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Exponential Population Growth: Another Push for Small Families

by John Huizenga

Big families are frowned upon by the world today. A family of ten will receive a range of reactions from looks of surprise and disbelief to anger and disgust. This attitude is rather unique in the history of the world. Years ago a large family ensured plenty of help for the farmer. For some many children meant that the parents would be well cared for in their old age. For others, many sons meant prestige, and in some countries many daughters meant money from dowries. Until recent advances in medicine, mortality rates among infants and children were very high, so having many children provided some assurance that at least a few of the children would survive and the family name would go on.

The reasons listed above for having a large family are all reasons from the mind of ungodly man, and ultimately rooted in greed and pride. Today many couples would prefer fewer children; but this different, even opposite desire is still rooted in greed and pride. In today's world, having more children means less money, a hindrance to personal achievement, and less time for personal enjoyment. Years ago many children meant "more for me," now fewer children means "more for me." Then and now today, the ungodly world seeks his own prosperity and not the glory of God. May this selfish and wicked thinking be far from our minds.

This change from large to small is due partly to better medical care and increasingly to a new powerful motive: the overpopulation of the world. Don't have so many kids! The world is near its maximum carrying capacity! A man by the name of Malthus already recognized the problem of overpopulation in 1778. Then in 1968, Paul Ehrlich, a biologist wrote "The Population Bomb" and many have been very frightened by the possibility of famine and the starvation of millions, even billions of people. Consequently, people with large families are increasingly viewed as ignorant, foolish, and greedy destroyers of mankind. Such fear and societal pressure threatens to yank us away from a biblical perspective in the matter of children.

It is not getting any easier to live in this world, fellow young people. If God is pleased to give you children, will you let the scorn of the world govern your decisions, or will the light of God's Word guide you in these matters? Are you ready to stand up under the wrath of the world? Do you have a clear understanding of God's Word regarding children? Are you ready and willing to stand strong if God is pleased to use you to raise a large family?

Some may attempt to escape the glare of the world by arguing “I like big families, it is my right to have children, and population really isn’t a problem anyway.” But such a response is ungodly and spiritual cowardice. We may not desire children simply for our own personal enjoyment, security, or prestige. We may not desire a big family simply because it is the PR thing to do. Whether it be few children or many, we must seek first the glory of God. We must receive each child with much prayer and thanksgiving to God.

Perhaps you just want to avoid the scorn of the world by hiding behind ignorance and denial. To deny the problem of overpopulation is to bury your head in the sand. The problem of overpopulation is real and made obvious with a simple mathematical exercise. For at least the past one thousand years, human population has been growing exponentially. You can understand what “exponential growth” is if you pick up your calculator and press “2” “X” “2” “=”. Press “=” again. Keep doing this. What you are doing is doubling the current number each time. You will notice that the numbers get bigger at an alarmingly rapid rate until your calculator gives an error message or goes into exponential notation. A graph of the math would be a line that begins to go up gradually, and then becomes increasingly steeper until nearly straight up. From 1750 to 1900 the world’s population went from about 750 million to 1.5 billion and at the rate of increase, it would take about 150 years to double. Prior to 1750, it is estimated that the doubling time was about 1000 years. Presently the world’s population is at about six billion people. At the present rate of growth, the population will double in about about 35 to 50 years. Obviously there is a limited amount of space to live on the earth. It may seem like there is plenty of space, but we must not forget what exponential growth is about. Either people need to have fewer children, or face population reduction in the way of starvation and plagues.

The present population situation is in accordance with God’s eternal plan. God reveals to us in His word that His purpose is to fill the world with men. He created man to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). God reveals that there will be a steady increase in famine, plagues, and environmental problems as we near the end. Many of these things arise from the pollution we have due to overpopulation as we live in the last days. When Jesus instructed his disciples concerning the days which would come before His return, He said “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7). The word of God in Revelation 16 also describes the days in which we live as those days in which the angels pour out vials of judgment upon the land, waters, and men of the earth. This is the world, and these are the days in which we will bear and raise our children.

The answer to our questions, and our comfort in the face of future fears is the Word of God. The Bible reveals the corruption of man and the earth as the dark background to salvation and eternal life in heaven. In contrast, man seeks salvation from the corruption of this world in technology and population control. He is working hard at solving the problems and appears to be enjoying some success. Technology and man’s wisdom has ushered in a time in history when man’s average life span is on the rise, and many live in luxury. Population in developed countries has stabilized and developing countries are making efforts to slow their population growth. As resources such as wood, coal, and oil are used up, man finds even better resources. Though pollution is a problem, it is better in many cities than it was 30 years ago.

