enoch as, not the Cainite, but the Sethite (the covenant) Enoch. Also underscored here is both the antiquity and impendency of the prophesied coming of the Lord to judgment.

"'Enoch. . . prophesied. . .' This
prophecy ("the Lord cometh!") is certainly of the most ancient date, in view of the above, was universally received and acknowledged in the Old Testament church and is a central article of our New Testament creed. Prophecy, a form of preaching, or proclamation of the promise of God, began with the faith of our antediluvian fathers, continuing throughout the six thousand years of earth’s history and yet to be continued to the world’s end. (Matt. 28). Judgment was first pronounced in paradise, thence all through the ages of the church in the words of Enoch, Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, Daniel, Joel, Zechariah (14:5), Malachi, Jesus, Paul, Peter, John and Jude, holy men of God who prophesied as they were carried along by the Spirit of God. (II Pet. 1:21). Enoch had foreseen and foretold the Lord’s coming to judgment. The approaching Flood was an emblem of that. The Lord shall come with all the saints in glory and all the angels of glory for all the saints on earth to execute judgment on the wicked.

Enoch was a prophet inspired to see the day of the Lord’s coming in judgment. Enoch walked with God in covenant fellowship and reverential awe of Him. Like John he was a bosom friend of the Lord’s (Jn. 13:23). The secret of the Lord is with such. (Psm. 25:14). Moses was inspired to write the record of the Creation. But where he left no written record of the names of the Egyptian magicians, Paul was inspired to name them (II Tim. 3:8). He also recorded an inspired statement of the Lord’s not found in the Gospels (Acts 20:35). Peter was moved by the Spirit to inform us of a fact, which unsupplied would have left us ignorant, that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” (II Pet. 2:5).

“Behold.” Jude saw Christ’s day, saw it clearly with certainty, as though it had already come to pass: “behold, the Lord came.” Indeed, in God’s counsel it was as certain as already historically realized. The future event, spoken of as already a past occurrence, must come to realization. Nothing can prevent the future which God has foreordained. (Acts 4:27, 28). In that last day, the church will echo the words of this prophecy with the new meaning of fulfilment: “The Lord came!” There will be great voices in heaven saying. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15) or, literally, “The kingdom (singular) of the world became our Lord’s and His Christ’s…” Nothing can change what God has ordained in His eternal counsel. Just so, nothing can change history once it is past.

“Behold, the Lord cometh.” By “the Lord” is meant the Lord Jesus Christ. The title appears fourteen times in the Epistle of James, and it plainly refers to Him. Cp. Jas. 1:1; 2:1; 5:7, 8 etc. He is the One who judges the living and the dead. The “coming” prophesied by Enoch is not His first coming, which was not to introduce the final judgment (Jude 15; ct. Jn. 3:17), but His second coming at the last day (Rev. 1:7, 8).

“The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints,” that is, cometh in connection with myriads of His holy ones. Moses had mentioned the Lord’s holy myriads in Deut. 33:2. Zechariah also had prophesied, Thou, “the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee” (14:5). These saints, or holy ones, are the angels. “The Son of
Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matt. 25:31). “Saints” also means the believers of redeemed humanity. “The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ shall be “with all His saints” in heaven (I Thess. 3:13). At the same time, the Lord will come for saints who will be alive on the earth at His coming (I Thess. 4:14-17), and who, like Enoch, will be by God translated to Him so as not to see death. (I Cor. 15:51, 52). These angelic myriads are mentioned in Psm. 68:17 and in Dan. 7:10, 13. The redeemed saints are mentioned with the Lord’s coming in judgment in Dan. 7:22, 27 and in I Cor. 6:2, 3. The redeemed saints shall be preserved unto the coming of the Lord (Jude 24), at His coming shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4), at His coming shall be blameless (Jude 24), and so at His coming shall not be ashamed (I Jn. 2:28). shall see Him in His coming and be like Him (3:2) and shall receive a crown of glory at His coming (II Tim. 4:8), then shall reign with Him at His coming (2:12). The wicked scoff at the idea of His coming (II Pet. 3:3, 4) and shall be punished at His coming (I Thess. 1:8, 9).

“The Lord cometh with His holy myriads to execute judgment.” Enoch prophesied of the Lord’s coming at the end of the world. He also stated the purpose of this eschatological coming of the Lord, namely, “to execute judgment.” It is true that at that time, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked” (Eccles. 3:17), but Jude’s prophecy centers only upon the judgment of wicked ungodly sinners. Yet what was Enoch’s purpose in preaching and denouncing judgment against them? It was not to “scare them into heaven.” Rather, more than likely he would have said to them, Ye “have neither part nor lot in this matter.” It was not to sentimentally warn them to flee from the wrath to come. He, more likely, would have said to them. “Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7). It was not, after preaching judgment, to extend to them all kinds of offers and invitations to come “accept the Lord” in order to escape destruction in the judgment. It is far more likely that he would have told them, “Ye will not come unto Him that ye may have life,” and. “no man can come unto Him except the Father draw him.” None of the prophets, including Jude, cluttered their preaching with “offers” for the very reason that they imply a denial of man’s moral impotency and spiritual total inability. Likely, Enoch would command the wicked to repent. John Baptist, Peter and Paul did so (Matt. 3:8; Acts 8:22; 17:31) in order to leave the reprobate without excuse (Rom. 1:20, 28).

