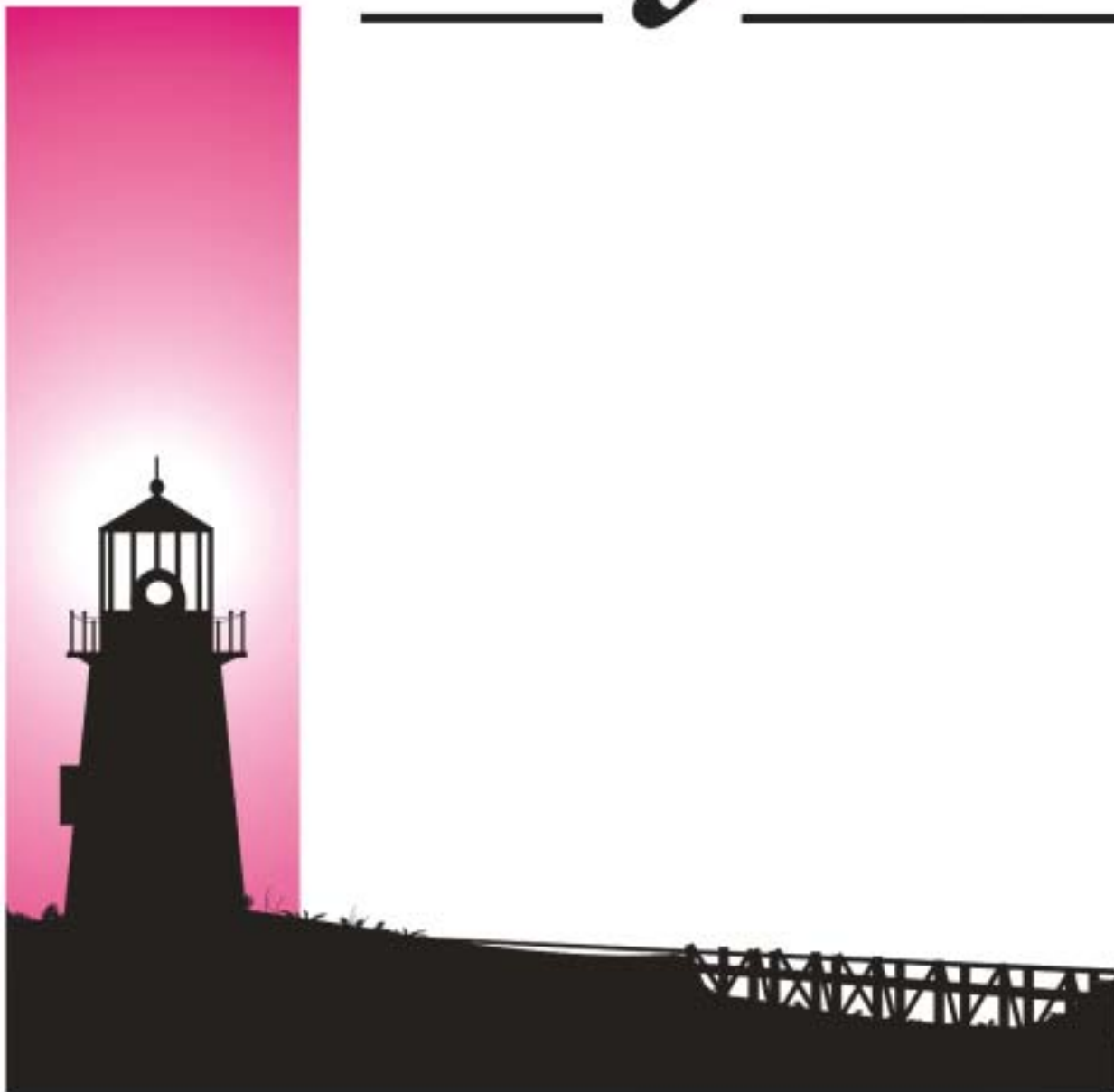

Beacon

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Lights



God Has His Way in the Storm (2)



by Aaron J. Cleveland

Last time we ended in anticipation of looking at the various elements of a storm from the viewpoint of God's Word. We remember, that God has "His way in the whirlwind and in the storm" (Nahum 1:3). There are many spiritual realities pictured for us in the physical elements of a storm. It is interesting and profitable to go through God's Word in order that we might grow in our knowledge of storms (which demonstrate the sovereign power of God) from a spiritual point of view.

Before we begin, we must understand that we as believers know God through His revelation in creation, but more importantly through His Word, the Scriptures, which He writes upon our hearts. The unbeliever, even though he lives in the creation and can read the Bible, cannot come to a spiritual knowledge of God by creation. It is not true, as many falsely teach, that the creation is God's revelation to the unbelievers and the Scriptures is God's revelation to the believers. No, both creation and Scripture are one and the same revelation and only the believer has a spiritual knowledge of God by them. Therefore, only a child of God can see the spiritual realities pictured in an earthly storm.

The first element of a storm which we will look at is the cloud. It is interesting how God used a cloud as a means to physically preserve His people in the Old Testament. A striking instance of this is found in Exodus 14:20 where we read of the cloud that "came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." What came as a means of defeat and confusion to the Egyptians, was a means of light and preservation to the Israelites.

There are a number of instances where the "glory of the Lord" appeared to the children of Israel in "the cloud." Read Exodus 16:10, 40:34-38 and I Kings 8:10. In Isaiah 19:1 there is a reference to the Lord who "rideth upon a swift cloud." At the last day, the Son of man will come "in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27).

Another comforting truth which ought to come to our remembrance every time we see a thick, billowing cloud approaching is the reality of the covering of our sins. Of this we read in Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." No longer do we stand guilty before God, for our sins have been covered by the blood of Christ.

Finally, we see in a storm and clouds a physical picture of our spiritual victory and the defeat of our three-fold spiritual enemy. A song of David recorded for us in II Samuel 22 tells us of God's overthrow of David's enemies pictured for us in a storm. David sings (vs. 5, 6), "the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me." But God heard the cry of David and came swiftly to his rescue. And this rescue is pictured graphically in terms of a storm, God sovereignly in control of every element to the defeat of His enemies and the preservation of David. May the Spirit bring this passage to our remembrance the next time we are surrounded by a storm.

The second element of a storm which we will consider is the wind. As Amos 4:13 clearly states, it is "The Lord, the God of hosts" that "createth the wind." It is the living God who "bringeth the wind out of His treasures" (Psalm 135:7 and Jeremiah 10:13).

When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, “there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2). When Jesus was gathered with His disciples behind closed doors after His resurrection, it is recorded that “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). The wind pictures for us the spiritual reality of the Holy Spirit proceeding from Christ.

The wind of the storm, which drives away all that which is not sturdy and attached firmly to its foundation, reminds us of God’s judgment of impenitent sinners. Matthew 7:24-27 records for us the fall of the house built on sand by the “foolish” man. It is written that “the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (vs. 27). Likewise, we are reminded that the “ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away” (Psalm 1:4). But the righteous man has his house built upon the firm foundation, Christ, and when the rain, floods, and wind beat upon his house, it stands.

The third element of a storm is the lightning. A portion of Psalm 135:7 states that the Lord “maketh lightnings for the rain.” God made His presence known to His people Israel by “thunderings” and “lightnings” after they received the ten commandments (Exodus 20:18). II Samuel 22:15 and Psalm 18:14 record for us a portion of David’s song of thanksgiving to God for his deliverance from the hand of his enemies. And David sang that God “sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.” Lightning pictures for us the spiritual reality of the discomfiting and defeat of our enemies through Christ.

Another comforting truth pictured by lightning is the second coming of Christ. In Luke 17:24 we read, “For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day.”

The fourth element of a storm, and related to the lightning, is thunder. As Psalm 104:7 tells us, thunder pictures for us the voice of God. I Samuel 7:10 records for us how the Lord “thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.” Later in I Samuel, we read of how God sent thunder and rain to show His displeasure with the people of Israel for their great wickedness in asking for a king (chapter 12:16-19).

When we hear the booming thunder during a storm, we ought to be reminded of the fact that God speaks and that He is to be feared, even as Israel feared when God’s presence was known after they received the ten commandments (Exodus 20:18-21).

The final element of a storm is the rain. Once again we turn to the Psalms to know that it is the Lord who prepares rain for the earth (147:8). Rain is very interesting to consider, because both an abundance of rain and a lack of rain was connected with God’s wrath against sin in the Old Testament. During the Flood, God rained upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights. Solomon’s prayer in I King’s 8 records for us that God would shut up heaven and send no rain when the people walked contrary to His ways. When they repented and walked in the “good way,” God would then send rain upon the land (verses 35, 36). Ezekiel 38:22 tells us that God rains with an “overflowing rain” upon His enemies.

To the elect, however, rain pictures for us a comforting spiritual reality. We find this truth set forth for us in Isaiah 55:10, 11, “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Deuteronomy 32:2 records this same truth. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.” God’s word is efficacious. It perfectly accomplishes the purpose He has sovereignly intended it to accomplish. May we remember this truth which is pictured for us by the falling rain.

Let us also confess that our God is a “refuge from the storm” (Isaiah 25:4) and in Him we have a certain hope.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

I would like to take a little space to thank you for your support, make some comments on this issue, and put a person behind the editor. The staff and I are very encouraged in our work by the financial support and words of encouragement from our readers and the churches of our readers. Our desire and prayers throughout the past years have been for strength and wisdom to bring material in this publication that gives God all the glory in the way of guiding our readers in the way of the truth.

This issue is a combination of August and September. Inside you will find devotionals for two months. The August devotionals contain the final verses of our Psalter/Psalm series and continues into Proverbs with a little bit different format. The September devotionals are reprinted from a past issue. We hope that you have enjoyed reading and singing your way through the beautiful songs that God has given to us. We also welcome any suggestions for future devotionals.

When I began my work as editor, I was a student at Calvin College working toward teacher certification. Shortly after becoming editor, I was asked to teach at Faith Christian back in my hometown of Randolph Wisconsin. I moved to Randolph and began doing my work as editor over the internet and leading the monthly meetings over the telephone. That has been working quite well, although I miss seeing the faces of the staff. We also have some new staff members that I barely know except for hearing their voices.

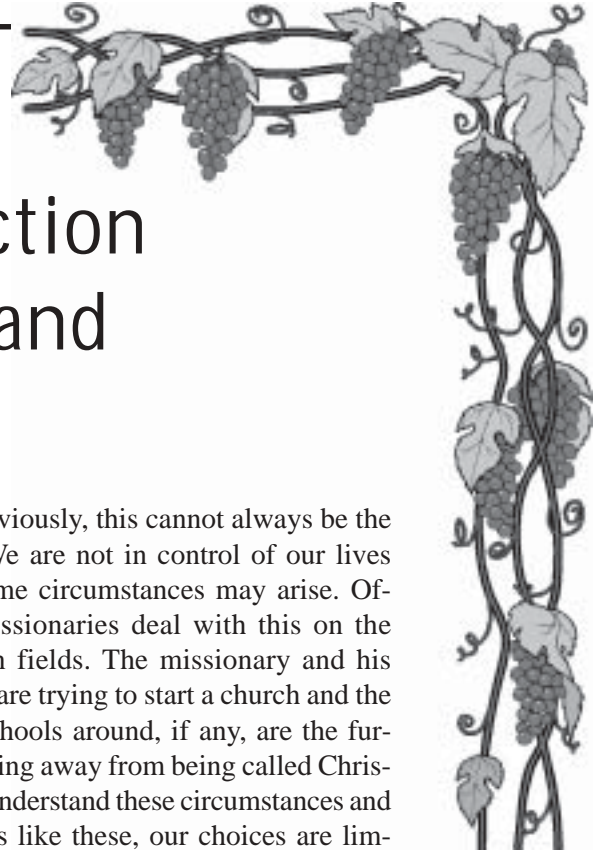
After a year of teaching, my wife Jeanine and I were married. Her help and support in my work as editor has been invaluable. After my third year of teaching and the birth of our second child, we decided it would be best for me to finish my teacher certification, so we moved temporarily to Jefferson, Wisconsin, which is near the University of Wisconsin in Whitewater. I have been going to school there full time for the past year and worked as a maintenance and yard man for an apartment complex. I continue to take classes through the summer and plan to finish student teaching in the Spring of 2001.