The solutions of the world seem so logical and the temptations for earthly success and advancement are very strong, but we must not let these things govern our thoughts about having children. This is the thinking of the anti-Christian kingdom of Satan. These goals of the world are in anti-theological opposition to the revelation of God. Three or more children are viewed as a burden to the

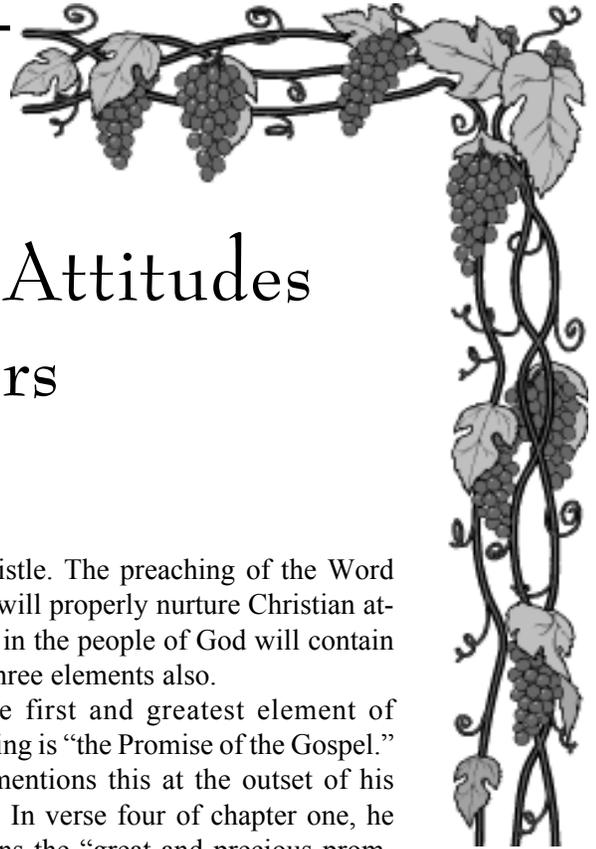
world, but each child of the believer is received as a blessing from God (Genesis 33:5; Psalm 127:3). The world wants to limit population growth and create a stable environment in which man can live and develop in wickedness, but God is gathering the full measure of His people to inhabit a new heavens and earth. The world is afraid of over population, but God is glorified by the numberless host of the church. The following are texts that speak of the church as a numberless host: Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 16:10; 22:17; 28:14; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:10;. 10:22; I Chronicles 27:23; Romans 4:18; Hebrews 11:12; Revelation 7:9.

Prosperity in the godly home is measured not by wealth, but by children who develop spiritually and walk with God throughout their life.

Earthly prosperity governs the “family planning” of the world, but spiritual prosperity governs the family life of the child of God. Prosperity in the godly home is measured not by wealth, but by children who develop spiritually and walk with God throughout their life. The godly parent says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). God reveals to us that this prosperity comes in the way of obedience: “Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God.” Deut. 12:28. Having been given many children, the believer does not fret about costs, but rather meditates upon the promise of salvation recorded in Acts 2:39, “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.” Each child is received knowing that God is pleased to gather children in the way of their being reared by godly parents. When we let the world influence our thinking about children, then we are drawn away from the precious heritage of the Lord, and led in the way of eternal destruction.

The world says that it is best if women give birth to an average of 2.5 children. If the Lord is pleased to give you two children, do not yield to the temptation to side with the world, set your eyes upon earthly prosperity for your children, or look down with contempt upon those families of ten children. Rather commit your life to the godly rearing of these children and walk in obedience to God. If God gives you ten children, rejoice in the blessing of God and remain steadfast in God’s calling to teach each one diligently in the fear of the Lord.

The glory of God: that must be our chief desire throughout our lives. Do not look to the world for praise if the Lord gives you but one or two children, but rather devote your life to their spiritual prosperity for the glory of God. Does this mean we receive large families with gladness and support large families in our churches even if overpopulation threatens to destroy the human race? Yes. The eye of faith sees something that the world cannot see and we must walk in the light of God’s Word as we condemn the world with our testimony of the coming of Christ. Our faith will bring us under the scorn of the world as it did Noah and others. We read in Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Do you see God gathering the innumerable host of the church into eternal glory? May we ever pray that the vain glories of this earth not distract us from the beautiful promises of our God. ❖



Nurturing Christian Attitudes in Parishioners

by Rodney Kleyn

Protestant Reformed scholarship essay.

The proper Christian attitude is a sanctified and holy one. This attitude is displayed by the Christian in all of his walk and life. It can be seen in what the Christian does, in who his friends are, in how he talks, and even in what he thinks about. With a proper Christian attitude, the Christian lives always in the consciousness of the presence of God and of his duty towards God. He lives in antithetical opposition to the world.

The apostle Peter devotes his entire second epistle to the task of nurturing Christian attitudes in the people of God. In verse one of chapter three he says, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you: in which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." In this text we see the purpose of this second epistle. It is to "stir up" the pure minds of the people of God. The apostle wants to nurture a proper Christian attitude of holiness in the people of God to whom he writes. The apostle also tells us in this text the manner in which he stirs up the pure minds of the people of God. He does it "by way of remembrance." He reminds them of things that will help them to have pure minds, and to have proper Christian attitudes. So, the way in which Christian attitudes are nurtured in the parishioners is by reminding or teaching them. This is what the preaching of the Word does. It is the chief means of grace by which the people of God are nurtured.

But, what does Peter remind the people of God about in his epistle? In this epistle the apostle Peter reminds the people of God of three main things. First he reminds them of "the exceeding great and precious promises" that are theirs in Christ. Second he reminds them of the way in which they should live, and third he reminds them of the evils and heresies of the world in which we live. These three themes are brought up again and again in

this epistle. The preaching of the Word which will properly nurture Christian attitudes in the people of God will contain these three elements also.

