
Beacon Lights

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*"...it shall come, that I will gather all
nations and tongues; and they shall
come, and see my glory."*

Isaiah 66:18b

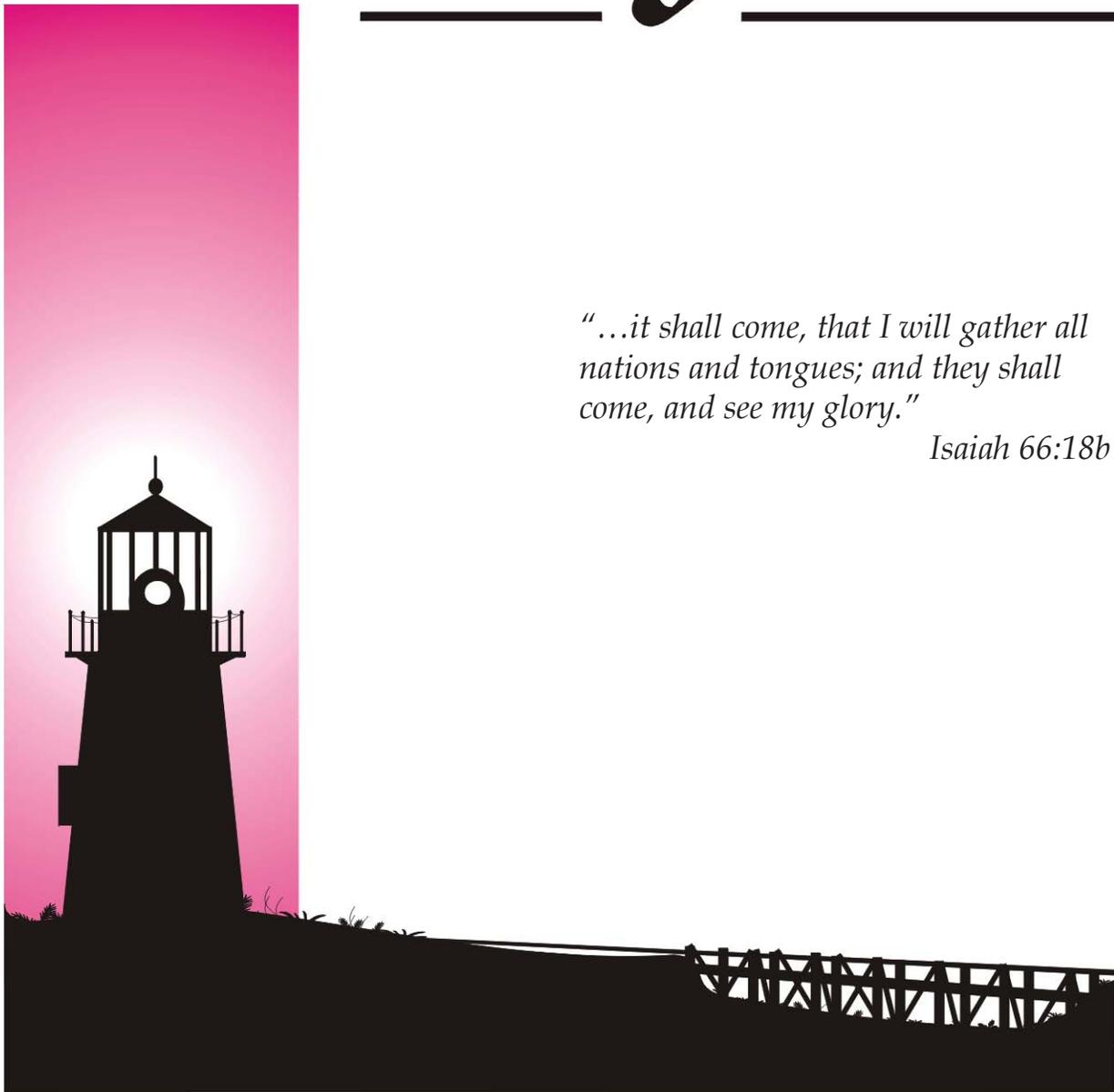


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Waiting on the Lord

by Ryan Barnhill



“**W**ait.” This term can be so foreign to our vocabulary. Yet, the Lord requires us to wait upon him. The idea can be found all throughout God’s Word (Psalm 25:5; 27:14; 62:5; 123:2; Proverbs 20:22; Isaiah 8:17; Hosea 12:6—just to name a few). We would benefit from studying this idea of waiting and what it means for our lives as Christians.

What does it mean to wait? Waiting has the idea of patiently looking forward to something. A young woman who is engaged waits to be married. She patiently looks forward to the day of the marriage ceremony.

Biblically, waiting has some of the same meaning that we attach to our earthly meaning of it. Psalm 27:14 is a verse that we know so well: “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” When we wait on the Lord, as this verse instructs us to do, we patiently and quietly look ahead in our life while wholly depending upon God’s will for us.¹ Waiting means that we see, by the eyes of faith, God’s perfect and loving hand of governance in our lives.

You do not have to read this article to know that the concept of waiting is challenged in our culture. Microwaves, ovens, and convenience stores—prepare or buy your food quickly! High speed internet—download your favorite songs and check baseball scores in a matter of seconds! Many of these things are a convenience, and for the most part are not sinful in themselves. The point, however, still stands. Our culture is fertile ground for our selfish flesh. “I want it, and I want it now!”

So often the attitudes developed by society find their way into our own hearts. Our sinful flesh finds this impatience to be exactly what it loves, because, by nature, we selfishly want instant satisfaction and results; thus the difficulty in heeding the command of the Lord to wait upon him. We are so much like children in this regard. Little children will often take actions that compromise their safety without waiting and thinking about future consequences. A toddler may cross a busy street to chase a ball. He has one goal in mind, and chases after the ball as if he has blinders on, oblivious to the danger of cars. Let us not think that we are much different. We formulate plans and make decisions without seeking the Lord’s will.

Negatively, a failure to wait upon the Lord not only means that we fail to seek his will, but also that we are living anxious lives and not depending upon him for all our needs. As young people and young adults, our lives are filled with anxieties. College offers its fair share of stresses—grades, scholarships, scheduling, tuition, etc. At work—the amount of money you make and the fears of paying off various bills. That is not all. So many times our relationships are a cause for anxiety. We worry about problems in dating, rejection of friends, and deep-rooted family problems.

**God does not leave us alone to suffer in our anxieties
and fears. He teaches us. Sometimes, he teaches us
in most marvelous and powerful ways!**

Yet, God does not leave us alone to suffer in our anxieties and fears. He teaches us. Sometimes, he teaches us in most marvelous and powerful ways! In his providence, he often uses adversity to shape and

¹ Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 464.

mold our heart to patiently wait on him. Is that not so often the case? The death of a dear loved one stops us in our tracks and makes us quietly reflect upon God and his will for our lives. We learn so much about God's will for us as we limply kneel beside our bed with hot tears stinging our cheeks. God teaches us to reflect quietly upon his work in our lives. How dreadfully sinful to open our mouth against the one who knows our plight better than we and against the one who plans everything for our good! Even through the trials and tribulations of death, sickness, rejection, failure, and frustration, God teaches us to lean totally upon him. God uses these trials to shape us for our heavenly home. We must not expect an easy, pleasure-filled life. Our journey on earth is but a pilgrimage; our life in heaven, on the other hand, is an eternity for which God must carefully mold us each day.

Waiting means that we accept God's will for our life. Sinfully, we do not recognize the value and good that God brings in our lives by taking us through the fire. That is why we must ask for the strength to rest upon his will—in prayer! Read and study the prayers and confessions of Hannah and Job (I Samuel 1; Job 1, 19). Contemplate Jesus' prayer life throughout his ministry, even how he rose up very early in the morning to pray for the daily strength he needed in his extremely busy work.

As young people and young adults, our optimism, as well as our physical strength and vitality, can deceive us into thinking that we are masters of our own destiny. That is what our flesh craves. That is the individualistic attitude that the world trumpets in our ears. God give us the grace to resist these sinful thoughts that appeal to our old man of sin. Let us make this personal. I do not depend upon myself because I know that my will is but the sinking sand. My own wants and desires are not a true indicator of what I really need. Like the child chasing the ball, my feelings and desires are only characterized by foolishness. Instead, I must pray earnestly every day that my will might be in harmony with God's will.