Life an hour away from church has been somewhat lonely but also very busy for my family. We desired to go to the 75th anniversary of our churches but were unable to do so with my work and school schedule. The reports from those who were able to go have certainly given us reason to rejoice. We heard wonderful stories of 500 covenant children heartily singing, psalm singing from memory late into the night, harmonious communion of the saints, wonderful speeches, and outstanding attention to the needs of the elderly and families with children. Those with whom we spoke could not put their feelings into words but the moist eyes revealed the great joy they had from the experience. Such news certainly makes me glad that I have the opportunity to work as editor of a publication that circulates among this people.

Yours in Christ,

John Huizenga
John Huizenga



Called to Take Action by God's Command

by Ryan Van Overloop

Scholarship Essay

Psalm 78:5-8 "...which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children. that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Continuously throughout the Bible, references are made to the instruction of children. Parents are repeatedly called to teach their children. This contemplation of Asaph (Psalm 78:5-8), which I quoted, is a prime example. In this passage, God calls the fathers (parents) to teach and instruct their children. God even explains Himself in this psalm. His reason for commanding parental instruction is so that the future generations will know His law and that they will trust and confide in Him. They will not stray off the straight and narrow pathway but they will set their hope and trust in Him and Him alone. Similar passages can be multiplied: Exodus 10:2, Deuteronomy 4:9, Isaiah 38:19, Acts 22:3, etc....

Other passages, like Proverbs 22:6, do not explicitly refer to God's law but still command parental instruction. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." We must train our children, so that when they grow up, they will hold on and cleave to what they have been taught. We must catechize them, watch them, and keep them under discipline. Matthew Henry's Commentary says this instruction is "a great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them." Along the same lines, I think it is our duty and calling as parents to educate our children in a Christian school.

Obviously, this cannot always be the case. We are not in control of our lives and some circumstances may arise. Often, missionaries deal with this on the mission fields. The missionary and his family are trying to start a church and the only schools around, if any, are the furthest thing away from being called Christian. I understand these circumstances and at times like these, our choices are limited. However, this is not always the case.

In fact, most of the time we have a choice as to which Christian school to send our children.

Therefore, if possible, we must educate our children in these Christian schools. Even better, we must educate our children in one of our own Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. When a Protestant Reformed Christian education is made available to us we must, by all means, grasp it and hold fast. This is our duty and responsibility. I say this is our duty and responsibility because there is no reasonable excuse for anybody not to send their children to a PR school if it's made available.

Now, I would like to address an issue that I think is prevalent in our own schools. I would like to address the issue of vacations. I am referring to Spring Break. From what I understand, parents are excusing their children from school early so that they can start their vacations early. It's not just a couple hours early, I hear it's a couple of days early. The schools are half empty the day before Spring Break. Is there something wrong with this picture?

I definitely think so. However, obviously, some parents in our circles do not. Our schools have a whole week recess for Spring Break. Some families, or should I say 70+ students from our very own Covenant Christian High School decided that they needed more than a week for Spring Break. Is leisure and vacation time becoming more

important than our own children's Christian education? The consensus seems to think so.

I think we have to step back for a second and remember how important these Protestant Reformed Christian schools meant to those who started them. Maybe we should even think about how important these schools should mean to us. Are we starting to lose interest in our own schools? Worse yet, are we starting to lose interest in our calling to educate our children in the fear of the Lord and in His commandments. I hope and pray that this is not the case.

On the contrary, our parents should be interested in their children's education. They should send their children to Christian schools because they want their children to be taught from a Christian perspective. They want their children to be taught the truth. So many misconceptions and even heresies can creep into our children's minds if they are educated outside of our schools. Therefore, our parents should show their interest and send their children to our Christian schools.

In addition, parents can show their interest by their involvement in the schools. Volunteer to be a room mother. Participate in school activities. Attend choir and band concerts as well as other extracurricular activities. Let your children know that you care and are interested in their school and want to be a part of it. Show your

interest to your children by asking them questions. Inquire what happened at school today and what they learned. Help them with their homework and become excited for them to succeed. All of these little things show that you are interested in their education.

Finally, don't forget to instruct them at home. Make sure they know their catechism and/or memory work. Show them that you are most interested in their achievement in Bible class. Teach them to pray. When they get older, have them open or close in prayer around the family dinner table. Discipline them when they err. Also, show them that you care by setting an example for them to follow.

In conclusion, God commands us to instruct our children in the fear of the Lord. This commandment doesn't stop at just sending them to a Christian school. This commandment must be heeded in the home as well. As parents, we must continually be involved in our children's Christian education.

Exodus 10:2 *"And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord."*

Ryan is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Story Time

Dissenting From the World

by J.P. de Klerk

When Ria Westra walked towards the river that July afternoon in the Dutch village of Elst, she knew for certain that she had holidays there in the Province of Gelderland, but not much more than that. It was the area between Arnhem and Nijmegen where all the Westra's she knew were born and grown up, and where they had been involved in growing all kinds of fruit in the fertile clay soil.

Beyond the river was the old post-mill she knew so well; it could be turned in any direction from which the

wind was coming. The purpose was that it got rid of superfluous water from the ditches between the pasturelands, and directed it towards the river.

Ria found it difficult to imagine that here, many centuries ago, had been a Roman army camp.

She gave the ducks some old bread crusts and decided to saunter on the path along the river by the rustling reed and sword grass.

When she was seven years old a hunter had saved her life, when he saw her come too close to the water-

side, slip and fall into the river. She had not yet learned to swim. He grabbed her and carried her back to the farmhouse, where Mother cleaned her under the pump and gave her dry clothes. The hunter had only said, "The Lord arranged, that I was at the right spot at the right moment." She had never seen him again. But she had avoided going to the same place until she was fifteen years old. Then she liked to sit there, making drawings of the surroundings and writing some poems.

Her most beautiful memories were the Christmas holidays, when they were all still together at home. Father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, her brother Henk and her sister Ritske.

They went with horse and carriage to church. They sat with friends and neighbors around the big pot-bellied stove, or sometimes in the square kitchen next to the cooking range, on which the Dutch fritters and waffles were baked. Later they sang with father behind the old blow organ, or with grandfather and his mouth organ.

None of them had gone with the stream of the modernists; they had turned their backs against the spirit of the age.

Inside before the window of the living room a white star was suspended from the ceiling; in it was a small electric light. Father had gotten it from a friend who had been ill and had made it while lying in bed a couple of months.

Absorbed in her thoughts, Ria walked further.

She had left Amsterdam in the morning with the first train, after she had given notice of departure and cleaned her room in the boarding house. She had studied a year at the university, with the purpose to become a general practitioner in the future. She tried to digest all the impressions she got during the past months. The way she saw the other students lived had bewildered, shocked and disgusted her. Soon she began withdrawing to her room after the lectures.

She saw that she did not fit in that world.

Among all the young people, she had been unable to find someone with whom she could have a conversation, in the library of the university or the conference room, during lunchtime or in the evenings. Even those boys and girls, who did not drink alcohol, did not use drugs, and who told her that they had had a Christian education, had disappointed her. They told her, that nowadays with a modern economy, it was possible to earn lots of money by introducing new medicines. They even speculated at the stock exchange with money that they borrowed from their parents. They had ideals which had

nothing to do with the medical profession. In the restaurants they never took the trouble to pray before they started eating. They told each other dirty jokes, drank a lot of beer and were very noisy. They threw puzzled glances at her. A boy once offered her a glass of wine, but she had politely refused.

In the pension it was clean, but unadorned and chilly, and other girls seemed not even to notice that she existed. They went with friends to their rooms and listened to strange, wild music, while they yelled and stamped their feet.



After much searching, she had found a church of the Liberated Reformed Church, where she could go on the Lord's Day. She heard about other churches, where there existed much unrest; there were quarrels going on concerning many things. She tried to hear more about it, but it seemed everybody wanted to avoid a conversation about it. She saw broken down church buildings, and some were replaced by mosques. She found it rather strange and even horrible. There were long streets with new houses that looked very somber and there were many children who spoke foreign languages. There were tourists everywhere; they did not care about these matters and just visited all the traditional historic buildings in

the center of the city, like the house where Rembrandt had lived.

She stopped and looked at the ducks. They followed Ria and she saw how beautiful they were with their white feathers and a kind of happy expression on their faces. She wondered if they ever had worries. Perhaps they discovered the existence of hunters when it was too late. She was amused by two of them who were diligently toiling and moiling in the duck-weed.

Above her were white clouds in the blue sky, and gulls in the distance. No, Ria did not want to go back to the big city. All her expectations had been different from what she had found there, sitting in her attic room peering at the rooftops. She would never joke any more, as she had done last year, about being independent and “completing my adolescence.” The old things of Elst were familiar; the city was threatening.

She saw a ship with a big light brown sail that did not move because there was no wind. Two young boys jumped from a small jetty and began to swim around. A woman on a bike passed Ria by, with a basket on the rear carrier.

O, how she had missed Elst during all those months in Amsterdam. She quickly wiped a tear from her smooth and rosy face. She remembered her brother Henk, with his impressive voice. He lived in the USA. He worked for a publisher of Christian books and he was engaged to the daughter of his boss. Her sister Ritske had married a minister in Scotland who was an invalid, but she had written that they were quite happy together.

She walked slowly on. She had plenty of ideas about what she could do now, but she was not bubbling over with excitement. What did the Lord want from her?

From a by-road arrived a ramshackle truck, with a lawn mower on it. The Truck stopped and a young man got out and walked with a couple of long strides to the mower and put it down on the ground. He appeared very quiet and purposeful. He was tall and had broad shoulders, brown hair and a smiling face.

Ria went a few steps towards him, but felt unable to say anything. Suddenly their eyes met. He cleared his throat and said “I am Bram de Zeeuw. I am lending my Dad a helping hand today. I am a student at the Economic University of Rotterdam, but I still prefer life in Elst.”

“You too?” she faltered. “I studied in Amsterdam, but I want to stay here now. I feel I don’t fit in that world. You know what I mean.”

Bram looked at her, solemn. Then he said, “You mean that it has become a most wicked mess. Well, that is what I have seen of it in my case. I often take some books from the library and read them, sitting on a bench in the public garden. I am not that savage, you see.” He winked.

Ria laughed and showed her white teeth. “Do you go to a church?” she asked.

“Sure. I am Liberated Reformed. But wait, now I see it, I know you from grade school. You are Ria Westra, aren’t you.

“Yes, and I begin to remember you. You were that boy who was often standing in the hall, because you were never out of mischief!”

They went to each other and embraced, surprised and happy. “Wonderful,” he said. “Just to discover an unspoiled flower in the midst of the long grass. Nowadays there are few girls like you, do you know that, Ria?”

“I believe you. I watched the girls, and the boys they went with.”

“They live in sin,” muttered Bram. “I don’t want to join them. I understand now, why so many people are leaving the big cities and prefer living in a rural municipality or in the woods.”

They began to walk alongside the river, in the direction where she came from. She hooked her arm into his. They had to tell each other so much. He grinned, “This is halfway to wonderful, but needs some polishing.” They forgot about the lawn mower and talked about what they saw, and had learned and discovered, what they believed, what they expected of the future, the music they loved of Handel and Mozart, the nostalgia they embraced.

He noticed that her shoulder length hair had not been anchored with hair spray and that there was no powder on her face.



Bram de Zeeuw and Ria Westra became a very happy couple. They married in Arnhem, where family of them both lived, and they rented an empty farmhouse that had been left behind by a poor farmer. Ria did not become a doctor. Bram became a teacher in a Reformed school. Their marriage was blessed with four healthy children.