The first and greatest element of preaching is "the Promise of the Gospel." Peter mentions this at the outset of his epistle. In verse four of chapter one, he mentions the "great and precious promises" which are ours from Christ who "hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." And, the fruit of these promises is that we (vs 6) are made partakers of the divine nature, and we escape the corruption that is in the world. In chapter three Peter mentions that "we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." So, Christ's promise is deliverance from this world, in which corruption abounds, and it is the promise of a new heavens and earth which are perfectly righteous. All of these great promises are because of the "longsuffering of our Lord" which is "salvation." This is the cross of Christ. It is all because of the sacrifice of our Lord that we are made partakers of the promises of the gospel. The proper preaching of the gospel will assure the believing people of God of these promises of the gospel.

Peter reminds the people of God of these things in order that they might have a proper Christian attitude toward the world in which they live. He tells them of the promises of heaven and of salvation in order that they might set their mind and affections on heavenly things. Doing this, the people of God will see that the things of this earth have no value. Says Peter, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day

of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall melt with fervent heat?" The preaching which nurtures a proper Christian attitude in the people of God tells them how they should live by directing them away from the vanity of this world, and towards the glory of heaven. How should you live when you know that everything here will be destroyed? The answer is clear. I will live in all godliness with my eyes set on heaven. And, this will show in all of the Christian's life. He will not care to be entertained by the world. He will not care to be friends with the world. He will not want the possessions and riches of the world. He will be content with what he has, and he will gladly suffer persecution.

Another way in which Peter effectively and fervently stirs up the people of God to holiness is by warning them against false teachers and false doctrine. The true preaching which will properly nurture Christian attitudes is preaching that warns against heresy. Peter devotes almost all of chapter two of this epistle to the warning against heresy and false teaching. He calls these false teachers "presumptuous," "selfwilled," "servants of corruption," and "brute beasts." And, he warns that their end is destruction and that they will perish as Sodom. Peter warns too that these false teachers will come from among those who "have known the way of righteousness" (2:21). Heretics come from within the church. So, we have to watch out and beware of heresy in our own

churches. The preaching must include these warnings to the people of God.

Peter concludes his epistle by telling the people of God that because they have been reminded of these things by him they should now have proper Christian attitudes. He also exhorts them to "grow in knowledge." He writes, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Here Peter clearly brings out the antithetical attitude that we should have. We should beware of and fight against the world and its lies, and coupled with that we should, through God's grace, grow in our knowledge of God. We should want theology in the preaching.

In conclusion we note that a minister nurtures Christian attitudes in his parishioners by preaching to them. He preaches the promises of the Gospel, the warnings of the Gospel, and the way of the Christian's walk through life. Then the people of God will grow in the grace and knowledge of God. ❖

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Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

Musing by the Fire

By Susan Adams

Have you ever sat staring into a campfire late into the night and been mesmerized by the flickering flames? Fire is one of the most mysterious and fascinating creations of God. Nothing else has such power to destroy as well as to serve man for many tasks. When out of control it can quickly consume a house or forest and strike terror in every man and beast.

Fire appears many times in the Bible, not only because it was the primary means of heating and cooking, but as part of miracles, visions, and signs. Fire symbolizes many other things, such as God's power and His

anger towards sin, and man's emotions of wrath, jealousy, or lust with which he can become consumed. The book of James compares the tongue's sin of gossip to fire, because both can quickly spread destruction. (James 3: 5, 6)

The presence of God Himself was manifested to Moses from a burning bush, and a pillar of fire led the Israelites by night on their journey to Canaan.

Fire was very important in the worship of God in the Old Testament. Incense was burned as a sign of the prayers of God's people reaching Him as a sweet smell. God required burnt offerings to be made as sacrifice for

sin. Animals brought to the temple were killed, placed on the altar by the priest and completely burned as a sign of atonement for sin.

Once God sent fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice! In the miracle on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18), Elijah mocked the gathered priests of Baal as they vainly called on their idol god to send fire on their altar. Then he told them to drench his sacrifice and wood altar with 12 barrels of water. Elijah called on the name of the LORD, praying that He would reveal Himself. God answered with fire that consumed not only the bullock and wood but the stones, dust and water all around the sacrifice! What an unmistakable sign before the Baal worshippers, who confessed, "The LORD, HE is the God!"

Fire is a sign of God's judgment and wrath on wickedness. Genesis 19 tells the story of the early cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed for their Godless lifestyle. God sent fire and brimstone (a smelly and flammable form of sulfur) to consume them, and they remain a monument of judgment to the world for all time.

II Peter 3:7 says that the present earth and heaven are reserved for fire and the judgment and destruction of the ungodly. At the end of the world the elements of the universe and earth will be dissolved with fire. This teaches us to look for the new heavens and earth which will last forever.