That we wait entirely upon God, and not at all upon ourselves, means that we know the end of our waiting. We wait because God is faithful to his promises of salvation in Jesus Christ. "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:5). John Calvin beautifully puts the idea this way: "Lord, keep thy servant in the firm persuasion of thy promises, and do not suffer him to turn aside to the right hand or to the left. When our minds are thus composed to patience, we undertake nothing rashly or by improper means, but depend wholly upon the providence of God. Accordingly, in this place David desires not merely to be directed by the Spirit of God, lest he should err from the right way, but also that God would clearly manifest to him his truth and faithfulness in the promises of his Word, that he might live in peace before him, and be free from all impatience."²

Therefore, God will give us all that we need in Jesus Christ—nothing more and nothing less. When we feel that the happenings of our life are unfair, we must see the cross. When we think that our will is best for our lives, we must see the cross. God loves his people so much that he sent his only begotten Son to die in their place. Let us never question that love, but patiently wait knowing that that love is sufficient for us. Talk to your grandparents, or the older men and women in your congregation. They will assure you that the Lord gave them all that they needed in their life. He is faithful.

Praying for the patience to wait upon the Lord will ultimately bring contentment.

Wait upon the Lord. Praying for the patience to wait upon the Lord will ultimately bring contentment. Trying to manage the circumstances in our own lives will surely cause us to faint. No matter what happens in our lives, we have the absolute and unshakable assurance that our great God loves us and that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. That is all that matters. Wait upon him! ❖

² Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, 416.

The Privilege of Catechetical Instruction

by Samuel Watterson

*“The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.
The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.
I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.”
Psalm 16:5-7.*

For Protestant Reformed young people, the Heidelberg Catechism is an ordinary part of growing up. We reach a certain age, and we study and learn it in catechism classes. It is good and right that this should be the ordinary experience of the covenant child. Covenant children are born and brought up in the light as their believing and godly parents are in the light. Godly parents know that God saves his elect children, and keeps his people from apostasy, in the way of spiritual instruction and discipline (Hosea 4:6). Yet for others it is not so ordinary.

The importance of this is simply an historical fact. It is the sad story of most of the Jewish nation, such that when the Lord of glory was set before them, they cried with the ungodly Gentiles, “Let him be crucified. His blood be on us, and on our children.” It is also the sad story of many of the regions which are now thoroughly under the grip of Islam. It is the story of much of continental Europe now too, in which there is scarcely a faithful Reformed church to be found any longer. And of course, it is the story closer to home, of my own forebears, the Irish and Scottish Presbyterians and Anglicans (and the legacy of Patrick is long gone). What Isaiah lamented concerning Israel could be said of Ireland and Great Britain too: “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:4-9).

Growing up within a modern Irish Presbyterian church (as well as in other groups in certain years, especially the Methodist church), I had no idea of how far we had fallen. Instruction was limited to a superficial five-minute “children’s address”

Growing up within a modern Irish Presbyterian church (as well as in other groups in certain years, especially the Methodist church), I had no idea of how far we had fallen. Instruction was limited to a superficial five-minute “children’s address,” coupled with a few uninspired songs (which were at the least terribly inappropriate and imbalanced if not utterly heretical) and then for the rest of the service the children were banished from the congregation to take part in “Sunday School.” To call it school was perhaps false advertisement.

In some ways this was good for the children. They did not have to stay to be corrupted even further by the ambiguous and sensational platitudes of the hopeless

Arminian “gospel” that was commonly put forward by the minister. Sunday school usually involved harmless crafts and games with cartoon Bible characters. However, it has been said that such cartoons place the Bible in the same realm as the trash that the children see on the television.¹ Children learn to equate Jesus Christ with Santa Claus; as something to grow out of. Seeing Noah’s ark depicted as a round bathtub-like object with a giraffe’s head poking out of a porthole is more likely to evoke laughter than awe. This is especially so when the child is simultaneously inculcated with the secular worldview for most of the rest of the week, at home and at school. The ark was not “cute.” It was provided graciously by God to save his elect church from the terrible destruction that he was going to rain down upon the entire world for their wretched wickedness.

All this meant that a young child in the Protestant Reformed Churches knew far more of the Bible and biblical doctrine than myself when I was of the age at which confession of faith would usually be made. Yet now, my eyes having gradually been opened, I am amazed and astounded. Most of all, I am awestruck and humbled at the sovereignty of God’s grace, that amidst such widespread apostasy, and despite the total depravity of my own heart making me as worthy of hell as any other, God spared me. God brought me to his ark to be saved through the day of evil (I Pet. 3:18-22).

I did not grow up with
such precious instruction.
Instead I floundered
through a morass of lies
and vanity in confusion
and ignorance for years
before God lifted me out of
the mire to see the truth of
biblical Reformed doctrine.

My own experience of the Heidelberg Catechism is quite different. I did not grow up with such precious instruction. Instead I floundered through a morass of lies and vanity in confusion and ignorance for years before God lifted me out of the mire to see the truth of biblical

Reformed doctrine. The heresies I laboured under sinfully and foolishly for years were many; Pentecostalism, Arminianism, and Anabaptism are the three main categories. These divisive, horrible and detestable poisons ought always to be exposed and condemned by antithetical instruction in the biblical truth. When I encountered the Heidelberg Catechism, it was with great skepticism and pride, but it was also with great earnestness and seriousness thanks to the patient and faithful labours of Rev. Angus Stewart. It is right that we ought to search the Scriptures to confirm whether these things are true, and thankfully the references and the many articles and pamphlets available on the CPRC website were so many signposts and maps to direct us to the light. But we ought to do this in the spirit of prayerful humility and meekness.

It is a terrible and heinous thing when covenantal instruction is so neglected and corrupted in an institution claiming to be a church of Christ. It is also evil when the children of the church despise and reject godly instruction when they ought to cherish it dearly as the very air they breathe and the bread they eat. It is all too easy in our carnality, to take for granted the things that God has graciously provided us with. Official catechetical instruction by lawfully ordained ministers of the Word, given biblically, is the chief means of grace to covenant young people, and as such ought to be received as the voice of Jesus Christ as much as the rest of the biblical preaching. By his voice we are inwardly called to him, and united more and more with him through the Spirit which assures us who believe of everlasting salvation. His words are spirit and life, and without them, it follows that we neither have spirit nor life. Delight in the peculiar privilege of receiving catechetical instruction!



Samuel is a member of Limerick Reformed Fellowship in the Republic of Ireland.

¹ See “How innocent are ‘bathtub arks’?” <http://creation.com/how-innocent-are-bathtub-arks>

Covenant Courtship: (3)

Spiritual Unity

by Aaron Lim

“God in his wisdom brings together two young people who are sufficiently alike, yet also sufficiently different, that they complement each other, forming one whole, forming a balance wheel for each other as well.” (Rev. Cornelius Hanko)

The covenant of God is unity. It is the unity between the perfectly righteous One and fallen, elect sinners in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is a unity of extreme opposites, the reconciliation of enemies by the atoning blood of the Saviour. Precious is that blood and powerful is that work of reconciliation to transform enemies into eternal friends. Fallen man called into covenant friendship with the living God. What blessed unity!

As the covenant is unity, so covenant courtship demands unity. The God who calls his people into unity with him likewise demands unity amongst them. The relationship between two young believers must be established on the basis of their common unity in Christ. This is important because all other basis for unity is false and can only lead to spiritual destruction in any relationship.

Spiritual unity in courtship means that a Reformed believer seeks to find a partner who is of the same mind of Christ as he is (Phil. 2:5). He is deeply attracted to one who shares the same spiritual mindset and convictions that he does. Covenant courtship insists that we be “likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:2). The common knowledge and love for God grips two believers so strongly that it is often the manner in which godly relationships begin.

Of utmost importance is to understand that spiritual unity means unity in the Word of God. A couple that is to grow in Christ must firstly be grounded in a common conviction concerning what the Word teaches. The cardinal truths of Scripture must be deeply impressed upon their souls to the extent that it is the foundation for a couple’s relationship. Since the confessions of the Reformed church are the expression of unity amongst members, they also ought to be the expression of unity in courtship. As a general rule I believe that covenant relationships must be established upon a common conviction

on the 5 points of Calvinism and the Three Forms of Unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordrecht). These are strong foundations for unity in a relationship and we may only be deeply thankful to our Reformed fathers for establishing such strong foundations for us today.