Soli Deo Gloria. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

The Offices In The Church

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the newsletter of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church

After He ascended into heaven our Lord instituted in the church various offices (Eph. 4:8-11). He instituted these offices that those who serve in them might represent Him, and serve His church in their offices. Though He remains the only Head and King of the church, these offices are necessary for the well-being of the church.

There has been much controversy about the number and nature of these offices. Without entering into that controversy, we believe that the offices that remain in the church are three, the offices of elder, deacon and minister.

We say “remain” because there have been other, temporary offices; apostle, prophet, evangelist, etc. These offices, which involved bringing the *inspired and infallible* Word of God (Acts 21:10-11, Hebrews 2:3-4, II Peter 3:15-16), are no longer necessary, since we now have the completed Scriptures (II Peter 1:19-21).

That it is only the offices of ruling elder, deacon, and minister that remain is clear, since these are the only offices mentioned in the later epistles of Paul (I Timothy and Titus, especially) where he is giving instruction to the successors of the Apostles. This is further confirmed by the fact that these epistles have to do with “proper behavior in the church” (Timothy 3:15) and with “setting things in order in the church” (Titus 1:5).

Nor are we concerned to argue the point that both the ministers and ruling elders are identified as elders in the NT. The fact of the matter is that these three offices have distinct duties and are viewed as separate offices in the NT (I Timothy 3 and 4).

What does concern us is the fact that these offices are neglected and forgotten in the church today. Few

churches have all three offices, and where the offices are present one often finds deacons doing the work of elders or *vice versa*, or ministers doing the work of all three. Likewise, in many cases the offices have become nothing more than honorary positions, and those who are chosen to them are chosen not on the basis of spiritual qualifications, but of prominence or wealth.

This can only be to the detriment of the church, if Christ has instituted them for the church. Indeed, insofar as the offices are representative of Christ, their absence in the church means that at least in some ways Christ Himself is not present among the people of God, as He ought to be.

We believe (this is another reason we find three offices in the NT) that these offices are aspects of Christ’s three-fold offices of prophet, priest and king. This is very evident in the offices of ruling elder and minister. It is hard not to see that those two are extensions of Christ’s kingly and prophetic offices. But the office of deacon, properly understood, is, we believe, an extension of Christ’s priestly office, or at least of some aspects of that office (this we hope to show in a forthcoming article).

If that is true, then the offices are that much more important to the church, and may not be neglected as they are today. It is our hope and prayer that they may be restored to their proper place and function. ❖

Rev. Hanko is missionary-pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.



The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign, Covenant God

by Skip Hunter

August 1 Read Psalm 147:1-11

Psalm 147:1-3 We continue with the group of Psalms which exhort us to praise Jehovah. These three verses have three parts. First of all, we are exhorted to praise Jehovah. This should be our goal with anything and everything that we do. Secondly we are told that the praise of Jehovah is beautiful. It must be beautiful. If it is not, it is not Jehovah's praise. Of course our praise is only beautiful through the blood of Christ. Finally we are told the reason for our praise. We must praise Him because of the great salvation He has given to the church and its individual members. Our covenant God cares for every member no matter what trouble they may be in. He cares for all those for whom the world, and sadly enough even the church, does not care. Let us praise our great God for His care for us. Sing Psalters 402:1 and 403:1.

August 2 Read Nahum 1:1-7

Psalm 147:4-7 There is contrasting language in these four verses. Can you find it? First of all in verses four and five the Psalmist makes several statements about God's greatness. Our God is the creator of the universe—even of the multitude of the stars. We may think that their number is infinite. It is not! Only God is infinite. The multitude of the stars only gives us a small picture of His infinity. Then this great God who has created all things cares for the meek. That is the contrast. The greatness of Jehovah over against the meekest of men. This lifting up is salvation for those meek people. Notice two other truths in these verses. The Creator is also the Saviour. Take away creation and salvation goes away as well. Secondly not only is election spoken of in verse six but reprobation as well. Let us be thankful unto our creator God who saves us from our sins. Let us do this with the song He has given to us. Sing Psalters 402:2 and 403:2.

August 3 Read Matthew 6:24-34

Psalm 147:8-9 We continue with an exposition of who God is. He is the One who causes all kinds of weather to come upon the earth. God rains, blows, snows, etc. It is not the chance happening of weather patterns or air masses. Each weather condition has His fingerprint upon it. If drought is drying up the farmers' crop now, it is His good work. If floods carry away our houses, it is by God's design. If we are enjoying weather that we like; this, too, comes from God and is a reason that we must praise Him. Not only does He give to us weather, He cares for all of His creatures. Every animal upon earth is in His hands. Because He does this, we can be confident that He will care for us in all situations of life. Let us pause and praise the Lord for such wonderful care. Sing Psalters 402:3.

August 4 Read Psalm 147:1-11

Psalm 147:10-11 Man is quick to boast over his accomplishments. In the upcoming summer Olympics we will witness great boasting about man and his accomplishments. Advertising is full of man and his goodness. What does God think about all this? Reread verse ten for the answer. It means nothing to Him. What is His pleasure? God delights in those that fear Jehovah. Young people, what do you think about day by day? What God-glorifying activities are you going to take part in tonight, tomorrow, or the next day? To praise God we must glorify Him. We may never take delight in ourselves, but only in His wonderful work of salvation. Let us fear Jehovah and hope in His mercy alone. Let us do this in every activity in which we may take part. Sing Psalter 403:3.

August 5 Read Psalm 147:12-20

Psalm 147:12-14 The last several verses focused on God's care for His people as individuals. Now we see God's care for His Church. As we prepare for the Sabbath, do we have a care for the body of Christ? Are we thinking about the members? Are we physically helping those who need our help? Do we bring the needs of the members before God's throne of grace in our prayers? He has cared for His Church. We must imitate that care as best we can in this life. And we must praise Him for caring for that church of which He has made us living members. Sing Psalter 402:4.

August 6 Read Job 38:22-30

Psalm 147:15-18 Today's verses are an expansion upon the truth first stated in verse eight. Take a minute and reread that verse. Notice how God carries out His desires upon the earth. He does this by His Word. This is the truth of Genesis 1 and John 1. All things happen not by chance but by His Word. This Word is Christ. Christ was present at creation. Through Christ creation was carried out. This is the same Christ who died upon the cross to save us from sin. This is the powerful Christ who bore the wrath of God during those hellish hours upon the cross. You do not think Christ is powerful enough to create? You think He needs millions of years to accomplish all that is on the earth? If you think that, then your Christ is not powerful enough to save you from sin. What do you think about the Word, people of God? Are you praising the Maker of heaven and earth? Sing Psalter 402:5.

August 7 Read Psalm 147:12-20

Psalm 147:19-20 The psalmist continues with the idea of the Word. Here the idea is more toward the fact of election and salvation. What a comfort to know that we are chosen by the grace

of God and not because of anything we have done. We can find the idea of the covenant in these two verses as well. There are definitely two kinds of people in this world—those who are chosen to experience the favor of God and those who are not. People of God, are you thankful for this truth? Do you live this truth? Do you praise God for this truth? As we go throughout our work week, let us do so in the knowledge that we are the people of God and must praise Him in and through all of our lives. Sing Psalter 402:6.

August 8 Read Psalm 114

Psalm 148:1-3 In this Psalm, which again calls us to praise God, we see an emphasis on God's works in His creation. Summertime is traditionally a time in which many people can and do spend more time in that creation. What do you experience, people of God? Young people, what are your thoughts about the outdoors? Do we stop and contemplate the various attributes of God that are shown to us in nature? Every facet of creation is called to praise God. Just as we must praise Him in everything that we do; so, too, this is the calling of creation. Just as we anxiously await the coming of Christ, so does all of the creation. Let us look around us and see the wonderful works that God has wrought, and then let us break forth into the singing of His praise. Sing Psalters 404:1 and 405:1.

August 9 Read Hebrews 11:1-6

Psalm 148:4-6 God's work of creation is not a temporary work. Oh, this world as we know it will be destroyed by fire at the end of time, but the new heavens and new earth will continue to reflect the everlasting goodness of our covenant God. Are we looking for this time? Or are we living lives that expect this present world to continue for ever? God's Word and works are unchangeable. What a beautiful and comforting thought that is. We need not fear what may happen to this earth, because a better home has been promised to us by the unchangeable God. Even the body that we have now will be replaced by a much better one. In our new homes and new bodies we will perfectly praise the Creator of this temporary place. People of God, who are pilgrims on this earth, praise the Lord. Sing Psalters 404:2 and 405:2.

August 10 Read Isaiah 43:14-21

Psalm 148:7-8 In our reading for today we see God's word to Israel through His prophet Isaiah. That word is one of rebuke, but also hope. Israel was rebuked for not following the paths that God had originally set forth at creation. In the passage in Isaiah as well as in our text for today we see that the creation will honor God. But God's own people do not at times. What do we do? Do we observe from nature the wonder works of God, and then do we follow them, or ignore them? God's people were taken into captivity for ignoring God and His commandments. What about us? There is hope as well, because we see that God has created a new way, the way of the cross for us. Let us be thankful and praise the Lord for this goodness. Sing Psalters 404:3 and 405:3.

August 11 Read Isaiah 44:21-28

Psalm 148:9-10 These two verses continue the lesson on God's sovereignty that we have been observing in this Psalm. As the reading in Isaiah shows us, God is sovereign over all. In Isaiah we see that He is sovereign over our salvation, His creation, and the world of wicked men. Heathen kings like Cyrus have to obey God's will. As our nation elects new leaders this fall, are we

aware of this truth? Do we realize that this is part of our salvation? The doctrine of God's sovereignty should be very comforting to the people of God. Do we bow to it in our daily lives? Do we see it in the working out of history? God is sovereign, and we are under His care from now until death or Christ's return. Sing Psalter 405:4.

August 12 Read I Timothy 2:1-8

Psalm 148:11-12 In yesterday's devotional I alluded to the rulers bowing before God. Today's verse bring this truth home for us. God gathers His people from all classes of men and from every race. All kinds of people are commanded to praise Jehovah. As Christians, we sometimes shake our heads at the actions of those whom God has placed in authority over us. But we have two commands concerning that authority. First of all, we must obey them (Romans 13). Secondly, we must pray for the salvation of those rulers whom God has elected from all eternity. We must also see from these verses the necessity of each member of our families praising Jehovah. Our children must use the songs of Zion at home **and** in church to praise our covenant God. Sing Psalters 404:4 and 405:5.

August 13 Read Philippians 2:1-11

Psalm 148:13 God's name is great! Of that there can be no doubt. Do a word study on the word *name* as it refers to God. You will find many places in Scripture where this truth is expressed. We open our worship services with the words taken from Psalm 124, "Our help is in the name of the Lord..." Do we glorify that name? Do we give proper praise to it? Quite often we will work hard that our names be not defamed. Do we work that hard to keep God's name holy? Are we jealous towards His glorious name? What about it, young people, do you take God's name in vain? Do you say nothing when your friends take His name in vain? God's name should be precious to us. Let us take great pains to glorify it and praise Him. Sing Psalter 405:6.

August 14 Read Psalm 148

Psalm 148:14 This final verse of this Psalm gives reasons why we should praise the name of the Lord. Those reasons can be summed up very simply: He has done great things for us. Are we constantly aware of those great things? Sometimes when we see a storm or witness a birth, we say that God is truly great. But what about some things which we may take for granted? What about every bite of food that we eat? What about every breath of air that we breath? What about the gift of language? God has done great things for His Church. The greatest, of course, being Christ Jesus. He has done great things, so praise the Lord daily. We must do this in our prayers, in our words, and in our deeds. With every breath that we take, we must praise Jehovah. Sing Psalters 404:5 and 406:7.