In contrast to judgment on the wicked, fire is also a metaphor of God's instrument of refining His people, cleansing our sins and making us able to serve Him better. Sanctification is pictured as a process of refinement on the "metal" of the righteous. Precious metals are usually found mixed with other rock and soil and must be refined to obtain pure metal. Fire cannot consume metals but burns away the dirt around them leaving them pure. We, like a precious metal, are naturally filled with weakness, with sin ingrained in our hearts. "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD tries the heart" (Prov. 17:3). Fire upon the righteous only strengthens us, burning our old nature and making us into new and holy creatures.

I Peter 1:7 says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." This verse teaches us to thank God even in the experiences that give us pain, because we know that afflictions serve to test and strengthen our faith.

So, next time you find yourself gazing into the flames, stop and remember God's "fire-works," and praise Him. ❖

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Story Time

My Trial And Being A Christian

by Angela Schipper

A first place winner in the Beacon Lights story writing contest.

Throughout life we go through tragedies or what the world calls: bad luck. As Christians we know them as trials; "gifts" sent by God. Gifts? How can we call the death of a loved one or a serious disease, a gift? The story below depicts a time in my life when I was given a trial. It tells of how my faith was tested and how my spiritual life hung in a balance. And I will tell of how I realized that my trial was a gift.

By looking at me you would never know I have a disease. If I didn't take insulin shots four times a day

and test my blood, you would probably never know that I am a diabetic.

Diabetes is a disease that affects an organ in your body called your pancreas. The pancreas' job is to produce a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps sugar travel through the body and get used. The difference between you and me is that when I eat sugar, I don't have a way for it to travel through my body, because I don't have insulin.

I was diagnosed on July 2, 1981, a day that I will never forget. Not only was it the day I became diabetic, it was the day I turned 6 years old. Weeks before the

only thing that consumed my thinking was that my birthday was coming. It was a different story for my mom and dad. I noticed that they kept whispering around me and mom was crying all the time. Something was weighing on their minds.

About a month or two before, my mom noticed things about me that didn't seem quite right. I was getting thin, I always looked sick and tired and every time she turned around I was drinking something. Mom took me from doctor to doctor trying to find out what was wrong. Each doctor told her the same thing: "There is nothing wrong, don't worry so much."

My parents grew more concerned as time went by. I didn't look well at all. My mom refused to give up. She set out trying to find a doctor that might know what was going on. She ended up making an appointment just two days shy of my birthday. I was so angry with her. We went to the doctors office where he drew my blood and told my mom: "We'll call you with the results."

July 2! I was so excited. All the worry's of the doctors had vanished, this was my day! It was my birthday! Then the call came. The doctor didn't want to tell my mom the results over the phone, he wanted her to come in. I didn't want to go. I wanted just one day without a doctor.

I remember getting to the doctor's office where he ushered us into his office and sat us down. The mystery had been solved. I heard him tell my mom that I had a disease called diabetes. He started asking questions that none of the doctors had asked. One of them was: "Does anyone in your family have diabetes?" I wondered what that was, but mom must have known because she said no.

I remember my mom holding me and telling me that I was sick. I remember thinking how big that word "diabetes" sounded. But was that it? Why was my mom crying because of that? Didn't she know what I knew about being sick? You take medicine and then you get better. I could not wait to get home. Mom had promised me a party with cake and ice cream and all my friends. But we didn't go home, we went to the hospital instead.

I remember being taken into a room and having a hospital gown put on. I remember seeing people come into my room and poke me with needles. I saw my mom at the door way. Why was she letting them do this? I remember screaming and wanting to get out of that bed. I saw my mom walk away. At the time, I thought that they didn't care about me. Why else were they letting these people hurt me? Was I being punished? I couldn't

see it at the time, but all of this was breaking my parent's hearts.

I spent my birthday, the Fourth of July, and 10 days in the hospital. I could not understand why I was being left there. Each day someone would come in and give me shots and they would draw blood. I remember being so scared. I thought that all I had to do was take my medicine! I took it, why wasn't I getting better? The medication, the stuff I thought I would have to take only while I was in the hospital, was actually medication I would have to take for the rest of my life.

I think my parents were scared too. They were always crying when they came to see me. But what confused me was the fact that they left me every night. I wanted to go home with them too!

I can remember the first day home. When it came time to have my shot I started screaming and I ran around the house so my mom couldn't catch me. It took one of my uncles and my mom to hold me down. She quickly jabbed the needle into my skin. I hated it. I still didn't know what I was doing wrong! Why did my parents hate me so much? Didn't they know that this was hurting me?

As a teenager my thoughts that I had as a child turned. I realized that I was given this disease by God. I questioned Him over and over. Why me? Nobody else was sick, why did He have to give it to me? I became angry with Him. I rebelled against my parents. I rebelled against God and I rebelled against my disease. I didn't care what happened to me. I just wanted to have it all go away. I wanted to forget that I had a disease. I wanted people around me to see me as Angie and not Angie with diabetes.

I started skipping my shots around the age of 15. One reason was because I was sick of taking them. And a second was because I realized that when I took my insulin I always had to eat. I began looking at myself and hating the image I saw. I was fat. I figured if I skipped my shots I would not have to eat, then I would start losing weight. This was so important to me because in high school, the way people perceived me was so important.