A couple who establish their relationship on strong foundations in the Word will enjoy a strong relationship. Like the wise man who built his house upon the rock their relationship will not be easily swayed because of its sure foundations. Consequently they will be able to prosper in godliness and service to God who unites them in the same knowledge of his Word.

When a covenant couple love each other in the LORD, they express spiritual unity. The common knowledge of their sinfulness and salvation in Christ alone provokes them to love each other in the love of God. They seek to out-please each other because they are precious in each other’s eyes. They are brothers and sisters in the household of God and fellow members of the body of Christ. Marriage counselor Dr. Ed Wheat writes that love is always doing the very best for the object of one’s love. Covenant courtship raises this love to a higher level because love is deeply exclusive in courtship, given only to a specific person.

Being spiritually united also implies possessing the same hope for their lives together. As pilgrims on this earth they seek the blessed hope of the new heavens and the new earth together. Their affections are not set on the things in this world, whether it be their studies, careers or achievements, but are set on the things of the heavenly kingdom. Unlike the people of this world they seek for the blessed coming of their Lord and Saviour who has prepared a place for them in glory.

Service to God in the church is another expression of a couple’s spiritual unity. When the Lord brings two individuals together in courtship, he desires their united worship and service to him as a spiritually united couple. Together they learn to function as one in reverential worship and service to God. In their own specific place and calling in the church they serve the Lord God with a

profound knowledge of their unity. As they do this they will be a tremendous source of blessing to their brethren in the church. Their loving and happy relationship is an example for other godly couples to follow because Christ is powerfully displayed in it. Such unity in courtship also serves to promote the greater unity of the church to which Christ calls it.

Finally their unity is demonstrated in the couple's total submission to each other. In heart, mind and soul they surrender to each other as God calls them to. They care for the other's good more than their own. When they surrender to each other their wills merge as one. This is where they experience the miracle of growing to be one flesh in the Lord. Rev. Cornelius Hanko writes that "their life is a giving to each other, even as God gives himself to us, to the extent that he brings us into his very heart, into his fellowship, into the intimate communion of life with him, reflecting his glory."

Bound by the same truth, love, service, hope and mutual submission, there is indeed true spiritual unity.

CERC is placed in a unique position in Singapore, where the Reformed community is relatively small in

number. Our young people face the temptation of dating professing Christians from other denominations. We tread dangerous waters when we do this because we sacrifice the distinctive edges of the faith that we possess. A relationship built with Christians of other faiths is a compromise to our Reformed faith. Our faith is a biblically distinctive faith, built by our fathers with sweat and blood. The truths that they have delivered to us must be carried on with all their power and sharpness even as we engage in courtship. How else are the Reformed truths of sovereign predestination and particular grace to be passed on to our children and their generations if couples are not doctrinally united? How else is the church to grow as the pillar and ground of the truth if covenant couples are not united in faith?

May the Lord so grant that we strive for spiritual unity in our relationships to the end that they may be powerful expressions of our unity with Christ! ❖

Aaron is a member of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

Church History

The First One Hundred Years of His-Story

by John Huizenga

Adam opened his eyes to astounding beauty and wonder. He heard the voice of the eternal God "I created you as a creature of my hands that you might praise me, and enter into eternal covenant fellowship with me." As his senses flooded his mind with God's handiwork, and as the very breath of God flooded his soul with true knowledge and love for his God, we can be sure that his first expressions were expressions of joy, songs of praise, and wonder. From the first moment, the wonder only increased. God brought the living creatures to Adam for him to ponder and name. His new knowledge of the animal kingdom only set the stage and prepared him for the wonder of the woman with whom

he was bound in marriage and provided an earthly picture of his relationship with God.

Even in this now sin cursed world, we go through life enjoying many first experiences—the first cry, the first step, our first car, and the first kiss. Our spiritual life also grows with many moments of first-coming-to-realize and understand a particular truth about God. When we read God's word, and listen to him speak to us through his undershepherds with a real hunger and thirst, our soul is thrilled with the works of God and we are satisfied.

Adam was the first man. In him were all the different skin, hair and eye colors. In him were all the personality and body types in this current world. From the unfold-

ing and development of man in this created world, God would gather a harmonious and when viewed all together, a beautiful church, his bride. The particular nature he possessed, whether obedient to God, or disobedient, would also be passed on to every person reproduced from Adam.

Adam and Eve grew in their knowledge as they walked and talked with God among the plants and animals, but there was an attribute of God hidden from them that a million years of walking, talking, and observing the creation would not reveal. That attribute is his love. It forms the very essence of God, and God had determined to bring man into that knowledge as well. To that end, God determined that the highest creature in the spiritual realm of heaven would, in pride and folly, find his place in creation to be too small. Satan determined in his heart to invade the creation, overthrow the power of God, and turn man's heart as well against this God of love. The creature, and not the Creator, would receive all the glory and praise.

Little did Satan know that his invasion, and resulting corruption and devastation, set the stage of history for the perfect display of the depths of God's love. A baffling blindness to the absolute sovereignty of God would destine Satan to a long history of repeatedly throwing himself at God in an attempt to thwart his plan.

Standing then before God in shame and guilt, God opened a new window. He revealed something of his grace, mercy, love, and righteousness. The view was blurred in their tears, and shrouded in new mystery and wonder, but it was a promise that God was not defeated at all, but in fact would reveal the fullness of his love by means of a child who would redeem creation, destroy the power of sin, and restore righteousness with a new knowledge of God's love.

Driven from the garden, Adam and Eve faced a creation that still displayed the majesty of God, but it groaned under the curse of God. Roars and shrieks of terror echoed through the great forests. The trees and plants no longer delivered their fruits with ease, but now grew with a wild competitive frenzy. Adam strove against the plants and

experienced failure and hunger. He sat down to eat with Eve with sweat trickling down his face, and lay down to rest with frustration and exhaustion.

Soon, however, the drudgery of life was broken with the birth of the first child. Perhaps the end of the weary night of sin and suffering would be over. Never again would Eve have to bear the anguish of childbirth. Never again would trials and grief disrupt their marriage. After all, God had promised victory through the seed of the woman. Cain grew, but despite their best efforts to train him in the fear of the Lord, his eyes were ever attracted to the glory of man and the potential of using creation to his advantage. Hopes were restored with Abel who with his parents longed for the fulfillment of God's promise. He understood the depth of sin, and saw the need for a bloody sacrifice.

The end of the first one hundred years of life brought Adam and his wife to new depths of sorrow and wonder at the promise of God. An obvious tension and bitterness had developed between their two boys. God had said that the enmity would be between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Was it even conceivable that their firstborn son was in reality the seed of the serpent? In jealous fury, Cain tore open the flesh of his brother and the first young soul opened his eyes in glory. Cain left the small circle of believers and with haughty scorn set out to exercise his wisdom in subduing the earth for his own glory.

God humbles his children. Only when they cling to God with all their strength will they be able to see the depths of his love. We may not depend upon our own plans and ideas to bring us down God's path for us. The next one hundred years would bring Seth. God would give Adam eight hundred years to talk with this son about the mystery of God's love and the promised redeemer. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and is Editor of Beacon Lights.



Victory in Christ

*O*ne moment on earth, the next in heaven,
O what a change it must be!
To close one's eyes in this troubled world,
In heaven, the Savior to see.

*O*ne moment on earth, the next in heaven,
All pain and discomfort are past;
No sorrow for sin, no battles to win,
True vict'ry has now come at last.

*O*ne moment on earth, the next in heaven,
Love's family tie is no more;
Our loved one has gone, but we must go on
'Til we meet on that beautiful shore.

*L*ord, help us each day as we go our way
'Til the time when our moment will come;
Then our work will be done, our race will be won—
And we'll enter our heavenly home."

— Annetta Jansen

*"When I in righteousness at last
Thy glorious face shall see,
When all the weary night is past,
And I awake with Thee
To view the glories that abide,
Then, then I shall be satisfied."
— Psalter 31 & 32, based on Psalm 17*

In Christian Love,
Sadie Knoper

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

January 10 Read Isaiah 44:1-4

Here in this short passage we have several beautiful words to and about the people of God. First of all, we see that they are the chosen servants of God. Secondly, we notice the covenant aspect as God identifies himself as Jehovah. Then we see that we have no need to fear because he has formed us even before we were born. The word Jesurun is a tender nickname that means “upright one.” It is a loving name that God calls his people. Finally, we see that to encourage us and to help us in the wilderness of this world, God has sent the Holy Spirit who refreshes our children and us. What words of comfort we have here! These words can give to us the confidence to live lives of praise and glory to our God. Let us do that today and everyday. Sing Psalter 241.