August 15 Read Psalm 149

Psalm 149:1-2 The people of God should be a singing people. Throughout all of Scripture, we can find instances of the church singing. Israel sang at the Red Sea. Judah sang going into battle. David sang on the hillsides as he cared for his sheep. We do read of them not singing because of the sadness caused by the captivity. The Bible also speaks of the angels singing together at creation. Paul sang in prison. Finally, we find many places in the book of Revelation which speak of the singing in heaven. Young people, are you a singing people? Do you sing the songs of Zion

that God has given for us to praise Him? We will have a new song in heaven. This is the song of triumph which cannot be tainted by sin. Let us practice in this life to prepare to join the heavenly choir which praises God day and night. Sing the first stanzas of Psalters 406, 407, and 408.

August 16 Read Matthew 21:10-16

Psalm 149:3 God has given to us the wonderful gift of music. How are we using that gift? There are many ways in which music can be used. Some fall under Satan's tempting and use it in very godless ways. It becomes the vehicle to promote sins of the worst kind. Sad to say, many people of God, some young and some not too young, have fallen to this temptation. Others, like those children who greeted Jesus as He made His entry into Jerusalem, use music as it was meant to be used. God created music. Jubal corrupted it. Christ has redeemed it for us. Not every type of music or musical expression has been redeemed. There is some, and you know what I mean, which remains in Satan's control. Flee that type of music, people of God. Flee to the music redeemed by Christ and praise the glorious name of God with it. With that praise God will be pleased. Sing the second stanzas of Psalters 406, 407, and 408.

August 17 Read I Peter 2:1-10

Psalm 149:4 Once again we see a verse beginning with the word *for*. Once again we must remember the grammatical use of that word. That word, used in this way, means that a reason for the preceding ideas is being given. What is the reason why we must praise Jehovah? We must praise Jehovah because He loves us and has given to us salvation. Just because this thought is repeated often in Scripture is not reason to think it trite. Scripture repeats things in order to emphasize them. We must pay attention to this reason. I hope that you read the Scripture reading carefully today. Maybe we need to read it again. God has done much for us who are nothing. Let us praise His name today, tomorrow, and every day. Sing Psalter 406:3.

August 18 Read II Chronicles 20:20-30

Psalm 149:5-6 Here we have further exhortations for the people of God to praise Him. We are to be joyful as we glorify God. Being joyful can sometimes be hard. It might be hard because of the circumstances that we are in. These circumstances might cause us to look upon the dark side of life. We may think that God has forgotten about us. But God calls us to be joyful. We might lie awake at night worrying about tomorrow and about the future; God calls for us to sing as we lie upon our beds. This call to be joyful must be answered by us. We must take a song upon our lips and His Word upon our hearts, and glorify Him in whatever state that we may be in. Let us pray for that grace even when we might not feel like singing. Let us pray for the grace to sing songs of joy unto our gracious heavenly Father. Sing Psalters 406:4, 407:3, and 408:3.

August 19 Read Psalm 149

Psalm 149:7-9 The final verses of this chapter give to the people of God work to do. In verse six, we are commanded to take the praise of God in our mouths and His Word in our hands. These verses tell us that we must go in His service and conquer the evil and stand for the right. This is the battle that we are in everyday. At our workplaces we must stand up for the name of God. Positively we must exhibit the graces which become the child of God.

Negatively we must rebuke those who scorn our righteous God. Young people, you must be busy about this work as well. Wherever you are, you must stand for God. You must fight sin and Satan. This is not easy, and it cannot be done in our strength. We must do this only with the Word of God in our hearts, on our lips, and in our actions. Let us serve God as He has called and commanded us to serve Him. Let us do this in praise to the Lord. Sing Psalters 406:5 and 407:4.

August 20 Read Psalm 150

Psalm 150:1-2 We come to the grand doxology to the book of Psalms. In it the Psalmist makes one last grand exhortation to praise Jehovah the sovereign God of the covenant. Twelve times the word "praise" is used in this short Psalm. It is good for us to consider the idea of praise, as that is the meaning of the word "Psalm" in the Greek. Every Psalm, whether it be a praise Psalm, a Messianic Psalm, an imprecatory Psalm, or any of the other types is a Psalm of praise to our God. The word "praise" is paired with "Him" nine times in this Psalm. We must praise Him! Our God is worthy of our praise! In fact He is the only One worthy of our praise for all that He has done for us. Praise ye the Lord. Sing the first stanza of Psalters 409, 410, 411, 412, and 413.

August 21 Read Isaiah 38:16-20

Psalm 150:3-5 Once again we are called to use the musical instruments that God has given to us to praise Him. We may not use these verses for a clamor to introduce all types of music into our worship service. The principles of solemn, Reformed, God-pleasing worship must be followed. But we are called to use all kinds of instruments to praise God. This can be done in the home, at school, at social occasions, and even at functions in the church building. But when we use them, we must praise God as He has commanded us to praise Him. We may not be the judges of what praise is. Scripture is that judge. Let us praise the Lord using what He has given to us. Sing Psalter 409:2-4.

August 22 Read Psalm 150

Psalm 150:6 We come to the end of our journey through the Psalms and the *Psalter*. It is our desire that this has been as profitable and instructive for you as it has been for us. We have seen that God has given to us a book that covers most, if not all, of life's circumstances. Whether young or old we may all profit from His Word as the Spirit has poured it out in this book. The last verse of the book calls everyone alive to praise the Lord. Are you attempting to praise the Lord, people of God, and especially our young people? Have you hid these precious words in your hearts so that you might not sin against Him? Be God praisers, people of God, and know that He will surely be pleased with you in your praise of Him, our almighty covenant God. Sing Psalters 409:5, and the second stanzas of 410, 411, 412, and 413.

August 23 Read Proverbs 1:1-9

We are going to spend some time in the book of Proverbs. Rather than travel through it verse by verse, we are going to look at various sections of the book. Sometimes we will focus on one verse, and sometimes we will look at more than one. This first section serves as an introduction to the book. God endowed Solomon with much wisdom. The Holy Spirit used this wise man as well as others to give to us this book. The book centers on wisdom as it must be manifest in our lives. Some of the book speaks of the life of sanctification that we must lead. There is

much profit for young and old alike. In this first section we see that it is the duty of the child of God of all ages to seek after wisdom. We need knowledge which comes from having the fear of Jehovah. This wisdom must be seen by those around us, and it must be the beautiful wisdom found by grace. Sing Psalter 325.

August 24 Read Proverbs 1:10-19

Parents, make sure your young people read this section of Scripture. Grandparents call your grandchildren and teach them the knowledge found here. Young men and women, consent not to do evil. School is starting. With school comes social occasions for our young people. Sometimes these occasions lead our young people into sin. What must we do? Solomon gives to us the answer. "Consent thou not!" Don't agree to walk into sin. Say no to those who would entice you to do evil. This is walking the way of the antitheses that is commanded by God. Adam and Eve had that commandment. The last man on earth will have that commandment. There is much evil to be found very near to us. People of God, "consent thou not!" Sing Psalter 27.

August 25 Read Proverbs 1:20-27

The wisdom that cometh from above is all around us. We can find that wisdom, first of all, in the Scriptures. But we can also find it in creation. God teaches us wisdom in the world around us. Are we studying those lessons? Are we learning those lessons? Are we paying attention to those lessons? Are we applying those lessons in our daily lives? This section also gives the results of not learning those lessons. If we do not walk in wisdom's way, we will be of all men most miserable. We will have many problems in this life. Let us learn wisdom's way and avoid sin's pitfalls. Sing Psalter 114:6-10

August 26 Read Proverbs 1:28-33

In this section we see a poetical device used often in this book. That device is called personification. It is most evident in verses 28 and 33. The word "me" refers to wisdom. Wisdom is speaking to all men. Some listen; some do not. What about you, young people? Do you listen to the catechism lessons that you have been taught? Are you ready to take up your work in school, catechism, and society with all your hearts? If you are not ready, you are ignoring the call of wisdom. You are called to be students. Some are more able and therefore are going to be held more responsible. Others do not have as many abilities, but they are still called to use those abilities to their fullest and to God's glory. They must give account of themselves before God in the day of judgment. Wisdom calls; are we listening? Sing Psalter 71.

August 27 Read Proverbs 2:1-9

If you are reading this before church this morning, I hope that you are going to put its admonitions into practice. As the minister speaks, he is speaking the wisdom of Christ. Are we listening to that wisdom? Are we seeking to understand it? Are we working to learn more about its implications? Are we desirous to put it into practice today, tomorrow, throughout this week? There is much so called wisdom to be learned. But when it is weighed upon God's balances, it will be found wanting. Stay away from that kind of wisdom, people of God, and seek the wisdom of the Lord. Sing Psalter 36:1-3.

August 28 Read Proverbs 2:10-22

One of the results of obtaining wisdom is the ability to be discrete. This attribute is mentioned in verse 11. People of all ages need to exhibit discretion in their lives. Parents must be discrete around their children. They must be discrete about many of life's activities that are for adults only. This is not sheltering children and young people. Rather, this is not allowing them to be affected by things in life for which they are not ready. Young people must exhibit discretion when with their peers. Just because a matter is truth and fact does not mean that it has to be said. Young people must be discrete as they choose the clothing that they wear. Even our young children must learn discretion. Discretion's reward is preservation in the life to come. Be discrete, people of God, and cultivate this grace in yourselves and in your children and young people. Sing Psalter 146:1-6.

August 29 Read Proverbs 3:1-12

This chapter, as well as others in this first section of Proverbs, begins with the words "My son." Solomon gives instruction to sons of all ages. We do well to read these words often and see what instruction they have for us. Notice that in these words which admonish us to keep the law of the Lord is the requirement that we remember that our material wealth comes from the Lord. Our offerings must not be what is left on Sunday, but our offerings are to be from our paychecks before other bills are paid. This applies to you as well, young people. Giving to God from what He has given you is your responsibility as much as it is your parents. In doing this you will be honoring God and showing wisdom. Notice that there is a blessing in such an honoring. This blessing will be peace with God both now and in eternity. Sing Psalter 95.

August 30 Read Proverbs 3:13-26

From instruction concerning our material goods, Solomon goes back to instruction on wisdom. First of all he tells us that happiness is to be found in seeking and finding wisdom. This is a much different philosophy from that of the world. The world will tell us to seek after material wealth or man's wisdom. This is not Solomon's instruction to his son and is not God's instruction to His sons. Seeking after God's wisdom is more precious than any amount of money that we can obtain. Young people, during this school year, will your focus be on the wisdom of God or the world? You will learn worldly wisdom; by God's grace you will also learn God's wisdom. Pray for that grace. And parents, help your children and young people seek after the wisdom which comes from above. Sing Psalter 1.

August 31 Read Proverbs 3:27-35

Included in the instruction on wisdom is instruction on loving our neighbor. Can you help out those whom God places on your paths? Maybe the proper question is "Are you helping out those whom God has placed on your path?" Children, you have this opportunity in school. If your friend needs paper or a pen, do you willingly lend from your desk? Do you help those who have forgotten their lunches? Young people, are you characterized by your love for your peers? Adults, are you examples for your children and teenagers? There are many admonitions about loving the neighbor in Scripture. This is one of the ways in which we show our gratitude for our salvation. Are we truly grateful? Sing Psalter 305:1-5.



The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign, Covenant God

by John Huizenga

Psalm 31—“This song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a death-blow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung.”
Spurgeon

September 1 Read Psalm 31:1 & Psalter 80:1

We can not know the great power and love of our sovereign covenant God if we don't know the greatness of our sins and miseries. Once again, we find David in the troubles and distresses of this life which lead to God through Christ. Are you distressed with family troubles, great loss, money problems, or discontent with your lot in life? Do these things weaken your faith and leave you miserable? Does it seem as though the ungodly neighbor is more happy and content than you? May God so work in your heart by the Spirit that you turn to God with these words of David every day as you walk as a child of God with your Creator and Redeemer. Shame is experienced when we are found wandering away from God in pursuit of our own self fulfillment and lust. God delivers His people from shame in “His righteousness,” i.e. His covenant faithfulness in which He never departs from His eternal plan to save. Sing the Psalter.