I knew that what I was doing was not good for me, but it was working. I was losing weight and I wasn't going to stop. But something was happening in my body. In skipping my shots, my sugar went high, damaging my body and bringing me closer to death. I was slowly committing suicide. Now to those unfamiliar with diabetes, a normal blood sugar is 70–120. If blood sugars remain high complications can occur. These complica-

tions are blindness, nerve damage, kidney damage, and heart problems.

When sugars get too far out of control they call it keto-acidosis. When keto-acidosis occurs, your body goes through chemical changes affecting organs in your body—mainly your heart and your eyes. It is hard to describe what it feels like, but it is almost like having a bad flu bug. You start dehydrating and your mouth and throat is so dry. You don't dare drink anything because everything that goes in your body, makes you feel nauseated. You hyperventilate and your heart rate goes so high that it feels like your heart will beat through your chest. Your vision doubles. You want so badly to be well again. I ended up in the hospital quite a few times with this.

When I skipped my shots I knew exactly what I was doing. I knew about the complications and I knew that I hated the feeling of having high blood sugars. But I was obsessed with the fact that I was losing weight. In a way I was thinking that if I didn't take my shots, I was forgetting about the diabetes.

After a while the symptoms of the diabetic coma became more and more severe. When my sugars went high I would notice my vision was blurry, but I also noticed black spots. My heart would pound, but I was also starting to have chest pains. I got scared and called the doctor. His first question was always "Are you testing your blood?" Of course! (how was he going to know if I wasn't?) When he asked for some blood reading, I would always send him a list, but they were numbers that I had made up in my head.

I was in complete denial. I hated this disease. I didn't want it, let alone, accept that it was part of my life. And the whole time I kept saying I was a Christian. I went to church and young peoples society. But I never once went to God in prayer asking for His help and strength. I kept blaming Him for this disease. And the only prayers I basically prayed were for Him to take my life.

About two and half years ago something happened that changed my life. I had been out with my friends and I had forgotten to take my shot. All night long I felt that my sugars were high and getting higher. Then something "new" happened. My chest started hurting and my arms were tingling.

My friend brought me home and I tested my blood; it was 590. I woke my mom up and she took me into the emergency room. I remember lying there fighting hard to breath. I ended up passing out. I remember coming to a couple times and hearing the doctors say that they would send in a heart specialist. I heard my mom start

crying. I heard the doctors tell her my heart had stopped. At that moment I thought I was dead. I started to pray "God, if I am supposed to go now—please take me but don't make my family suffer. Don't let my mom cry."

I woke up a day later in the ICU. The nurses told me that my heart had stopped beating a couple of times and that my blood sugars were close to 1,000. Then it hit me. I almost died! God may have let me live this time, but there might not be a next time. I had to fight for control and acceptance.

But it was so hard. I had denied it for so long, it had become so easy to do. How could I accept it? I couldn't do this alone. I knew that God was there and had been there from the very beginning, but why would He listen to my prayer now? For so long I had blamed Him, I questioned Him, and I was angry with Him.

I have never been as humble as I was that night. I sat on my bed and I prayed that God would forgive me for everything that I had done. I prayed that He would help me in accepting this and strengthen my faith. I gained strength and a inner peace that night. I realized that I can live with this disease, but I can only live because God gives me the strength to do so. For so long I tried to live on my own. I failed to realize that God was there and that all I needed to do was rely on Him.

I had seen this disease as a punishment. But now I saw it as a gift. I realized God gives us only the burdens that we can handle—nothing more and nothing less. When God gave me my diabetes, He knew how I would react, but He also knew that it was going to strengthen my faith in Him.

Being a person with a disease is very hard. But there is one thing that separates us from the world. Our faith that God will help us through all our trials. But even as a Christian there are times when we fall. We want to know why they happen to us. We want to be angry for our lives not going the way we want them to go. I see now that all things happen for a purpose. Sometimes God lets us know the reasons, and sometimes we just have to trust in Him that whatever the purpose, He will always be there.

I have learned that this trial has made me a stronger Christian. I am able to look at my life and see that even though I have been given some pretty tremendous burdens, I was chosen especially for them. I don't have to look at them and be afraid. I now have the faith and understanding that He will never leave me. ❖

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Antithetical Dating And Marriage

Part II:

The Calling of the Husband and Wife

by Rev. James Laning

Many couples in their first years of marriage run into problems because they do not understand, or they refuse to obey, the calling God has given them as husband and wife. In a sense, the calling is simple. The wife is to submit to her husband just as the church submits to Christ, and the husband is to love his wife just as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her. Husbands and wives in the church sometimes have to experience much divine chastisement before they submit to this word of God. But the more they do submit to this word, the more they enjoy the intimate love and friendship that unites Christ and His church, and godly husbands with their wives.

The Calling of the Wife

We begin, as Scripture often does, with the calling of the wife. The Bible sums up the calling of the wife by saying that she must submit to her husband. Some passages set forth the calling of the wife very briefly, and other passages set it forth in more detail; but repeatedly Scripture emphasizes that it is the calling of the wife to submit to her husband at all times. Why is this? Why is this so important for a godly and joyful marriage? This is because the husband and wife really become *one* flesh, and can enjoy living together only when they have *one* will, and together live *one* life. The wife who refuses to submit is actually attempting to destroy the union God has established.