January 11 Read Isaiah 44:5-8

Isaiah had to proclaim God’s sovereignty to the people of Judah. He had to do that at a time in which idol worship was prevalent. As the second commandment states, our God is a jealous God. The idea of following others is an age-old problem. The words we see in this text are similar to those Paul wrote to the Corinthians. It is no different today. We are prone to follow some man or some idea. We, too, need the admonition that there is no God besides Jehovah. He is the first and he is the last. He has made us to be his people. We need not be afraid of such turmoil around us. God is God, and of that there is no doubt. Let us cling to him as the sovereign God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 308.

January 12 Read Isaiah 44:9-20

What do we do with God’s good creation? Israel of old took it and made idols out of it. They used the same materials that Solomon had used in building the temple to fashion images with which to worship. Why did they do that? It was unbelief as we see in verse 18. In verses 19-20 we see the foolishness of their actions. How can you worship a created thing? For most of us, we do not bow down to a graven image. But do we have idols? The answer, sadly, is probably yes. Those idols are as foolish as a golden calf. There is not salvation in them. Let us

seek to walk only in adoration to him who made us and all of creation. To trust in anything else is to trust in a lie. Sing Psalter 309.

January 13 Read Isaiah 44:21-28

The chapter is finished with the promise of redemption. This is a redemption that only can be carried out by Christ. It is a covenant redemption as we see by the use of LORD or Jehovah. Creation awaits that redemption as it, too, will be made whole in the new heavens and the new earth. The church will be restored and gathered together as the church triumphant dwelling with God and the lamb. The assurance that all this will come to pass is found in the last verse. Cyrus will give the order that the earthly Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Cyrus’s birth is over 150 years away. The people then and the church of all ages will know that the Word of the Lord is true and will come to pass. Sing Psalter 310.

January 14 Read Isaiah 45:1-7

It should be no surprise that God raised up a man named Cyrus to release his people from captivity and make it possible for them to return to Jerusalem. It is not surprising because God is God! Nothing is too hard for God. Notice the last verse of this passage again. There is nothing that is not in God’s hand. He is sovereign over all things on this earth. He controls all the forces of nature. He controls all the forces of mankind. Why does he do this? First of all, of course, he does it for his own glory. All things serve to God’s glory. Even what we might call evil serves to glorify God. Secondly, he is sovereign over all things for our salvation. This provides to us utmost comfort as we confess in Lord’s Day 1. Let us see God’s glory in all things, and let us thank him daily for the great salvation he has afforded to us. Sing Psalter 265.

January 15 Read Isaiah 45:8-14

Quite often man, including God’s people, forget who has made them. We forget that it is the sovereign God who not only created all things but also has formed them for his glory. Creation is not just for our benefit, but we must use creation in a way that God is glorified. There are many times that we want to ask “Why?” about our situation in

life. We want to ask that in a way that shows we think God is being unfair. His answer to us is “Because I have made you.” This should be a comfort for us because we know that God makes all things good. Judah had to learn this and we must as well. Sing Psalter 287.

January 16 Read Isaiah 45:15-25

The final part of this chapter gives hope to all peoples: not every person, however, but all kinds of people. This gives hope to us, the Gentiles of the new dispensation. It is only through God that our salvation cometh. There is no one or nothing else that can give to us the salvation that we so desperately need. This is the truth of the Reformation for which Martin Luther and the rest of the reformers struggled and even gave their lives. This is the truth that is carried on today. It is only in Jehovah that we are justified. What a glorious thought that is! What a comfort that we can have in this dark world of sin! What a hope is ours as we await the return of Christ! Sing Psalter 174.

January 17 Read Isaiah 46:1-7

In this passage we see the folly of trying to serve someone or something other than God. Isaiah points out the lack of logic in worshiping a god that you have to carry from place to place and set up. We do this when we make an idol out of something or some thought in our lives. How can we say that they are equal to God? Why would we want to do such a thing? Whether it be money, education, sports, or some human philosophy; it cannot be compared to almighty sovereign God. Why is idol worship ludicrous? It is because our God cares for us from birth to death. He cares for us. What else can we want? Sing Psalter 266.

January 18 Read Isaiah 46:8-13

Notice that in this text we have the reassurance that salvation is only from God. We can have all the idols we want, but they profit us nothing because they are nothing. We must stay away from idol worship because our God is a jealous God. Judah had to go into captivity, ordained by God, in order to learn that lesson. God will teach us as well to not hold onto other gods. Let us adore him in all that we do. Let us live lives of thankfulness for the salvation that he freely gives to his people for his own glory. Sing Psalter 263.

January 19 Read Isaiah 47:1-9

Isaiah comes to Judah with these words of judgment against Babylon. Once again we must be reminded that these words were spoken many years before the captivity and the return. These words served to encourage the faithful remnant in Judah that God had not forgotten them. By his judgment of Babylon would come their redemp-

tion. We must also remember that Judah and Babylon are pictures of the elect and the reprobate. Therefore, we can be comforted in this world filled with evil that there is redemption for us though the judgment of the wicked. Our redeemer is the covenant God, Jehovah of hosts. Trust in him, as he delivers you to glory. Sing Psalter 379.

January 20 Read Isaiah 47:10-15

The final portion of this chapter is words addressed to Babylon. But they are words to which we do well to pay heed, for we are no different. We often time fall into the same sins. We say that God does not see us. We act as if there is no God, and we can do what ever we wish. We, too, trust in our own counsels not depending upon God’s will and providence. We must know that he will chastise us when we fall into such sins. But we must know that Christ has died for us for our salvation. Let us flee sin and ever walk in God’s ways. Sing Psalter 380.

January 21 Read Isaiah 48: 1-7

We see that Isaiah’s writing goes from a condemnation of Babylon in the last chapter to a chastisement of Judah in this chapter. What is the difference? The difference is that Judah is God’s people. Of course not all of Judah is. There are those that face the same condemnation that Babylon does. But only the remnant belongs to God. And they must repent. They, too, say they love God, but it is only lip service. What about us? Are these words for us as well? Of course they are. Because of the old man of sin which lurks within us we, too, are obstinate. We, too, must be set on the right path. Let us pray daily for the grace to walk in God’s ways and seek to glorify him the creator of heaven and earth. Sing Psalter 146.

January 22 Read Isaiah 48:8-15

The purpose of all things is for God’s sake, his honor, and his glory. This is hard for us to understand when affliction is brought upon us. We wonder why God has chosen to cause us what we see as grief. But we see that through the affliction there is profit for us. When we acknowledge God as the covenant God, only then can we understand his ways. In his sovereignty he loves us and only does what is good for us. As we have said before, we will be redeemed through judgment. We must be patient and wait until God delivers us to eternal glory. Sing Psalter 329.

January 23 Read Isaiah 48: 16-22

Standing by a river that flows through a field or woods can be very peaceful. The sound of the water provides solace for a soul that has been troubled by the busyness of the world. This is the picture that we see in verse 18. Walking in God’s commandments can provide that same solace. When we try to live as we want instead of what

God commands, there is no peace for us. But when we seek Jehovah and his kingdom, waves of peace flow over us throughout the day. Let us see that peace by obeying our covenant God. In that way we will feel the redemption wrought for us on the cross. Sing Psalter 127.

January 24 Read Isaiah 49:1-12

In this chapter we see the promise that Jehovah God will also be the God of the Gentiles. The Jews would reject God and his Son, and he would call unto himself a people from among all nations. He would use his servants such as Isaiah to accomplish this purpose. We, who are of those Gentile nations, must not fall into the sin of rejecting God even as the Jews of Isaiah's time did. We have been given a glorious gospel and promise. Let us look for the day when Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven and brings the church of all ages together around the throne. Let us live lives steeped in waiting and watching for that glorious day. Sing Psalter 195.

January 25 Read Isaiah 49:13-26

What a comfort we find in the first few verses of this section! It is a comfort which should cause us to break forth into singing. As Christ said, if we cannot sing at his coming, the very rocks would cry out. Are we thankful for the great salvation wrought for us by Christ? Do we sing with joy when we have the opportunity? We may think that God has forgotten about us. He no more forgets us than a mother would forget her newborn baby. He will care for us in all adversity. He will be our God even unto death. So sing in thanksgiving. Sing Psalter 170.