September 2 Read Psalm 31:2 & Psalter 80:2; 82:1

David uses language that demonstrates familiarity with God. He knows God as a Friend. He knows God is exalted infinitely above him, yet he does not hesitate to request that God, as it were, stoop down and listen to his plea like a child to his father. He prays that God would be to him a rock and a house. God is often called a rock in the Psalms, but we need to experience what this means. David wants to experience security and contentment in God. Fear has taken hold of him, he is weak and unable to go on. Every one of us has reason for such distress when we realize how far short we fall in our love and obedience to God. Meditate today upon your sins and pray this prayer of David. Sing the Psalter.

September 3 Read Psalm 31:3,4 & Psalter 80:3; 82:2

Notice the titles of the two Psalters from which we are singing: “God Our Resort in Trouble” & “Security in God.” These titles reflect the theme of the first 18 verses of Psalm 31 and our devotions through the next week. We will see how David's persistent request in time of need is turned into praise of God's goodness. While seeking security in God, David brings before God various details and truths about his covenant life with God. In the verses we consider today, David recalls the truth that God is his rock and fortress. There are many things that we know about God also, but that does not mean our feelings and life reflect this knowledge. We need to pray to God as we know Him, and seek the work of God in our heart to open our eyes to Him. God is pleased to use the medi-

tations of His people to work assurance of salvation and covenant fellowship. Sing the Psalter.

September 4 Read Psalm 31:5 & Psalter 80:4

Do you give over your life to Jehovah? This is something you must do continually. By nature we easily imagine that success in school, work, dating, friends, or marriage depends upon our own abilities, and we have no need of help from the outside. Though one may prosper in earthly things, one really has not begun to live until he commends his life to God in all things. It is not enough to depend upon our own abilities until we fail, and then, as a last resort, hand over our messed-up life to God. It is sometimes easier to commit our life to God after we have utterly failed and can do nothing else, but a godly walk requires that we learn to commend our lives each moment of the day. Knowing that God has washed away our sins, we know that the afflictions we face will draw us near to God, we know that God will bring a suitable marriage partner, too, in the time appointed, or give grace to live as a single. Above all, when we commend our lives daily, we will be ready to commend our life to God in death. Sing the Psalter.

September 5 Read Psalm 31:6, 7 & Psalter 80:5

Ungodly men thrive on lies as they seek to advance themselves in life. We all face the great temptation to present a false image of ourselves to gain attention and friends. Are you attracted to the popular people who in reality are putting on a big show? Many will say they want to be friends with people who are honest and true, but they will not seek God or friends who love God, in whom alone is truth. These people love the false. The child of God hates those who love lying vanities. Separate yourselves from the crowd that hovers around the deadly fumes of lying vanities and put your trust in the Lord. Meditate upon His Word. Have fellowship with His people. Stamp out the fires of lying when they appear in your life and friends. In God and His mercy you will find happiness and joy. Sing the Psalter.

September 6 Read Psalm 31:7, 8 & Psalter 80:6

Did you find happiness and joy in God's mercy yesterday? By nature each one of us has been wooed by Satan, forsaken God, and boarded the train headed for the concentration camp of Satan—hell. By nature our pride lifts us up so that we are willing to forsake the good purpose of God for us, in favor of our own idea of happiness in the thrills of this world. An enemy has never had better hold of his captives than the devil with man. Man has no hope of escaping by himself, because he does not want to escape and is even dead in sin and powerless to escape should he want to. Neither does God have any obligation to rescue man. God is perfectly just in sending us with haste to eternal damnation. This truth is gloomy

and terrifying indeed. The only hope is God's mercy; His desire to deliver, and to reveal His glory and power in doing so. He comes in the power of His Spirit to open our eyes and make us alive to see our plight. Do you see? Sing the Psalter.

September 7 Psalm 31:9, 10 and Psalter 80:7

Who is God? We must all have a ready and accurate answer. So many people who may even call themselves Christians think of God as a Being Who is more powerful than the individual man and influences man, but does not have sovereign control and leaves the destiny of man in a large degree to man himself. The role of Jesus in salvation is minimized to His being a good example. Their concept of salvation is based on man's ability to direct the affairs of the world. But God Himself makes very clear what He wants man to know. God is the One who has eternally decreed that man fall into the rebellion and death from which He would save. Who is God? He is the Creator of all things, and known by the children of God from day to day as the One who is constantly delivering us from our guilt and shame. He is our Savior. Sing the Psalter "God Our Resort in Trouble."

September 8 Read Psalm 31:11-13 and Psalter 80:8

The way in which we walk in covenant friendship with God is not bustling with friends who want to include you in their fun all the time. God often makes our way lonely from an earthly point of view in order to impress upon us the richness of friendship with God. David is crushed under the burden of his sin, and afflictions and human companions have forsaken him. Jesus experienced the dismay of friends who turned away when the disciples fled and Peter denied him. Job's friends turned against him when they came with their criticisms. Though earthly friends are important, God uses hard times to separate us from ungodly friends and strengthen our bond with Christ Who never forsakes His own. Sing the Psalter.

September 9 Read Psalm 31:14, 15 and Psalter 80:9

"My times are in thy hand" sang David. These words are a most beautiful expression of God's providence, a doctrine cherished by every believer and strongly defended by the Reformers in the Canons of Dordt, Fifth Head of Doctrine. God upholds every sparrow. He sends hurricanes and tornadoes. He maintains life of every form, and every believer confesses that every aspect of his or her life is in the hand of God. There are no "accidents" that just happen by cold chance. Statistics may determine your chance of getting hit by lightning or living to be 100, but statistics only reveal the constant work of God in and through the means He has established to work out His eternal plan. God is intently playing the instrument of your life in the grand orchestra of the universe for His glory and your salvation. Submit to God and pray that He will show you the joy of salvation. Sing the Psalter.

September 10 Read Psalm 31:15, 16 and Psalter 80:10

"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant," sang David, another beautiful desire placed by God in the hearts of His children. This desire and its fulfillment is the fruit of "serious repentance" as we read in the Canons, Fifth Head, article 5. Speaking of the times when the saints fall into sin, we read in the Canons "By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again

shines upon them." Take the time now or sometime today to meditate upon the Fifth Head of the Canons and Rejection of Errors in the back of your Psalter. Sing the Psalter.

September 11 Read Psalm 31:17 and Psalter 80:11

Shame overwhelms when the hope which we defend and upon which we govern our actions and words and direct our entire life, is shattered, and we stand exposed and naked to all who laugh at our foolishness. We hope in God who has revealed Himself and the way of salvation in His Word. We struggle our whole life to flee the life of sin which God forbids, but the world enjoys. We strive to crucify our pride and give God all the glory. We believe God's promise of life with Him in heavenly glory after death. The world laughs and says "this life is all there is, get all you can now or you will forever miss out on life." God gives us a taste of heavenly bliss now through the preaching of His Word and a life of obedience, but when times of doubt and sin overwhelm, the fear of shame may be strong. The world's trust in science often challenges our hope in order to bring us to shame. We can be certain that God's work will never come to naught. May we ever call upon God that we may never be ashamed. Sing the Psalter.

September 12 Read Psalm 31:18 and Psalter 80:12

Lying lips surrounded David with their incessant blather, they surrounded Christ as he taught in the cities and died on the cross, and they surround us today. The discontented factory worker spews forth vulgarities in every sentence, the scientist relentlessly scours God from every discovery, the "theologians" never give up trying to make myths of God's Word. God speaks in all creation and from the pulpit "I AM" and man responds "He is not, I am." Lying lips; do you hear them and cry out to God that He silence them, or are you listening to them with indifference or even interest? Listen for lying lips today and pray each time you hear them "Let the lying lips be put to silence." Watch your own lips too that they join not in the grievous speech against the righteous. Sing the Psalter.

September 13 Read Psalm 31:19 and Psalter 81:1

The new Psalter number sets forth the tones of praise which always follow the cries of God's people in distress. God answered David's prayer in such a way that David saw the riches of God's goodness. Sin - Deliverance - Gratitude. This is the pattern of the Heidelberg Catechism. This is the pattern of the Psalms. This is the pattern of life. The better we know this pattern, the closer will be our walk with God. God is pleased to show us the riches of His goodness in the way of the troubles and distress of life which He sends. When you find yourself walking the valley of the shadow of death, you know what to do: pour out your heart to God, read His Word, listen to His Word in church. He will reveal to you something that is not revealed to the ungodly. He will reveal not only that He is good in Himself, but also the effect of His goodness, i.e. the salvation wrought by Christ and tasted here on earth. Sing the Psalter.

September 14 Read Psalm 31:20 and Psalter 81:2

What are the riches of God's goodness? He hides us in the secret of His presence. The idea here is that He gives His people a share in His own hidden life. He brings them into covenant friendship; into the sphere of His fellowship, a region where the brightness of His glory shines from His face in Christ, a region into which the ungodly are unable to go. Presently we find this secret sphere of God's presence in the hearing of God's Word which is wisdom to God's people but foolishness to the ungodly. In this sphere we have

peace which can never be quenched by the pride of man and the strife of tongues. Do you long for the day when we enter into eternal life with God, being forever in His presence? Seek the shelter of God's grace whenever the pride of man and the strife of tongues penetrate your life. Sing the Psalter.

September 15 Read Psalm 31:21, 22 and Psalter 81:3

These verses tell us about another of God's riches - His marvelous kindness. In the Psalter we sing "His love beyond compare." David came to know the love of God through the experience of distress. God's love is at the heart of all the riches of His goodness. When David thought about the goodness of God, he was reminded of his weakness. Even though he had felt that he had failed and was cut off from before God's eyes, God did not forsake him. God loves his elect people and will never forsake them. Though we often speak words of foolishness in our haste and weak faith, God hears us in Christ. Let us also bless Jehovah for his steadfast covenant love. Sing the Psalter.

September 16 Read Psalm 31:23, 24 and Psalter 81:4

At the close of this Psalm, David exhorts the saints to love Jehovah and be of good courage. What a marvelous conclusion to a Psalm which began with sorrow and shame. God sovereignly works this love in our heart by means of sin and deliverance. We do not love God blindly, we love in faith knowing all that God has done for us. We read in I John 4:19, "We love him, because He first loved us." David recognizes the love of God in the doctrine of God's providence. God preserves those whom He has cleansed in Christ. In preserving His people, God rewards the proud doers with their just destruction. Thus a clear knowledge of the doctrine of reprobation which serves the doctrines of election and preservation is necessary for our love for God. May you also find courage in the wonderful works of God. Sing the Psalter.

September 17 Read Psalm 32:1, 2 and Psalter 83:1

Psalm 1 speaks of blessedness in a godly walk, and the Psalm we begin testifies of a blessedness that comes after being forgiven an ungodly walk. The sin of David which was covered was his sin with Bathsheba and killing Uriah. David wrote Psalm 31 *before* he confessed his sin and while experiencing terrible guilt, but he wrote this Psalm after the heavy burden was lifted from his shoulders. God uses this Psalm in Romans 4:6-7 to teach us that the great blessedness experienced by David comes to the child of God in the way of knowing the doctrine of justification by faith alone and not of our own works. This was a favorite Psalm for Augustine who also was delivered of great sin. Martin Luther also expressed his great delight and peace found in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. May you also know the happiness of forgiveness by God in this day. Sing the Psalter.