The wife in her heart, if not also with her mouth, must call her husband “lord.” In I Peter 3:6, we read that Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him “lord.” The husband represents Christ to her, and she must submit to him, as she would submit to her Lord, Jesus Christ. In fact, she is submitting to Christ only when she is sub-

mitting to her husband. This is another reason why it is so serious when a wife does not submit to her husband. When she says “No” to her husband, she says “No” to Christ, for Christ is the One speaking to her *through her husband*. Granted, she cannot obey her husband, if he tells her to do something sinful. But even then she must disobey with a submissive attitude, without rising up in rebellion against him.

The wife must submit to her husband not just in some things, but in all things. Ephesians 5:24 says wives are to submit to their husbands *in every thing*. It is easy for a woman to do what her husband says when her will is the same as his. But when her will is not the same as that of her husband, and she denies herself, submitting her will to that of her husband, this glorifies God and is beautiful in His sight.

The world, of course, has a completely different view of the calling of the wife. Women of the world say they want a relationship that is 50-50, meaning that the man gets his way half the time, and the woman gets her way half the time. Ungodly women *say* they want a relationship that is 50-50, but what they really want is to dominate their husbands. This is why the marriages of the world are characterized by a struggle for power, with the husband and the wife each trying to maintain the upper hand.

A second evil that is very common today is the refusal of wives and mothers to be “keepers at home,” as God Himself, in Titus 2:5, demands that they must be. Many worldly women long for a “career,” so that they can make a name for themselves and have plenty of money to buy all the things their hearts desire. Many women fool themselves into thinking they can work outside the home, and still come home and be the wife

and mother they are called to be. They act as though raising children was a rather easy task. It does not take all that much time, they say. You can drop off the children at the daycare center or grandma's house for most of the day, and, with modern conveniences, you can find ways to get around much of the work that has to be done.

Scripture clearly teaches that it is the calling of the woman to be a keeper at home, to love her husband, and to love her children.

The fact is that Scripture clearly teaches that it is the calling of the woman to be a keeper at home, to love her husband, and to love her children. This calling is a very high calling, given to her by God. She is to teach her children the truths of the Word of God, night and day. Constantly, she is to be pointing out to them what God says about this or that. She represents God to her children, who are actually *His* children. When children come to their mother with their problems, it is the calling of the mother to imitate God, and do what He does, and say what He says. A godly mother must study the truths of Scripture, the doctrines of the Reformed faith, in order that she might now how to do this.

The Calling of the Husband

The husband's calling is to love his wife, and to give himself for her, even as Christ gave His life for the church. What a different view this is from that of the men of the world, who treat women as playthings, things they can use for their own gratification and then toss away, just as Amnon tossed away Tamar. God says to the young man, "It is your calling to imitate Christ, Who willingly gave His life for His Bride, Who put His wife's needs before His own, even when this meant He had to suffer the accursed death of the cross.

Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, continues to give Himself to His bride. Ephesians 5:26 points out that Christ continues, sabbath after sabbath, to stand in front of His bride the church, washing His beloved wife with the Word. Similarly, it is the calling of the husband to wash his wife with the Word. Many think it is the calling of the man simply to put on the table the physical bread, to provide his wife with the physical things she needs for her physical well-being. Although it is, indeed, the calling of the man to provide his wife with the physical things

she needs, it is far more important that he provide her with the *spiritual* things she needs.

Although it is, indeed, the calling of the man to provide his wife with the physical things she needs, it is far more important that he provide her with the *spiritual* things she needs.

The husbands in the church are called to be hard workers in the kingdom of Christ. They are to work diligently to bring home the *spiritual* food for their wives and families. After a man sits down with his wife and partakes with her of the physical food he has worked to provide, he then must open the Scriptures and provide his wife with the spiritual food she needs. He must not merely *read* the Scriptures; he must *explain* the Scriptures.

The husband stands as the head of his wife. If a woman does not understand something that is set forth in the preaching of the Word of God, she is supposed to ask her husband at home. When she does this, it is the responsibility of the husband to provide his wife with the answer she needs. If he does not know the answer, he must do what it takes to find the answer. It is the husband's responsibility to ensure that his wife is growing in her knowledge of the Reformed faith, and that she is able to defend that faith over against the many enemies that will come against her. This means a husband must be able to explain the Word of God. He must be able to see how Christ crucified is set forth throughout the Scriptures. Only in this way will he be able to wash his bride with the Word of God, so that she spiritually becomes more and more beautiful, reflecting from the heart the perfections of her risen Lord.

For a man to be able to do this, he must dig into the truths of the Reformed faith, especially as they have been set forth systematically in our Reformed creeds. He has to be a man who reads good theological works, and who loves to discuss these matters with others. This is the kind of man a godly woman ought to seek. This is the kind of man that glorifies God as a mighty warrior in His kingdom. ❖

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The Song of Zion

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

November 1-14 by Heath Bleyenberg

November 1 Read I John 5:1-10

Psalm 112:1 “Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments.” Here in this first verse we have a summary of this entire chapter, namely to fear the Lord means a delighting in His commandments. Usually in our way of thinking, the words commandment and law have a negative connotation, in so far that it regulates our life in areas where we would rather do what is right in our own eyes. By way of our human nature we hate and despise God’s law, and try in all ways imaginable to have delight without the law. It will do good for us to read I John 5:3 “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” God’s commandments are not a burden to us, because we have the life of Christ in us and are sanctified unto Him. Thus let us delight and be happy in the keeping of the law and exclaim with the psalmist in Psalm 119:10 “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.” Sing Psalter 305:1.