January 26 Read Isaiah 50:1-11

First of all, in this passage we see that God speaks to the rebellious Jews who had rejected him. They did not listen when he sent his prophets to proclaim his Word. This should be a warning unto us. We are blessed with the preaching of the Word each Sabbath. Are we listening? Secondly, we see a prophecy concerning Christ. Christ would be abused. Why? The answer is so that we might receive the salvation that he earned for us. Finally, there is a message to believers and unbelievers alike. Reread verses 10-11. Are we trusting in Jehovah or lying down in sorrow? Our help is in God. Let us trust in him at all times. Sing Psalter 352.

January 27 Read Isaiah 51:1-8

These verses afford to us great comfort at all times on our earthly pilgrimage. We are called to look unto the rock. That rock is Christ and the covenant line that he has established with his people. A rock is something unmovable. A rock is something that will last. When we look to him, we can rest assured that he will care for us

in all things. Our salvation is eternal and cannot be taken from us. We need not fear what men might do to us; they are mortal and their works will fail. The day is coming in which we shall rejoice forever in our salvation. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 162.

January 28 Read Isaiah 51:9-16

Here we have an impassioned prayer that God, who is signified by the arm of the Lord, would deliver Israel even as he delivered them from Egypt. In verse 11 God replies with certainty that they would be redeemed and delivered not only from the struggles in the present age but from all struggles. What a comfort this is that when we take a loved one to the grave we know that the struggle against sin and Satan is over and God's people are delivered to the heavenly Canaan. God is almighty; we are his people, and he will most certainly care for us now and forever. Sing Psalter 307.

January 29 Read Isaiah 51:17-23

Now it is Jerusalem, that picture of the church of God, which is called to awaken. Her sleep is not alcohol produced; her sleep is produced by her wickedness. Among her none is found that can bring comfort. The only deliverer is the almighty God. That deliverer will give to the church the victory over sin and Satan. He will bring deliverance and redemption through the judgment of the wicked. What a comfort this is to us. Let us wake up and walk in the ways of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 152.

January 30 Read Isaiah 52:1-6

Once again the church is called to wake up and notice what Jehovah has done for them. While these words were written to comfort the God-fearing in Isaiah's day, they are written for us as we await the return of Christ Jesus. The day will come when our redemption will be complete; when all of God's people will be gathered together in the new Jerusalem. We do not have to do anything for this day; in fact, we cannot do anything. We must wait with patience; we must use the talents that Christ has left us. This is a calling that has great promise. The day will come when we will know Christ experientially because we will be with him forever in heaven. Sing Psalter 182.

January 31 Read Isaiah 52:7-15

In the first verse of this section we see a beautiful description of the preaching of the Word. Those who preach must bring the good news, the gospel, that God reigns. They must bring the good news of salvation by faith alone. In that good news the people of God find peace. This is the only kind of peace that brings the comfort that we so desperately need in this world. These servants would not just proclaim the good news to Jerusalem; they would

preach the gospel to the nations. What a joy it is when we hear the pure preaching of the word. Let us seek it and thank God for it each and every Sabbath Day. Sing Psalter 232.

February 1 Read Isaiah 53:1-5

Here we have the Christmas story that no one likes. Everyone likes to worship a baby lying in a manger when there was no room for his parents in the inn. That is the story that they love. But to worship an ugly, bloody, beaten man. That no one wishes to do. But it was that ugly, bloody, beaten man who was those things for us. He became those things to take away our sins. What about us? Whom do we worship? Remember, we were healed by his stripes. Sing Psalter 185.

February 2 Read Isaiah 53:6-12

Reread verse 6. Think of what that last clause means. Our Lord and Saviour took all of our sins upon him and went to the cross for us. Should this direct the way that we live? Should not we want to spend our lives in a way that shows gratitude for such a sacrifice? We know our sin; and when we realize that Jesus took each and every one of them upon him, it should be sobering. Jesus obeyed, and because he obeyed, we prosper in his hand because we are Jehovah's pleasure. We are bought with a price and a very steep one at that. Let us be thankful each and every day for such a Savior. Sing Psalter 47.

February 3 Read Isaiah 54:1-10

Our God is a God of mercy. We see this throughout this passage. First of all he is a God of mercy because he saves his people from among all nations. We are from among the nations. We sometimes forget this. Most of us have been members of an established church for a long time but in our generations we have been gathered from among heathen nations. After Pentecost the church of Christ grew and spread throughout the world. Isaiah prophesied of this fact. Our God is also merciful in that he will not take his covenant of peace from among the line of continued generations that he has established with us. As God is merciful, let us also be merciful day by day. Sing Psalter 271.

February 4 Read Isaiah 54:11-17

"And all thy children..." What beautiful words are found in verse 13! Children and young people do not always consider their covenant education to be a great heritage. They are not ready to appreciate what true peace is. God, through Isaiah, gives to us these blessed words of hope. Our children will be taught by Jehovah. We may not always see how this is going to happen, but it will happen. We can be comforted that they will have the peace that

passeth understanding. They will have the peace that is not the peace after which the world seeks. Jehovah cares for us in all of our life. This is a great heritage. This is what Christ has left us after dying and ascending into glory. We have no reason to doubt this because our righteousness is from Jehovah God alone. Sing Psalter 360.

February 5 Read Isaiah 55:1-5

Here we have the call of the gospel. This is not a call to all men. It is not an invitation to all men. It is only to those that are thirsty. Many in the world today do not think they are thirsty. They will not listen to this call. In the beatitudes we hear that those who are hungry and thirsty after righteousness shall be filled. The call is for the elect to drink only the pure drink of the Word. They are to buy only bread that is fit for consumption. Is that our goal in our life? If it is not, we will not come to the living water. It is good that it is not up to us, however. It is good that this verse is in the form of a command. This command will only be obeyed by those who are the called ones of God. Sing Psalter 114.

February 6 Read Isaiah 55:6-13

There is not much more that needs to be said than what we find in verse 6. It is a command for us to seek the Lord. When we look for other answers to solve our dilemmas we not only waste time; we will fail. We must look for him because his thoughts are the action for our lives. His thoughts because they are higher than our thoughts are the way that we must go. How do we seek the Lord? We need to go no further than our Bibles. Daily devotions will help us know our Bibles and therefore know what is in them that will help in any given situation. The end of seeking the Lord is found in the last two verses of the chapter. A blessed place of peace and rest awaits us in heaven. Sing Psalter 333.

February 7 Read Isaiah 56: 1-7

This is an appropriate passage for the celebration of the Lord's Day. Our covenant God has given to us the way we must keep the Sabbath. Our Sabbath keeping cannot be our own invention. We must keep his day and his worship in the way that he has charged us to go. To do anything else is to not please our covenant God. The reward for obeying Jehovah's commandment in this matter is found in verse 7. He will bring us to heaven where we will celebrate the eternal Sabbath with those of his from every nation. Let us diligently remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Sing Psalter 251.

February 8 Read Isaiah 56:8-12

Israel of old had times in which those who were entrusted with the flock neglected their duties. Because of

this the flock was harassed by wicked from without the church. It is no different today. Each of us is entrusted to be a watchman over the walls of Zion. While it may not be in the official offices of elder and minister, there is a calling to all of God's people to watch. We must watch out for ourselves, for our families, and for our friends. If we do not watch, but are found walking in sin, there will come judgment upon us. Let us watch each day, that when Christ comes, he will find us faithful to him and his church. Sing Psalter 223.

February 9 Read Isaiah 57:1-12

Here we have a contrast between the only two kinds of people on the earth. There are the righteous and the wicked. You fall into one camp or the other; there is no middle ground. Notice the comfort brought to God's people in the first 2 verses. While the world cares little for the death of the righteous, their death has no sting. Christ has taken away the sting of death. They are gathered unto "their people"- that "great cloud of witnesses." The wicked, however, may have great funerals, but nothing can cover up the fact that their death is the beginning of an eternal death. Nothing they have done in this life can help them in the next. Those who disregard God have nothing in death. Let us not fear death, but let us fear God who has delivered us from death's power. Sing Psalter 133.