September 18 Read Psalm 32:3-5 and Psalter 83:2

Guilty silence, what a miserable condition. We sin against someone, we know it, but we are too proud to admit it. We feign joy and peace, we may even speak and talk freely with the one against whom we have sinned, but a wall stands between, and true fellowship is virtually silent. Meanwhile inside we are being ripped violently apart. Though outwardly silent about his guilt, David roared inside and his strength was wasted; all because he was proud and wanted to live in his sin. Left to ourselves, our pride would bring us to death. In grace, God sent Nathan the prophet to bring the sharp word of God which cut his festering sore and let the poison of his unconfessed sin drain out. Confession of sin is the only way to

experiencing the blessed forgiveness of God. Pray that God would crush our pride and open our hearts to confession of sin. Sing the Psalter.

September 19 Read Psalm 32:6,7 and Psalter 83:3

The child of God who desires covenant fellowship with God must never procrastinate to enter into that fellowship in all its fullness. David's misery only increased when he refrained from seeking God's forgiveness. It is very foolish to seek your own pleasure while you are healthy and strong and wait until you are in desperate need before seeking God. God is near right now as you meditate upon this portion of God's Word. He is near in the preaching. May God open our eyes to see the great blessedness we receive when we confess our sins immediately. God saves His people by means of His presence in the preaching of His Word. Woe is he from whom God removes the preaching of His Word. Seek Him diligently now while He may be found. Sing the Psalter.

September 20 Read Psalm 32:8,9 and Psalter 84:1

The doctrines of sovereign grace are often criticized as doctrines which force men to obey God so that men become machines and not willing, joyful followers of Christ. God's sovereign power over us, however, works in such a way that we are given new hearts and made willing followers of Christ. Yet, the old man of sin remains to make us sluggish and ignorant. Except God constantly and graciously guide and teach us, we would become ignorant and stubborn like a mule. Let us be diligent to study God's Word that we might not be ignorant of God's marvelous grace. We can not expect to be found in heaven when we wander in beastly ignorance and indifference to the preaching of God's Word. Sing the Psalter.

September 21 Read Psalm 32:10,11 and Psalter 84:2

Under God's gracious guidance, His mercy shall compass us about. This means that when we walk in obedience to God through the trials in our lives, God will always be present and ready to lift us out of our miseries. Don't imagine that a godly walk, due to the demands of God which are contrary to our sinful nature, is a way of greater sorrow than a walk in our own sinful desires. We have sorrow because we know our sin, but when we strive to walk in obedience, we will always be near unto God's Word, and the consciousness of God's mercy will quickly restore the joy of our heart when we fall. The ungodly try to cover up sorrow with more pleasure. They may appear happy, but it is only a mask. Those who are cleansed in the blood of Christ have every reason to rejoice. May this be a day of joy for you. Sing the Psalter.

September 22 Read Psalm 33:1-3 and Psalter 85:1

Praise is comely, i.e. beautiful and suitable for the righteous. You and I could do nothing better than praise Jehovah. How must we praise God? With our voice moved by our love for God. Musical instruments in themselves do not praise God except they help train your voice to lift up the best music possible. Our love for God, not music, must inspire us to sing. Highest praise comes from the lips of the godly saint who sings from the heart without the aid of musical instruments. Sing as loudly as you can without distorting the quality of your voice. Sing a new song. A new song does not mean a different song, but it is a song sung with zeal that is newly inspired by a deeper knowledge of God. Take the time to learn the music of this Psalter and so meditate upon the words that you can sing it joyfully from the heart without musical accompaniment.

September 23 Read Psalm 33:4, 5 and Psalter 85:2

We sing praises to Jehovah because His goodness fills the earth. The Word of Jehovah is in the Bible, and also includes the entire decree of God's counsel according to which He created all things and governs them for the salvation of His people. In all of His words and works, God is good. We live in a world in which lying, pain, hate, and distress bring sadness and death, but God loves truth and lives in eternal bliss. All the scientific wonders and history of the earth reveal His goodness. Even sin and its terrible effects on the world reveal God's goodness, because it is the means whereby God reveals the fullness of His grace to His people. We have much reason to praise God. Show forth His praise as you sing the Psalter.

September 24 Read Psalm 33:6, 7 and Psalter 85:3

We sing praise to Jehovah because He has created all the wonders of this world and the universe. The Word of God is Christ (John 1) and His Breath often refers to the Holy Spirit. Thus we praise the triune God. The very existence of every atom and the energy and life within the living creature is upheld each moment by God. He spoke and the massive stars and galaxies of the universe came into existence. If you stand by an ocean you can see the curve of the earth and it appears as though the water is in a big pile. God holds the water in place by the mysterious force of gravity which He has created and upholds every moment of the day. We must remember that God continues to uphold the creation which He created. For this, too, is a reason to sing praise to our God. Sing the Psalter.

September 25 Read Psalm 33:8-9 and Psalter 86:1

This Psalm of praise began with an exhortation to praise God, and gave reason for praise in the goodness of God and the wonder of creation and preservation of that creation. In the section covered by Psalter 86 everyone in the world is exhorted to stand in awe of and fear God for His providence and grace toward His people. The God who gathers His people to be with Him in heaven has created the world to accomplish this purpose. Because the ungodly hate this fact and seek ever to erase it from their minds, God declares it in His Word so that they are unable to hide from God. The doctrine of providence causes the ungodly to tremble, but makes the godly lift up their hearts in praise. Do you find peace and joy in the doctrine of God's providence? Meditate upon this doctrine today and sing the Psalm.

September 26 Read Psalm 33:10,11 and Psalter 86:2

It is very common today to find people who confess faith in God and His salvation in Christ, but deny that His will and plan for them and the world never changes. They do this because they want man to have some control. Some who see the clear language of God's sovereignty in Scripture say God sovereignly decided in His counsel to give man a will that is free to choose Christ if he wants. But God makes it plain that even though man has a will and nations make counsel to do this or that, it means nothing as far as the goal and purpose of man is concerned. God's plan, His eternal and sovereign good pleasure, His counsel according to which He has created all things and governs them, stands certain forever. Nothing which He has created will interfere and change it. Blessed are we who belong to God! Sing the Psalter.

September 27 Read Psalm 33:12 and Psalter 86:3

Indeed the eternal counsel of God is reason for praise! We can be at peace knowing that everything is in God's hands. The world

is so big and so many things are happening every day. We watch developments in the nations and peoples of the world, stand helpless when denominations of churches slip into apostasy, and fear the power of the world will influence our churches and persecute the faithful. But God is in control of every event and heart of man in the world. Woe is he whose God is not Jehovah, whose god is evolution and the "forces of nature," whose god is man. But we belong to the God who created all things and governs all things for our salvation and to His glory. Blessed indeed are we when we remain near unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

September 28 Read Psalm 33:13-15 and Psalter 87:1

The psalmist sets forth yet another reason to praise God: His omniscience and omnipresence, doctrines which comfort God's people in the midst of an ungodly world. Jehovah is exalted above all that is created and looks down upon man which He has placed on earth to care for the earth and live in obedience to Him in love. He gave to man a mind and body suited for His service. But what does He see? We know that God is angry with man, who has forsaken Jehovah and serves himself in pride and rebellion. Remember, God is also watching your every move. What does God see when he looks at you and considers your works? Does he see a humble and repentant sinner who hates his sin? Does he see one who seeks a refuge in Christ? Do not look to man for your salvation, come to Christ alone that your works may be seen in Him. Sing the Psalter.

September 29 Read Psalm 33:16-19 and Psalter 87:2

Does not a king depend upon his army to deliver the kingdom from the invading enemy? Does not a man depend upon his strength to fight off the foe? Would not a horse be invaluable to escape from danger? Human strength and physical power may preserve earthly life for a time, but the preservation of life in time itself only brings every man closer to death. Forget earthly strength. Behold, look over here, look at Jehovah who rules over all. His eye is on those that fear Him and hope in His mercy. His goal and His aim in all things is His glory in their salvation. Devote all your attention to that which is important: a right knowledge of God and His counsel. He is gathering His Church. Are you busy in that work? Go to God in prayer and ask how He might use you and show you His great salvation. Sing the Psalter.

September 30 Read Psalm 33:20-22 and Psalter 87:3

Above all things, the child of God seeks God's mercy. All the virtues and truths about God's glory, righteousness, power, and providence bring fear to the sinner apart from the assurance of God's mercy revealed in Christ. It is important that we know God as our help and shield. It is important to know God and put our trust in Him. In all our spiritual growing and hearing God's Word, we must always pray "Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee." Our hope is rooted in our faith, which is given to us by God. Our hope grows as we grow in our knowledge of God. We must seek to know God's mercy revealed to us in Christ with every particle of hope that we have. When we live in peace, our heart shall rejoice, and we will render the praise due unto Him. Sing the Psalter.

Psalter 325— Instruction in the Divine Law

by Beth DeVries

How do we live our lives? This is the subject at hand this month in this Psalter versification of Psalm 119:33-40. The title of the Psalter is “Instruction in the Divine Law.” We know that Psalm 119 has as its focus the law of God; in this the fifth section, we find the call to live a life of holiness. We are reminded to look to God and His commandments for how we must walk. We are called to turn from vanity despite opposition, and desire a righteous walk with God.

The first stanza of this Psalter versification has us asking God for instruction in the ways of truth. This is really the heart of the matter. We know and must remember that it is God who gives us the Holy Spirit that we may desire to seek His commandments. God preserves us that we may not depart from His ways. We are reminded to steadfastly obey the laws that are set before us. God has given us His laws and He gives us the Spirit to desire to obey them. What a wonderful gift of grace this is! May this lead us to the understanding heart that is mentioned at the close of this stanza.

We are called to walk in the commandments of God. We think primarily of the ten commandments. We can at times think that we do pretty well in keeping these, from all outward appearances. Then we are reminded of the words of Jesus in the Scriptures at the time when the woman taken in adultery was brought to Him. Jesus said that he who was without sin should cast the first stone,

and all left without a stone being cast on her (John 8:3-11). There are also the words of Matt.5:27-28 which read “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” These passages condemn us for our very thoughts and not just our outward acts. We are reminded to keep the commandments of God written on our hearts.

When we keep the commandments of God on our hearts we will have joy to do the will of God. We will be reminded of our sins and seek repentance from them often. This helps us to live that life that is holy and acceptable to God. This is when we feel a closeness to our God and trust in His will. As this second stanza puts it “...give me a heart that loves Thy will, From discontent and envy free.”

The last part of that phrase tells us the result of loving the will of God. Is that not how we desire to live? A life free from envy and discontent is truly a joy.

The third stanza continues on in this theme by speaking of turning our eyes from vanity. We remember that vanity is a love self and what we want for ourselves. The world in which we live is filled with good things. God has blessed us with so much that we, instead of being thankful, just desire more. We are easily caught up in

325 Instruction in the Divine Law
PSALM 119 L. M. Bishop Joseph P. Holbrook

1. Teach me, O Lord, Thy way of truth, And from it
2. In Thy com-mand-ments make me walk, For in Thy
3. Turn Thou my eyes from van-i-ty, And cause me
4. Turn Thou a-way re-proach and fear; Thy right-eous

I will not de-part; That I may stead-fast-
law my joy shall be; Give me a heart that
in Thy ways to tread; O let Thy serv-ant
judg-ments I con-fess; To know Thy pre-cepts

ly o-bey, Give me an un-der-stand-ing heart.
loves Thy will, From dis-con-tent and en-vy free.
prove Thy word And thus to god-ly fear be-led.
I de-sire, Be-vive me in Thy right-eous-ness.

the worldliness of this culture. May we here be reminded to seek the ways of God first and foremost.

We are to show gratitude to God for the gifts He has bestowed on us. We do this when we live our lives following the ways of God. When we seek to follow the Lord's way then we also are brought closer to God and His Word in the Bible. We find ourselves consumed with the study of God's Word and are not distracted by the many things about us. It seems that we seldom find ourselves so consumed with God but rather on the other extreme, consumed with the material things. This is the constant struggle of the Christian life. By God's grace we are sustained to endure to the end in His way. What a comfort to know that we can not fall from God's grace, for it is He that upholds us and not we ourselves.