November 2 Read Proverbs 3:1-10

Psalm 112:2 & 3 The rest of the chapter enumerates the blessings of God upon those who take delight in His commandments. God’s lovingkindness extends to them not only spiritually, but also toward their possessions, as verse three points out that wealth and riches shall be in his house. Instantly we ask the question, How can this be true, do not many of God’s children live in poverty, and many that have various sicknesses and diseases? Let us keep in mind that God bestows these blessings more generously and at other times more sparingly upon His children, and this He does according as He sees fit for their own good. It is in this frame of mind that we can then thank God for all that He has given us, whether it be more or less than our neighbor, realizing that is good for us given by the Lord’s very hand. Sing Psalter 305:1.

November 3 Read Ephesians 5:1-20

Psalm 112:4 We live in a world of darkness. Not a physical darkness, as a darkness of the night, but a darkness as in the evil works of men. One has only to turn on the television set to see the darkness into which man has fallen. A person is foolish if he thinks he is not affected by the darkness of the times. It is interesting to note that in this psalm it says that light ariseth **in the darkness**. Just because we are children of God does not mean that this life we live will be easy, for we know by experience that our journey through life consists of many trials and tribulations, and many battles with spiritual enemies. But God has given us comfort amid the darkness that surrounds us. “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.” Unto the man that feareth the Lord, God will give light. He will comfort us in all our sorrows and afflictions and will deliver us from the hands of the

devil. Therefore let us not live in fear of the darkness, but rather fear God and walk as children of light. Sing Psalter 305:2.

November 4 Read I Timothy 6

Psalm 112:5 We are called to be stewards over all that God gives, and to use all to serve and glorify Him. In verse five of Psalm 112 we read that a good man will show favour and lendeth, he will guide his affairs with discretion. It is very important that we read this verse as humble creatures, and doing so we will realize that all that we have comes from the Lord’s fatherly hand. We cannot do what we want with our possessions, because we would surely waste them. But rather we must guide our affairs with discretion, not laying up treasure for ourselves here on earth, nor plunging ourselves into the pleasures of this life. May we pray for wisdom, that we might indeed guide all our affairs and transactions in harmony with the scriptures, and to use all that crosses our path for the honor and glory of God’s name. Sing Psalter 305:3.

November 5 Read Acts 2:14-36

Psalm 112:6 We read in this verse of the protection and peace of mind that God gives unto His people. Surely the good man will not be moved forever, because he has an unshakeable faith and confidence in the God of his salvation. But this does not mean that we are free from all the struggles of this life. Besides all the physical afflictions we endure, we also face times when our spiritual lives are not where they should be, be it by skipping catechism or bible study class, not praying as frequently and as fervently as we ought, or even doubting our very salvation! But in all things let us not be moved! For just as surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, so shall we be raised also to life eternal. Therefore let us rejoice knowing that we are in everlasting remembrance and that by the grace of God, we shall not ever be moved. Sing Psalter 305:3.

November 6

Psalm 112:7-8 These two verses point us to the trust we must place in God, and with this trust we will not be afraid of evil tidings. One of the prominent tidings we hear so much of these days is that of the chaos that will occur from the computers inability to recognize the digits”00”. We are told that this will affect all areas of our lives, from the possible breakdown of household appliances all the way to the end of the world itself! One can only imagine the utter distress and anxiety the ungodly world must feel, in that they do not know what will occur. It is of these evil tidings we are not to be afraid. Although the events that will take place no one can predict, we give ourselves over to the care and protection of God. Our confidence which we place in God will be able to rise us above all the cares of this life. What a burden is lifted off our shoulders! Let our trust be forever in God, and let us sing Psalter 305:4 now, and in the years to come.

November 7 Read II Corinthians 9

Psalm 112: 9-10 Verse nine instructs us that the good man will disperse that which he hath and give to the poor. What an act this is, that is so contrary to our human nature, that we are to give freely and willingly. We by nature want to grab all the riches and possessions we can and justify ourselves by saying that we worked hard, that we deserved it. And after all this we are told to just give it away! But this is exactly what we must do, for God gives us these things that we may be able to distribute to others. This places the question before us, do we give to the poor? Do we give sparingly and grudgingly? How often do we find ourselves on a Sunday morning salvaging our change and loose bills from our pockets, and then drop it in the collection plate hoping to be seen of men. This requires that we examine our ways and see if it is in accordance with the word of God. God does not give sparingly to us, but has blessed us with physical and spiritual blessing innumerable. In that same manner let us joyfully give to others, for God loves a cheerful giver. Sing Psalter 305:5-6

November 8 Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Psalm 113:1-2 We come now to Psalm 113, which speaks of the providence of God, and what better way to start off than to praise His name. It is interesting at how emphatic the psalmist is in his exclamation of God's praise "Praise ye the Lord, ... praise the name of the Lord." Are we emphatic in our praise toward God? Do we praise God with an unwearied zeal, knowing that He is indeed the author and founder of our salvation? Verse two confirms the fact that God's praise must be continued now and forever. We are exhorted here to teach our children and our children's children to praise God, for if God's name is to be praised forever, we must make sure that the generations after us continue to do so. Therefore, being servants of the Lord, let us praise always the glory of His grace and with all perseverance teach our children to do likewise. Sing Psalter 306:1.