February 10 Read Isaiah 57:13-21

Isaiah continues with his words of comfort to God's people who are afflicted by the wicked around them. Their spirits are broken down by those who persecute them because of their righteousness. It is to them that God comes with peace and comfort. In this day and age we, too, are afflicted by the world. It may not be physical persecution, but they hate us and all for which we stand. God will come and bring perfect peace. We must be patient, for he will only come in his time. Let us be thankful for the peace that will reign in our souls and give to us contentment with the way our heavenly Father leads us. Sing Psalter 350.

February 11 Read Isaiah 58:1-14

God's people have much for which to be thankful. How do we show it? One of the ways we must use is taking care of those in need. Do we see those whom he has placed on our path? Do we give to them the assistance that they need? Israel of old had their needy. These needy were right in Jerusalem There is a great blessing for those who care for the needy. Reread verses 11 and 12. When we are in despair, we should see that maybe our thanksgiving is not what it should be. Let us truly be thankful and show it to those around us. Sing Psalter 25.

February 12 Read Isaiah 59:1-8

In this section of Scripture we see an accurate picture of what harm our sin does to our relationship with God. Because of our sin we are separated from him. Our relationship is one of friendship. That is the truth of the covenant. There are times that it seems that he is not our friend any longer. Verses 3-8 describe exactly what we do. Is all lost and despair? No, that is the truth of verse 1. Because God establishes the covenant of friendship through Christ, it will never be broken. He will save us and hear us even when we fall into the worst of sins. Let us remember this blessed truth and live lives of thankfulness for his goodness toward us, an undeserving people. Sing Psalter 398.

February 13 Read Isaiah 59:9-15

When we read about the sad state of affairs that is described above, one calamity should jump out at us. That one is found in verse 15. "Truth faileth." Now the text is speaking of the lack of truth among men because it goes on to say that Jehovah was displeased because the lack of truth meant the lack of judgment. Why was there a lack of truth? A major cause to a lack of truth among men, is that there is a disregard for the truth of God. When the church disregards God's Word as found in the Scriptures and the pure preaching of that Word, the church will fall into all sorts of sins. This is true with us as individuals as well. We must hold the truth of God in high regard or there will be no truth within us. Let us seek God's truth and walk in it day by day. Sing Psalter 230.

February 14 Read Isaiah 59:16-21

Israel had troubles from both within and without. From within were sins in both the people and their leaders. From without were nations who wished to destroy them and rule over them. After describing those troubles, God states that he will bring to them a redeemer. This passage is an introduction to the redeemer that will be described in the following passages. Yet, we find in these short verses a description of our Christ. There are comforting words in this chapter for the church of all ages and for us today. We need not fear because God will keep his covenant with us and his word will stand eternal. Let us embrace our redeemer and walk in his ways each and every day of our lives. Sing Psalter 280.

The Coming of Christ

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

In our last article we showed that the whole New Testament age is the *last* time, according to Scripture. The last day or last time—the end—is not only something future but something present, something with which each of us must reckon, no matter when we live.

The coming of Christ must be similarly understood. As the great event of history through which all things are brought to their appointed end, the coming of Christ is not only something future, but also something present.

The point is, first, that the Christ's coming is described in Scripture as *one event* including his birth in Bethlehem, his return for judgment and all that happens in between. This is the reason why the prophets in the Old Testament seem to mix events that to us are separated by thousands of years of history. They saw it all as one event, and they were not wrong.

Both from the viewpoint of God's purpose and from the viewpoint of eternity itself (II Pet. 3:8), Christ's coming is one event which finishes history, accomplishes God's sovereign purpose, and ushers in the eternal and heavenly kingdom of God. The Old Testament prophets under the inspiration of the Spirit saw something of this.

He is on the way, and his personal appearance at the very end is only the final stage of something that began in Bethlehem.

This means, in the second place, that Christ is already coming! That is the way Scripture speaks. Though it also speaks of his coming as a future event, looking ahead to his personal and bodily return, it more often speaks in the present tense—that he is coming and that throughout all history. He is on the way, and his personal appear-

ance at the very end is only the final stage of something that began in Bethlehem (Matt. 26:64—note the word “hereafter,” i.e., “from now on”; Matt. 28:20).

Scripture, therefore, not only speaks of Christ's birth as his “coming” (and remember, the Old Testament prophets do not clearly distinguish it from other aspects of his coming), but also speak of various other events as part of the “coming” of Christ. These are especially three:

(1) He comes through the Spirit (Jn. 14:16-18). Because the outpouring of the Spirit is part of the coming of Christ, even the Apostle Peter in his Pentecost sermon does not make a clear distinction between that event and those things that we connect with the very end of the world, blood and fire, smoke and darkness (Acts 2:16-21).

(2) He also comes for believers at death. *He* comes! though not personally and bodily. He himself assures us of this in John 14:2, 3. That, of course, is our comfort.

(3) He also comes through the preaching of the gospel. That Christ himself speaks through the gospel is evident (Jn. 10:27; Eph. 2:17). Through it also, therefore, he comes and is present. This is the point in Matthew 28:19, 20. It is *in* preaching the gospel that Christ is present with us, even to the end.

All this means that the coming of Christ is not just a future event which has no immediate bearing on us, but something present with which we must always reckon. Indeed, in one or another of these senses, Christ comes every day and will certainly come in our own lifetimes when he comes to take us to himself! ❖

Rev. Hanko is pastor of Lynden Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington. The article is a reprint of Vol. 7, No. 13 of Covenant Reformed News. <http://www.prca.org/current/Doctrine/NEWS-G13.htm#ComingChrist>.

The Calling to Preach to All Nations

by Rev. Angus Stewart

“... it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles” (Isaiah 66:18b-19).

I. The Message to Be Preached to All Nations

What do you think is the most important thing about the work of missions? The message! The message to be preached!

Do you have a message? Does your congregation have a message? Does your denomination have a message? Do you, personally, have a message? Do you have a message that is worth bringing to the nations?

You must be totally convinced that the gospel that you believe and the gospel that your church preaches is both true and important. It must be true otherwise you are spreading lies—lies about God and his salvation in Jesus Christ! Wouldn't that be awful! It must also be important—and you must be convicted that the Reformed gospel we confess is important. If you don't believe this, you won't do much witnessing. If you don't believe that it is important, even a little bit of hardship and suffering will be enough to silence you.

The Protestant Reformed Churches must be convinced that their message is both true and important. If not, why send missionaries halfway around the world? Why bother with all the necessary training? Why spend all that money? Why go through all the difficulties and setbacks that are involved in mission work—suffering experienced not only by the missionary but also by those converted through his missionary labours?

Unless we believe that the Reformed faith, as we confess it, is both true and important, we should not start any more mission works, for there are other churches that do mission work which are much bigger than us and have more earthly resources than us. Moreover, un-

less we believe that the Reformed faith is both true and important, we should stop all our existing mission works.

unless we believe that the Reformed faith is both true and important, we should stop all our existing mission works.

Now, what does Isaiah 66 have to say about the true and important message to be preached to all nations? In verse 19, Jehovah says, “they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.” This is the message to be proclaimed throughout the world: glory, God's glory. This is the truth! This is the only important thing!

The Hebrew word for “glory” means “heavy.” We must proclaim not that which is light or insubstantial, like idols or the wisdom of man, for they are vain and inconsequential. Rather, we must preach God's glory, which is heavy, substantial and weighty. The God of glory is dreadfully majestic and only to be approached with fear and awe.

The glory of God! This is the message to be preached to the nations. This is missionary work. This is what God himself wants proclaimed. This is what God himself will see to it is preached by true churches.

This means that missionary work is not man-centered. The glory of man is not to be preached. This is what must be preached about man:

All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever (Isa. 40:6-8).

Missionary work is not—if we're thinking in a third-world context—sending famine relief, building huts or hospitals, or raising the standard of living. These may be

related to missionary work and may even be by-products of missionary work, but these in themselves are not missionary work. This is pretty much all the liberal and departing churches can do, because they are not concerned with God and his glory. They are not consumed with his majesty; they are man-centered in their missionary endeavours. Where does preaching God's glory come in for them? It doesn't. According to verse 19, God does not send such people.

What are some of the things that Isaiah says about God's glory? Isaiah makes it very clear that God's glory is revealed in Jesus Christ. Isaiah 40:5 prophesies, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." The context, along with the citation of the previous two verses in the gospel accounts (e.g., Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4-6), indicates that this refers to the incarnation of the eternal Son of God for us, totally depraved sinners. This is certainly weighty! In Isaiah 49:3, Jehovah speaks to Christ, "Thou art my servant ... in whom I will be glorified." God is glorified in Jesus' holy life, his death on the cross, his resurrection, his ascension and his reign from heaven. Christ alone justifies, sanctifies, preserves and glorifies us. The name of Jesus is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Preaching him glorifies the one, true and living God.