When we live our lives in holiness and fear of God, as we have been thinking about, it naturally follows that we turn away reproach and fear. This is the final stanza of Psalter 325. We let our light so shine that the world knows we are God's and we are not frightened by the

reproaches which this may bring upon us. We confess God's judgments and commandments to all. We know that those in the world do not want to hear these things, but we have nothing to fear because God is on our side. We are then reminded to know the precepts of God. This is to be our desire that through knowing them we may praise God.

We conclude with a few thoughts on the last line of this stanza. The idea that God will revive us in His righteousness brings us back to the fact that it is all of God. He gives us life in the Spirit. We pray to God because we know that He hears us. He will renew in us that love for Him and His truths. God will then revive in us that desire to walk in His will and ways. Then we shall be filled with true Christian joy. We will sing to God with our voices the Psalms which He has given to us. ❖

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Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

A Similar Niche: Different Animal

by John Huizenga

Let's play a little game called "guess the animal." This animal eats lots of grass. It has fur. Full grown, it can get to be a couple hundred pounds. It escapes predators with its incredible speed. If cornered, it may attack. It is hunted for its meat and hide. Millions of dollars are spent each year fixing the cars that collide with them. Farmers often get quite upset when these creatures eat their crops and pastureland.

What is it? Why, it's a kangaroo, of course. "Kangaroo?" you say, "The description sounds more like a white tailed deer to me." Both answers would be correct given the descriptions, and your answer was probably a pretty good indication of the hemisphere in which you live. For two animals that are so different in ap-

pearance and life, it is quite remarkable that they have so much in common.

Along with the facts that both animals are mammals, are similar in size, move quickly, and eat grass, they live in a similar niche. The niche of an animal is the particular place in which it thrives in the creation. They both exist in a place where there is enough space for a medium sized animal to get around quickly and enough grass and vegetation to eat year round. They generally have no trouble reproducing to fill that space because there are few predators large enough to catch and eat them.

Looking a bit more broadly at the various deer species, we find a whole range of deer ranging in size from a few pounds to a few hundred pounds. These deer all have a particular niche in the Northern Hemisphere.

Similar niches in Australia, New Zealand, and New Guinea, however are filled not by creatures with hooves, antlers, and four walking legs, but rather by creatures that have pouches for their young and hop on two legs. These also range in size from the giant kangaroos to the wallabies. I find it quite fascinating that God has created creatures to fill very similar environments, but yet created them to be so different.

I have not studied these animals enough to know if a herd of kangaroos would thrive in Wisconsin or Michigan or if a herd of deer would thrive in Australia or New Zealand. I suspect that the kangaroo would have some trouble in the deep winter snow and that the deer would prefer a more dense vegetation and higher precipitation. The niches are similar, but different enough to prevent the deer from invading the niche of the kangaroo and the kangaroo from invading the niche of the deer.

Even though the niches are similar and the interaction of the deer with its environment is very similar to that of the kangaroo, the creatures have some fundamental differences. Both animals belong to the class Mammalia: they are warm blooded, have fur, and nourish their young with milk. But the class Mammalia is divided into three sub-classes which differ in the way that the young are born. These sub classes are: the Monotremata or egg-laying, the marsupial mammals which carry their young in pouches, and the placental mammals which carry their young in the womb for a longer period of time. Kangaroos belong to the category of marsupial animals. Deer belong to the placental mammals.

One major difference, then, between a deer and a kangaroo is the way in which they reproduce. A baby kangaroo is conceived within the mother, but after a few weeks, the tiny leg-less embryo is born and wriggles across the abdomen to the pouch where it attaches to a mammary gland and drinks milk for about 9 months before it emerges into the world. A baby deer is conceived within the mother and remains in the womb attached to its mother via the umbilical cord and placenta. After about nine months, the baby deer is born into the world where it soon learns to walk and live.

When the godly scientist begins to analyze the comparison of the kangaroo and deer under the spectacles of Scripture, he sees something very different than the picture given by the ungodly scientist who looks through the spectacles of evolution. One thing that we notice is that all marsupials except the opossum, are native to Australia, New Zealand, and New Guinea. Through the spectacles of evolution, the ungodly scientist imagines

that there was a time when perhaps all mammals laid eggs and then some species began to keep the eggs within themselves for longer periods of time. Some of these creatures lived in environments where it was to their advantage to keep the young within themselves and they survived as a species and evolved further. In time, continents became separated and the marsupial type mammals survived best in the lands around Australia while the placental type mammals survived best in the Northern Hemisphere.

Through the spectacles of Scripture, however, we see that God on the sixth day of creation created each creature after its kind. The kangaroo was always an animal with a pouch for its young and the deer was made to carry its young in the womb. God created each creature with its unique way of generating another of its own kind. We also see the flood and the command of God that the creatures go back into the world and fill every part: "Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark." Genesis 8:17-19. God so directed their movement and the formation of continents that the marsupial animals ate the grass on the more arid land of Australia and the placental deer ate the grass of the Northern Hemisphere.

The scientists continue to study the creatures of the world and are amazed at the features that they have to live and adapt to every corner of the earth. The godly scientist gives glory to God, but the ungodly scientist gives glory to his own theory of evolution. Let us also give glory to God who has in his infinite wisdom created creatures so similar, yet fundamentally distinct and diverse. ❖

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Hope and Comfort in the Truth (2)

by Rev. W. Bruinsma

Young People's Convention, Redlands, 1999

In the last issue, Rev. Bruinsma explained "comfort" and "hope" as gifts from God. He defined comfort as "encouragement and strength when I feel insecure. And, best of all, comfort is this certain deep-down consolation that I receive from God when I am hurting or face the problems of this present life." He explained "hope" as follows: "When we have hope, immediately our life is anchored and this lends purpose and meaning to our lives. Why? Because of what hope is! Hope is looking forward with eager anticipation to something that is coming." Rev. Bruinsma then left us with the following paragraph:

The question is: do young people actually need this comfort and hope? We can certainly understand why old people need that comfort and hope. They do not really have all that much more to look forward to in this life. They are going to die pretty soon. They need to have hope in the future life to see them through their older years. And, since they are the ones fraught with all kinds of infirmities in life they really need comfort. But I am a young person and I live in the strength of my youth! I really do not need all that much comfort or hope in my life because the pleasures of this life are enough to make me happy! I could come to a convention and do without the speeches or discussion groups and go home at the end of the week with all the joy and happiness that I need! All I need is good times with my friends!

I have had only 21 years in the ministry—not a very long time. But from what I have seen in my short ministry we need a hope and comfort that earthly pleasures cannot bring! Hope and comfort give inner peace and joy! Do we think that we are exempt from needing that?

I was still in grade school, not quite yet a teenager, when I hung around with a boy my age. He was my best friend! I had to watch my buddy cry because God took away from him at that time a father. He was not going to have a father to be with him like I did though those dif-

ficult teen years. He needed comfort and hope. In my ministry I have stood by the death bed of a middle-aged

I had to watch my buddy cry
because God took away from
him at that time a father.

mother who suffered from degenerative heart failure. I stood by her bed with her husband and teenage children to read and pray with them that they might be comforted in the death of their wife and mother. Every one of your ministers can tell you of similar experiences in their ministry. A young mother was taken away by God because of a blood clot lodged between her lungs and heart, leaving behind seven children, from preschool all the way through high school. A young father and husband was buried alive while at work and spent the rest of his time on earth comatose. A young father of five has just fallen from the roof of a house and is lying even now comatose in the hospital. These things do not affect you as young people? I know they do! These do not just touch the lives of adults; they touch the lives of young people too. A young person needs hope and comfort!

We have not only seen older people die but God has at times taken from us close friends too. I can name a number of these instances too. Where do we go when we are confronted with such pain and sorrow in life? We run to God and to our Savior. Why? To find comfort and hope in these times of our lives. We need then a comfort and hope that not earthly pleasure or treasure can give to us!

And that is only the half of it! What about the pain the hurt that can confront a young person due to sin? What about the excruciating pain we feel in our hearts when a father or mother forsakes us and goes away because of their sin? What about the abuse we might expe-

rience in our lives by the hand of a father or mother? In the church? Yes, these things can happen in the church too! What about the hurt that a brother or sister causes us because they are living a life of rebellion and sin, causing war and strife in home and family? There are friends who turn their backs on us, who perhaps mock us because we will not follow after them in their sin. How often cannot you as teenagers feel so all alone! The Heidelberg Catechism tells us that life in this sin-cursed world is nothing more than a valley of tears.

There are friends who turn their backs on us, who perhaps mock us because we will not follow after them in their sin. How often cannot you as teenagers feel so all alone!

It is not as if we do not have our good times. It is not as if we do not enjoy the pleasures of this present life. God gives us these too. We have happiness, especially when life seems to be going well for us. But let's get real! Life is not always a bowl of cherries, as the saying goes. There are sorrow, hurts, and pains sometimes, it almost seems, that are too great to bear. You and I need to be comforted!

We need hope too! As we mentioned, hope gives to our lives direction, a goal that we aim for. It gives us purpose to live and go about our activities in this world. The unbeliever has his hopes and dreams too. But these are based on things that are temporary. For that reason, the unbeliever's hope is so fleeting. He might have hope

When we look around us through spiritual eyes at the mass of young people in our society, we see a bunch of unmotivated, wandering, confused souls who have no real purpose or goal in their lives.

for a little while in something, but when that hope is finally accomplished, then he finds out that his life is just as empty as it was when he was trying to hope for something. When we look around us through spiritual eyes at the mass of young people in our society, we see a bunch of unmotivated, wandering, confused souls who have no real purpose or goal in their lives. They are not even able to establish their own identity much less know where they are going in this life. And when they set out to prove that they are an individual who has some worth to his life they always go about doing this in a sinful way. They do it by means of rebellion against God and those in authority. "Here I am! Don't you see me? Bang! I'll shoot my fellow classmates, then I'll shoot myself!" Visions of making a name for oneself in this world so that no one will forget them! "Hey, I'm cool!" So I spike my hair and tint it purple or green! I put rings in my ears and nose, through my lip, eyebrow, tongue (cannot even talk straight), bellybutton, or through other unmentionable parts of my body! And if rings will not grab other's attention then I'll add to it all a few tattoos! Why? Because I am an individual. See me? Here I am! I have worth in my life. I am somebody. I do not know where I am going, I do not know who I am, I do not understand my purpose in life! But here I am!

See me? Here I am! I have worth in my life. I am somebody. I do not know where I am going, I do not know who I am, I do not understand my purpose in life! But here I am!

It is this lack of hope that leaves a young person floating about in this sea of life with no anchor. They drift aimlessly in life! The result? They become involved in riotous living, drunken parties, fighting and brawling. They immerse themselves in alcohol, drugs, fornication, filling one's heart and soul with the noise and lyrics of songs so ungodly that worldly psychologists cringe at the words. They frequent the bars, indulging in the night life of this world. Why? Because unbelieving young people have no goal and no purpose to their lives! They float about aimlessly in this world until through their sin God takes them away!

They might even make us think that they have somehow found joy and happiness in life. That they have the key to finding comfort and hope. You can hear them laugh. Their laughter is loud and hearty. They can sound so happy! You know what? It is all emptiness. It is empty laughter because those same people go home and if they have but a moment to reflect on their life they are the most miserable of all people. They fill their lives with activity from the moment they get up to the moment they fall asleep exactly because they do not want time to think about the purpose and end of their lives in this world.

There are those of you too, young people, who follow after these sinful ways! You know why that is true of some of you? Because your lives are empty too. And they are empty because you do not have hope! If your hope was in Christ and in His coming upon the clouds of heaven, then you would have something to aim for in life, something to live for. But there is no hope. So, you too seek out the earthly pleasures only to drown out your own lack of hope and comfort in Christ!