Enoch’s purpose then was not to flatter them with the so called “offer of the Gospel.” For one thing, Christ cannot be offered. God will not have His Son “up for grabs.” Christ is preached, not offered. Nor can the Gospel be offered. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. That power is an energetic, operative saving power! What does puny man have to do with it, let alone to offer it?

Nor, according to Enoch’s prophecy did he preach salvation and deliverance. He left that to the later ministry of Noah who had preached righteousness for one hundred twenty years. What Enoch had to tell them about the Day of the Lord was that it would not be for them a bright day of gladness (as it surely will be for the righteous!), but his preaching was in
the spirit of, "Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The Day of the Lord is darkness and not light...very dark and no brightness in it" (Amos 5:18-20). Enoch was a prophet of "judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (Jude 15; II Pet. 3:7). He preached "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). The Lord speaks through His prophets and preachers in the proclamation of the doctrine of eternal judgment to accomplish His own intended purpose. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished" (II Pet. 2:9).

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**PAMPHLET REVIEWS**


This valuable gem of writing makes five preface reasons for purposes of distribution: 1) It is a basic explanation of Calvinism for the non-reformed. 2) It is a call to nominal Calvinists to be, or become, what they profess to be. 3) It is a simple statement for the coming generation of our own Protestant Reformed young people.... 4) To explain that Calvinism is not abstract theology, but GOSPEL. 5) And to win men to Calvinism by God's grace. At the first reading, I would have agreed with all of the above, except for the first one. It seemed to me to be too difficult for the non-reformed to understand, unless they were already familiar with reformed terminology.

Questioning the claim to reason number one, I reread Rev. Engelsma's Calvinism-Gospel pamphlet. To my pleasant surprise, a truly considerate structure of organization emerged. After bringing to light the historical truth that Calvinism is the name for the faith of the Reformed and Presbyterian branch of the Protestant Reformation, Rev. Engelsma embarks on a careful voyage of explaining the five points of Calvinism from three perspectives: 1) Calvin and the Reformed Creeds. 2) Holy Scriptures - the Gospel. 3) And of those who reject Calvinism. I was convinced that Rev. Engelsma's pen had produced a worthy presentation of the five points of Calvinism for the non-reformed and had also made it abundantly clear that Calvinism is the GOSPEL.

Since the various sections can be deduced from their topic sentences and because these sections are brief yet furnished with creedal and scriptural references, this pamphlet is highly recommended for learning to defend Calvinism as the Gospel.
2. God's Sovereignty In Salvation - by Rev. Steven Houck. The Evangelism Committee of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, 32pp. Free. Reviewed by DH.

Rev. Houck is to be commended for this sincere and thoroughly Reformed explanation of the sovereignty of God in salvation. The reader will soon become aware of the fact that Rev. Houck is abundantly blessed of God with the gift of making our Reformed doctrine of salvation unmistakably clear to those who are Reformed and to those who are non-Reformed. He carefully defines dogmatical terms by using scripture and a gifted pen. In addition, the use of subject headings, bold face type for main point emphasis, and the scriptural index at the end are all evidences that this beautiful work was prepared with the reader in mind. Rev. Houck does a brief yet excellent presentation of what the title states.

The direction of this pamphlet starts out with the sovereignty of God and then rightfully proceeds with His will and love, and God's work of salvation in man, which follows closely the Ordo Solutis set forth by Rev. H. Hoeksema in his book Reformed Dogmatics. Rev. Houck does justice to an explanation of the Reformed truths that we hold dear to our hearts and of the work of God that He performs in our lives with regard to our salvation. Certainly this is a God glorifying work and highly recommended for use in witnessing to others of God's sovereignty in salvation.

I SHALL NOT WANT

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. —Ps. 23:1

When the Lord is our Shepherd we are never in want because:
– when we need rest . . . He maketh me to lie down.
– when we need refreshment . . . He leadeth me beside still waters
– when we need forgiveness . . . He restoreth my soul
– when we need guidance . . . He leadeth me.
– when we need companionship . . . Thou art with me
– when we need comfort . . . Thy rod and staff they comfort me.
– when we need food . . . Thou preparest a table before me.
– when we need honor and blessing . . . Thou anointest my head with oil.
– when we need joy . . . My cup runneth over.
– when we need anything in this life . . . Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
– when we need anything in eternity . . . I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
WISDOM

God sends the sunshine, and God sends the rain,
God sends the blessings, and God sends the pain;
And I must go sorrowing, oftentimes, until
I learn this one lesson: to bow to His will.

God send the harvest, and God sends the loss,
God sends the laurels, and God sends the cross;
And I shall know teardrops and sorrow, until
I learn the one precept: to bow to His will.

God sends the smooth way, and God sends the thorn,
God sends the praises, and God sends the scorn;
And much I must suffer of anguish until
We learn that He wants us to bow to His will.

Lalia Thornton