Remember also Isaiah's vision of the Lord, high and lifted up in the temple, in Isaiah 6. John 12:39-41 identifies the glorious One seated on the throne as Jesus Christ. Only with this awesome vision of God's glory in Christ could Isaiah obey his call to preach. After all, Isaiah's ministry was largely to be one of hardening; his preaching was used to effect God's eternal decree of reprobation in most of his hearers. What does Isaiah 6:9-10 declare?

And he [i.e., God] said, Go [Isaiah], and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

In short, the message of God's glory in Christ to all nations includes sovereign election and reprobation. We cannot be unfaithful and leave this out.

God calls it "my glory" in Isaiah 66:19, and he determines what glorifies him. He does this in his Word—all of it! This is the book that glorifies God! His Word is summarized and systematized in our Reformed confessions, the Three Forms of Unity.

God is God! This is the message of omnipotent grace, Christ's particular and effectual atonement, sovereign regeneration, the almighty preservation of all the elect,

etc.—God's glory! This is the message of God's grace in the covenant with us and our elect children. This is the biblical and Reformed gospel that declares God's glory among the Gentiles.

God is God! This is the message of omnipotent grace, Christ's particular and effectual atonement, sovereign regeneration, the almighty preservation of all the elect, etc.—God's glory! ... This is the biblical and Reformed gospel that declares God's glory among the Gentiles.

II. The Messengers Who Are to Preach to All Nations

Isaiah 66 is distinctive, even unique, in the Old Testament in that it not only presents the message to be preached—God's glory!—but also the official messengers who preach it.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the Gentiles are typically presented as being attracted or drawn to the church. This is the case in Isaiah 2:2-3:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The nations are drawn to Zion—flow uphill to it—by irresistible grace, in order to hear God's Word.

But here, in Isaiah 66, God sends out his messengers to the Gentiles where they are: "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations" (v. 19). Isaiah 66 does not mention the nations closest to the land of Israel, such as Moab, Philistia or Edom. In this passage, God's messengers are not even sent to nations a bit farther away, such as Egypt, Assyria or Babylon. It is the distant na-

tions, the lands farthest away from Israel, that are listed in Isaiah 66. Five are named in verse 19: Tarshish, Pul, Lud, Tubal and Javan, places in the three then-known continents, which we call Asia, Africa and Europe. (Australia and North and South America were unknown to the ancients.) The text also refers to “the isles [or coastlands] afar off.” This includes most of us, for we are far from the biblical lands in the Near East.

Those mentioned in Isaiah 66 initially know nothing of the one true God revealed to Israel, for God describes them as those who “have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory” (v. 19).

These messengers that God sends out in Isaiah 66 are sent even to the fiercest of the pagans, those who “draw the bow” (v. 19), the warlike peoples. One thinks, for example, of the cannibals of Papua New Guinea. There have been many missionaries who have been martyred by those to whom they brought the gospel.

It is entirely appropriate that Isaiah should be the prophet who speaks of God sending out missionaries to the heathen to bring them God’s Word. The book of Isaiah has so much to say of Christ, his gospel and the conversion of the Gentiles that Isaiah is rightly called the “evangelical prophet.”

Isaiah 66 is the last chapter of his prophecy, so our text is included in the culmination and climax of this biblical book. It answers the questions, How is Christ going to be made known throughout the world? How are the Gentiles going to be converted?

Isaiah 66:18-19 sets before us various elements in the sending out of God’s New Testament messengers.

First, God prophesies, “I will set a sign among them” (Isa. 66:19). Christ himself is this “sign,” as Isaiah 7:14 confirms: “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The same Hebrew word for “sign” is used in both texts (Isa. 7:14; 66:19). Old Simeon refers to Jesus as a “sign” in his words to the Virgin Mary: “Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2:34). Christ is a “sign” pointing us to the God who saves his elect people and punishes the wicked and unbelieving.

Second, God set Christ as “a sign among them,” that is, among Israel (Isa. 66:19). Some thirty years he lived in their midst, followed by three years of public ministry amongst them. All knew of him and his teaching, miracles and work, for this thing was not done in a corner. But the nation rejected him and killed him by Roman crucifixion, resulting in the cutting off of the Jews

as a nation (Isa. 66:15-17).

Third, Jehovah says, “I will send those that escape of them to the nations” (Isa. 66:19). “Those that escape of them” are those that escape the spiritual judgment upon Israel. They are the believing Jews who receive Christ as the promised Messiah and so do not perish with the unbelieving majority in Israel. Thus Peter, one who by grace avoided God’s righteous judgment, exhorted the people on the day of Pentecost to escape from that “untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

Fourth, God promises, “I will send those that escape of them to the nations” (v. 19). Jehovah sent Philip to Samaria. He sent Peter to Cornelius in Caesarea. Paul was sent on his first, second and third missionary journeys, probably even going as far as Spain, which includes “Tarshish,” mentioned in Isaiah 66:19.

Do you remember what the word “apostle” means? It means “sent ones;” the word “apostle” comes from the Greek word for “send.”

Think of your catechism classes on New Testament history. Do you remember what the word “apostle” means? It means “sent ones;” the word “apostle” comes from the Greek word for “send.” God sent the twelve apostles and Paul. They escaped the judgment of God against Israel, and they were sent to the nations, with many even being martyred doing their missionary work.

There were others who were sent but were not among the twelve apostles. Prophets, such as Agabus, and evangelists, like Timothy and Titus, were sent by God through the risen Christ (Eph. 4:11). There were also pastors and teachers who were sent by the Lord, just as today he still sends pastors and teachers in this special, permanent office.

In this connection, it must be pointed out that God sends through the church. In Acts 13:1-3, Paul and Barnabas were sent on their missionary journey by the church at Antioch. Missionaries are to be sent by churches, not parachurch organizations or missionary societies. Romans 10:15 states that missionaries cannot preach “except they be sent.”

God is still sending people through the church as he has done throughout the New Testament age. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). This is the great commission. Teaching all nations all things that Christ has commanded us and baptising them into the name of the Triune God is proclaiming God’s glory!

Fifth, God gives positive fruit to the preaching of his glory. In Isaiah 66:18, Jehovah proclaims, “it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.” This is God’s history-long gathering of his catholic or universal church of which you, young people, are a part. Being a part of this church means that we are privileged to see God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 66:20 uses Old Testament imagery to represent this gathering of the universal church:

And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.

All of God’s people, including us, are dedicated to the Lord!

Isaiah 66:21 adds, “And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord.” God will make some Gentile New Testament believers “priests” and “Levites,” that is, special office-bearers in his church.

III. Your Practical Calling

Flowing from all this comes your personal calling, young people in Christ’s church. Some of you will fill special offices in his church. Some of you will be ministers or missionaries who preach God’s glory to the nations. Some of you will be elders who oversee ministers and missionaries who preach God’s glory to the nations. Some of you will be wives who help such ministers, missionaries or elders. Some of you will serve as missionary assistants on foreign mission fields. Some of you will be members of evangelism committees. (By the way, if you do join such committees or hold such positions, perhaps you could forward requests for literature from the British Isles or Europe to us in N. Ireland, just as we forward requests we receive from people in the US and Canada to the nearest Protestant Reformed church, thus reducing postage costs.)

There are, of course, a couple of objections that you might have to this. You may be thinking that this is all far off in the future: “I’m only 14 [or 16 or 18 or whatever].” You may also reckon, “I’ll never be an office-bearer or do any of those things you’ve mentioned.” Even if this

is the case—and which of us knows the future?—there are other ways, though, that you can help in the spread of the Word by using your various skills or opportunities or resources.

If you travel abroad on vacation or for study or work, what about learning about the country you are visiting? Why not learn about the church there and the history of the gospel in that region? Or perhaps you could visit our mission fields. You are all very welcome to stay with us in Northern Ireland. But don’t all come at once; our home doesn’t have room for all of you! You are all invited to come to the British Reformed Fellowship Conference in Cardiff, Wales (7-14 August, 2010). There you will meet fellow believers from the British Isles, Italy, Portugal, Germany, France, the Netherlands and other countries, as well as saints from Canada and the US (DV).