Let's face it: young people need the hope and comfort that can be found in cross of Jesus Christ alone. That we have only when we dwell within the sphere of the truth! It is not ours when we walk and live the lie. God does not give comfort to those who walk in sin and rebellion against Him. We ought to keep that in mind in our lives too. When life seems to us empty and meaningless, when nothing seems to go right for us in life, is it not because we are not living in the knowledge of the truth? Our restlessness, our own lack of direction, our lack of joy or motivation ought not to be blamed on others. Do not blame it on parents, do not blame it on the church, do not blame it on friends. Take a good hard look at yourself! Do we know the truth, do we love the truth, and do we live in the truth? That is the first thing that we ought to examine in us when life does not seem all that happy!

The great comfort that we find in Jesus does not simply drop down to us from the skies so that it is automatically there when we need it. Do not take comfort in that false assurance that so many people have today. Even the wicked like to try and comfort themselves with this false assurance that even though they walk in sin, God still loves them. Comfort is rooted in our hope. You and I cannot be comforted in this life unless we look in hope to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the eternal kingdom that will be ushered in at His coming. Here is David's hope in Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the

house of the Lord [in heaven—W.B.] all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple." That is my desire, David says, that is my hope! That is what gives us comfort in life. Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Is it not true that we also with David will then say every time we confront a difficulty in life: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." Comfort is rooted in hope.

And hope, in turn, is rooted in truth! If I want to have hope I have to know the truth. Our hope and comfort is found in the knowledge of the truth. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," the hymn goes. I need to *know* that truth if I am going to be comforted. Freedom from the worries and cares of this world is rooted in the knowledge that God is my God forever and ever. Freedom from the anxieties and the hurts of this present world is rooted in the knowledge that we are saved from wrath in the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

So necessary it is for us to know the truth because, after all, Christ is the truth! He tells us that: "I am the way, the truth and the life!" And when we know Christ together with our heavenly Father, then that is life eternal. Christ is the solid Rock into which we drop our anchor. That anchor of faith takes firm hold in Him and the restlessness of life will no longer move us. And that is true because Christ is holding on to us. We would let go of Him so quickly! But Christ holds us! He gives to us all the comfort and hope we need to get through the difficult circumstances of life. No matter what burdens we have to bear - and I know there are at times some pretty heavy ones - no matter what the struggles are, our hope is rooted in Jesus Christ. He will never let us go! God does not leave or forsake His covenant children. He will uphold you, young people, in the hardest times.

Here is the conclusion to the matter: know the truth! Learn the objective truths of the Scriptures. The more we learn of God and Jesus Christ the better we will know them. The better we know them, the more strongly we will be rooted in them. The more we are rooted in them, the more we will find hope and comfort in this life. May God give hope and comfort to you as the covenant youth of His church. ❖

Rev. Bruinsma is pastor of Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Early Church History— The Arian Controversy

by Rev. John A. Heys

Reprinted from the March, 1947 issue of Beacon Lights.

A nation that is at war with a neighboring country finds itself hindered to a great extent in its efforts at home in construction and general improvement of living conditions. Today our country is not yet back to normal after the war has been brought to a close for a considerable length of time. To a certain extent this was also true of the church before the peace which was brought about by Constantine and of which we wrote last time. All during the period of the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists the church had a struggle on its hands. That is always the case with the church in this world. She must always fight the good fight of faith. However in these first three centuries after the death and resurrection of Christ, she had a special battle to fight. The church had to defend the Christian religion over against the Pagan philosophies and Judaistic antagonism, and as we have seen, the apologies written by the church fathers in this period were intended to show that Christianity rightfully has a place in this world and is in fact the true religion so that all other religions have no right of existence. Now, however, after Constantine embraced Christianity and being a world ruler made Christianity the state religion, the church was free to study and develop the various doctrines taught in Scripture. The enemy outside the church is no longer a powerful force that threatens to destroy the church. Now a careful and uninterrupted study of the teachings put forth can be conducted in order that the church may derive a clearer conception of what is taught in the Scriptures.

It must not be thought that there was no doctrinal development during the first three centuries after Christ's ascension. There certainly was, and in former issues of this department we called your attention to some of this development. Now, however, there is ushered in a period of more intense study and of deeper and more frequent discussion of the doctrines taught in God's Word.

One other element which enters the picture is that due to Constantine's work of making Christianity the state religion, many were brought inside the church institute who were steeped in Pagan philosophy. Many of these men were capable writers and speakers and began to expound their views freely inside the church. One such a man was Arius, who taught a very corrupt doctrine which spurred the church on to greater study of the matter and ended in a clearer declaration of the truth than the church had enjoyed before.

Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria. He was a very capable man, having attained quite a reputation as a teacher of great ability. He was also highly respected for his apparent piety. But the doctrines he began to teach were such that he clearly branded himself as a heretic.

His false doctrine centered about his corrupt conception of the divinity of Christ. In fact, it was just exactly this divinity of Christ that he denied. The Son of God, so he taught, is not of the same essence as the Father. He believed that all things were created by the Son. How could he deny that, when in John 1:3 it is plainly stated that all things were made by the Word and that without Him was nothing made that was made. But Arius maintained that the Word, or the Son of God, was Himself created by the Father. He existed before the creation of the world, according to the view set forth by Arius, but was not co-eternal nor equal with the Father. He is a creature made by the Father who only is God. Arius considered Christ to be a creature of far higher degree than either man or angels, and that all men, angels and all that appeared from the moment that God said, "Let there be light" have been created by God.

You understand then that Arius not only denied the truth of the Triune existence of God, but he also taught a doctrine which makes salvation impossible for us. If the Son is not of the same essence with the Father, then we

do not have three persons dwelling in one divine essence. Nor do we really have a Saviour in Christ. If He is not truly God as well as truly man, salvation through Him becomes an impossibility. As the Heidelberg Catechism

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as truly man, salvation
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impossibility.

states, Christ must be very God “that He might by the power of His Godhead sustain in His human nature, the burden of the wrath of God; and might obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life.” If Christ, that is the

Son of God, is simply a creature God has made, even granted that He made Him higher than man and created Him long before the foundation of the world, He still cannot bear the wrath of God without being consumed by it. Then He perishes under that wrath, and we have no salvation. Only Christ as the Son of God of the same essence with the Father and Spirit can bear this wrath, sustaining His human nature in it and delivering us from it.

In our next installment of this department we hope to call your attention to the defense of the church. over against Arius and the historical proceedings which led to the final expression of the church. ❖

The late Rev. Heys was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches from 1941 to 1980.

Edgerton Summer Retreat 2000 Lake Shetek, Minnesota August 14-17

Register now to join the congregation of the Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church, August 14-17, 2000, for a few days of fun and fellowship on the shores of Lake Shetek. We'll be staying at the beautiful Lakota Retreat Center. Three days of activities and relaxation are planned, while we explore together the area of Christian stewardship. Registration forms are available from your Pastor. Cost for attending is \$50 now, and an additional \$35 when you arrive at registration on Monday, August 14. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Sharon Kleyn at (507) 442-4441 or email Jill Gunnink at jill@sdcul.com.

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Tulip (2)

"What do the tulips remind you of?" Krystal asked her parents.

"The five—" they said the words in unison and laughed. Mother feigned a curtsy and then let Father speak.

"The five points of Calvinism," Father completed the answer. "You remember: **t**otal depravity, **u**nconditional election, **l**imited atonement, **i**rresistible grace, and **p**erseverance of the saints. It spells 'TULIP,' and it all goes together."

Yes, now Krystal remembered. But she couldn't have named each letter so well as Father!

"If you understand TULIP," he continued, "you'll be able to see much more clearly the difference between what we believe and what others believe. And you'll be able to appreciate and love that difference, too. These are precious truths!"

She fingered the tulips in the vase. They were beautiful! Silky, shiny, richly colored blossoms they were. But the truths that TULIP represented were even more beautiful! Krystal would come to find this out very soon in a much deeper way.

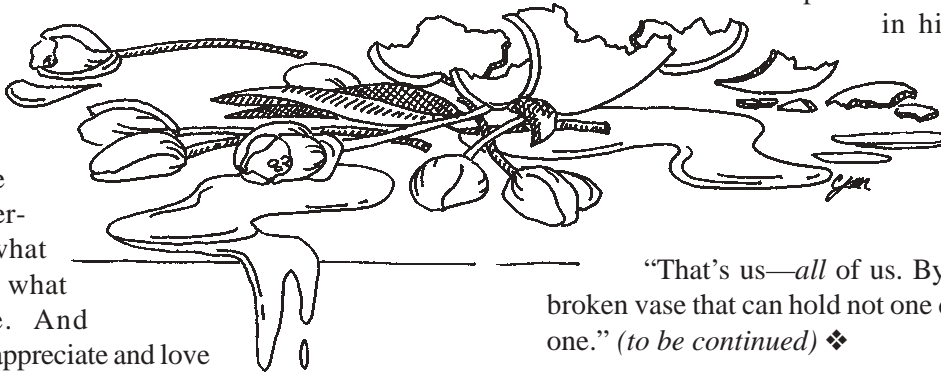
"Total depravity. Do you remember what that is?" Father quizzed Krystal.

"I think...it's that we are all sinners," she said. She looked up from the tulips and leaned on her elbows to listen to Father's reply.

"Yes," Father nodded, "and even more than that, it means we are totally dead in sin. *Totally*. By ourselves we can do absolutely nothing good at all. We—"

Before Father could finish his explanation, Krystal's elbows suddenly slipped on the table, knocking the vase of tulips over. The vase broke, the flowers spread over the table, and the water ran onto the floor.

Mother hurried to find a rag. "Krystal, you have to be more careful!" she chided as she began to wipe up the mess.



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Krystal's eyes filled with tears. She hadn't meant to knock them over! But it was true, she quite often wasn't very careful.

Father quietly picked up the broken pieces of the vase. He held them in his hands. Finally he said, "See this 'vase'?" He walked over to the trash bin and dropped the pieces in. *Plunk—plunk, plunk.*

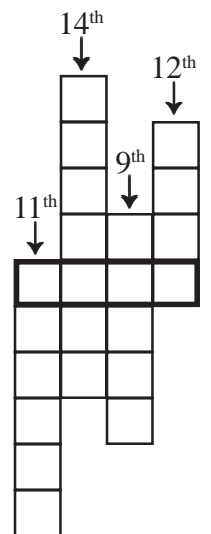
"That's us—all of us. By nature we are like a broken vase that can hold not one drop of goodness. Not one." *(to be continued)* ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Puzzle

Look up Ecclesiastes 7:20. Fill in the correct words down by counting the words in this verse. The first word down is the 11th word in the verse, etc.

What word across fills in the blank?



By nature we are spiritually _____.

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Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Tyler Ronald, son of Mr. & Mrs. DJ Bultema—Byron Center, MI
Nicole Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott DeYoung—Byron Center, MI
Tyler Stuart, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Knott—Byron Center, MI
Michael Wayne, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Altena—Georgetown, MI
Rachel Deborah, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Altena—Georgetown, MI
Aaron Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykema—Georgetown, MI
Annika Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Potjer—Faith, MI
Cassandra Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Potjer—Faith, MI
Zachary John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Potjer—Faith, MI
Melissa Antozak—Faith, MI
Levi David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jim Geerlings—Hope, MI
Travis Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Randy Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI
Presli Lauren, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Hugg—Hudsonville, MI
Levi Addison, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Miedema—Hudsonville, MI
Jordan Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Kamps—Southwest, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

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

Melissa Antozak—Faith, MI
Chad Corson—Grandville, MI

MARRIAGES

"...and they twain shall be one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Aaron Gunnink and Miss Erin Hassevort—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Angus Stewart and Miss Mary Hanco—Faith, MI
Mr. David Korhorn and Miss Kristin Kalsbeek—Faith, MI
Mr. Jason Jabaay and Miss Amanda Flikkema—First, MI
Mr. Dan Dykstra and Miss Christine Schipper—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Joel Houck and Miss Shanda Bleyenbergh—Peace, IL
Mr. Darrell DeVries and Miss Joy Reichert—Randolph, WI