Some of you have computer skills. You may be able to help with your church website. Far more people listen to our church’s sermons via the internet than attend our church services—a lot of people listen from China especially. Whatever you do, though, don’t go on-line to air criticisms of your church on the worldwide web. This is sinning against Christ and the unity of his church. If anyone you know spreads evil, schismatic views, tell them that the devil has legions of fallen angels to do his bidding already, and he doesn’t need any more helpers!

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Mission fields need those with practical skills. For example, the Pittsburgh mission field needed work done on their church building and manse. There are opportunities for those who can help with such things as cleaning, carpentry, landscaping, etc.

The one most important thing—and something all of you can engage in right now, even at this stage in your lives—is prayer. Pray, of course, for labours connected with the PRC in the US and Canada, for the two missionaries called to the Philippines, for the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, for Singapore and Myanmar, for Australia and India, etc. Pray also for the labours of

others in over 200 countries in the world. Pray for the church in all six continents of the globe; remember, half or more of the world's population is in Asia.

There are also various Protestant Reformed ministries of great help in mission work. There is the Reformed Witness Hour (RWH) with its radio sermons by Rev. Haak and others. The RWH is broadcast on the airwaves in N. Ireland and the Philippines, as well as on various stations in America and Canada. A friend in Portugal hopes to translate RWH sermons into Portuguese and read them on Portuguese radio. Praying for the Reformed Witness Hour, helping them and giving offerings to them helps in the spread of the gospel and missions.

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six continents of the globe;
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Asia.

What about RFPA books and Protestant Reformed pamphlets? Our mission work in Northern Ireland would be greatly hampered without these excellent resources. While my wife and I have been here in the US, we have received a request from an officer in the British army in the Falkland Islands, off the coast of Argentina, who would like ten copies of Rev. Houck's pamphlet "God's Sovereignty in Salvation" to use in a Bible study with fellow soldiers. We also have translators and/or helpers on every continent who assist us in rendering parts of these materials into other languages.

Finally, your own walk with the Lord affects the spread of the gospel and missions. Be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. If you stray spiritually and walk in sin, you bring grief and trouble to the pastor and the consistory (as well as your parents and other saints). Time and energy that might have been spent spreading the Word of God then goes in seeking to recover you! You should be a help, not a hindrance in the dissemination of the gospel of Christ!

Witness where you are—now! You don't have to go overseas. Probably people from every country of the world are already found in the US, the world's great melting pot. Pass on literature (pamphlets and books) or CDs or DVDs or internet links to friends and acquaintances. Contribute to the life of your church so that it is a faithful, thriving congregation filled with the Spirit, just like the churches in Jerusalem and Antioch in the book

of Acts. It is churches like these—like yours—that God uses to preach his glory to the nations. Let us be faithful and diligent! ❖

Rev. Stewart is pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland.

Poem

The Word of God

*The Bible is an awesome book.
Its pages tell a story;
The "new-born babes" may have a look
To see Jehovah's glory.
The simple milk of Father's word
The weak may understand.
And children young, or young-in-faith,
When guided by His hand
Are nourished and find pleasure great
In learning of His love.
They gain the joy of seeking Him
Who dwells in heaven above.
And when they are no longer babes
His word means even more.
They find this book a treasure trove
With grace and peace in store.
The longer that they study it
The richer still it grows;
The Holy Spirit guides their steps
As He new insight shows.
They see their overwhelming sin;
Repent, and are forgiven,
And through their precious Savior's blood
They're welcomed into heaven.*

– Thelma Westra

Church News

BAPTISMS

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Act 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Lucas Joshua, son of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Lubbers—Byron Center, MI

Andrew Cole, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Westra—Edgerton, MN/Sioux Falls, SD

Carly Shae, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Allen Brummel - Edgerton, MN/Sioux Falls, SD

Emery Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Scholten—Faith, MI

Dylan Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike VanTil—Faith, MI

Danielle Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Bylsma—Grandville, MI

Alexis Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Looyenga—Hudsonville, MI

Gavin Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott DenHerder—Hudsonville, MI

Jordan Jan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Martin van de Pol—Immanuel, Lacombe, AB

Brooke Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Lubbers—Southwest, MI

Devin Ray, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Machiele—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” Proverbs 4:26

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

Tim Ondersma—Byron Center, MI

Oliver Scott—Byron Center, MI

Lisa VanDenTop—Doon, IA

Valen VanEgdom—Doon, IA

Caleb Woiwood—Doon, IA

Betsy Griffioen—Faith, MI

Aubrey Richards—Faith, MI

David Flier—First, MI

Luke Bomers—Hope, MI

Derek Bleyenbergh, Darrin Brummel, Erika De Jong, Heath Heynen, James Korver, Harrison Van Maanen, Leah Vink, and Brian Westra—Hull, IA

Dani Vroom—Randolph, WI

Joe Schutz—Spokane, WA

MARRIAGES

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Tyler VanDerBrink and Miss Krista Van Den Top—Calvary, IA

The Clock

Stephan moved the hands of the clock back. No one would notice a few minutes off. Besides, he'd move the hands ahead again later.

"Stephan, you're late!" Mother scolded as she entered the house. "I said if you were late once more—"

"But Mom," Stephan interrupted, "I'm not late."

Stephan's mother looked at the clock, and then at her watch. "Hmm, I thought it was later than that." She tapped her watch. "Okay, you still have time to do your chores."

Stephan grabbed his gloves and headed out the door. He found his broom in the horse barn and started sweeping.

"Well, Lightning," he patted the horse's head, "I have lots of time for you today." He leaned his broom against the wall. He pulled an apple out of his pocket and gave it to her. He stroked her white coat.

Suddenly Stephan heard shouting outside. He peeked his head through the barn door.

"Stephan! Stephan, come quick!" his mother yelled from the house.



BEACON LIGHTS

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Stephan ran to her.

"I need you to watch Carl. Just keep him in his highchair. I have to drive Anna to her interview. We're late!" Her words ended with the slam of the door as Stephan's mother and sister Anna left the house.

Carl threw one of his toys onto the floor.

"Want to play pick-up-toys, Carl?" Stephan put the toy back on his highchair tray and Carl threw it down again. And again. Carl laughed. They played a long time.

"Carl, I'm sick of this game."

Carl began to cry.

Stephan looked at the clock. How long did it take to have a job interview? It looked like the hands of the clock hadn't moved at all. Then he put his hand over his mouth. "Oh no, the clock!" He tried to turn the hands ahead again, but the minute hand clicked and swung down, limp.

The door of the house opened. Mother stepped in while Anna ran past to her room. No one smiled. "Anna didn't get the job," Mother said. "It was because she was late."

Stephan looked down. Carl kept crying. Stephan wanted to as well. He stood silent awhile. A tear trickled down his cheek.

"I-I'm sorry, Mom," he stuttered. "I moved the clock back so you wouldn't know I was late. And now Anna was late, and...the clock is broke."

Mother took Carl out of his highchair and walked to Stephan. "I'm glad you told me, Stephan. I forgive you. But this is serious. It is a hard lesson to learn. You will have to tell Anna, too."

Stephan nodded. Yes, he thought, this is hard. He looked at the broken clock. Time is never found again, either. ❖

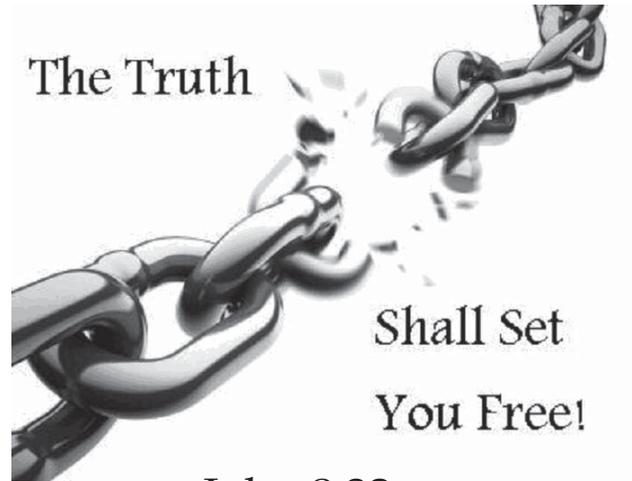
"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15, 16).

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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Prof. Gritters, "Set Free to Live Obediently"

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