November 9

Psalm 113:3 "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised." It is stressed here that God's name is to be praised daily. In all our day to day activities we have to be conscious to praise the Lord. This is no difficult task for us. We may think that quickly repeating the Lord's prayer before and after our meals, and again a quick prayer before bed at night is enough. But it's not. God is to be praised when we wake up in the morning, when we leave for work, while we are picking up groceries, conversing with fellow employees, enjoying fellowship with our family and friends at night, to when we lay our head down at night. Our motive throughout the entire day, in every deed, action, or word that proceeds from us, is to praise God and to make known His marvellous works. When we are finally able to go to bed at night, we should be exhausted, not because of the hard day at work, nor because of all the fun and pleasures we participated in, but because we, unceasingly, with a sincerity of heart, praised God with all our strength throughout the day. Let us pray for His grace, that day by day we may glorify and praise our Lord. Sing Psalter 306:2.

November 10

Psalm 113:4 The psalmist expresses in this verse the greatness of the Lord, in that He is high above all nations. Many of us have no trouble at all admitting that God is high above all creatures, because after all He is God. But we must go further. In our proclamation that the Lord is high and worthy of praise, we must reject all those who seek glory for themselves and strive for the highest possible position in men's hearts. Whether it be kings or nations, such as Hitler and the glory he strove for, to certain individuals, such as the sports stars who capture our attention, unto all these we refuse to ascribe glory. Al-

though their glory seems to be great and their fame published throughout the entire world, it is just for a fleeting moment, for soon all they and all that they have striven to accomplish will perish and die. In this respect we recognize all the more clearly that God's glory is far greater than that of the men of this world. God does not compete with them for our praise, for He gave them their temporary glory and honour and will also take it away. Thus let our hearts be filled with praise as we give glory and honour unto our God, the God whose glory never fadeth. Sing Psalter 306:2.

November 11 Read Isaiah 46:3-11

Psalm 113:5 We read in Isaiah 46 about idol worship. Many times did the children of Israel fall into this grievous sin. They tried to liken God to material made with human hands. God rebukes them in verse nine saying, "...for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." God tells us Himself here that He, and He alone must be worshipped. Often looking at the sins of Israel we notice how similar our sins are. Just as Israel, we place our trust in gods, we are all inclined to trust in money, for if only we could get enough money, then all our cares and worries would cease. We all strive for the attention of men, seeking our own self-glorification. But all this we are told to avoid, see Q & A 84 and 95 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Let us not liken anything to our Lord, or place our trust in anything but Him alone, but recognize that there is one God of heaven and of earth to whom we will praise now and forever. Sing Psalter 306:3.

November 12

Psalm 113:6 There are those people who believe that God created the world, but as a watchmaker He wound it up, and lets it run its own course. God then watches from a distance, and might intercede only if some catastrophic event takes place on earth, in which He will come down, set things right and then continue to watch. Such people who believe such ideas have no comfort. Our God is a God who humbleth Himself to behold His creatures. God indeed does dwell in the heavens, but this does not prevent Him from showing to us that He is near, for He plainly and personally by His very hand provides for all our needs. It is remarkable to think that if God has to humble Himself to behold the thing in heaven, then how much also He must love His own children, who live on earth, that He would humble Himself to behold us also! Let us thank God then, who has not forgotten us sinful creatures, who humbles His own self to the death of the cross that we might someday soon join Him in heaven. Sing Psalter 306:3.

November 13 Read I Samuel 2:1-11 and I Corinthians 1:18-31

Psalm 113:7-8 In all things we must acknowledge God as source of our salvation. This is why He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and the needy out the dunghill. Gideon was fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from tending after the sheep. The apostles themselves were called to the ministry from being ordinary fishermen. There should be no doubt in our minds that these men by themselves had no wisdom or courage or strength to do any of the things God called them to do. The rulers, elders, scribes and high priest knew that Peter and James were unlearned and ignorant men. Thus it becomes so evident that God was in control, He was the one who raised these poor and needy men up that His name might be exalted. What a strong exhortation this is to us, that we humble ourselves, lest we glory in ourselves, I Cor. 1:27-29. Sing Psalter 306:4.

November 14

Psalm 113:9 God's providence and almighty power is made known in this last verse of this psalm. There are many accounts in scripture where God's power is displayed to His people, be it by parting the

waters of the Red Sea, a young man killing a mighty giant, to all the miracles Jesus Himself performed here on earth. Among these miracles also is that He maketh the barren woman to bear children and to be a joyful mother. It is hard in today's day and age to believe in miracles, for technology and science are elevated above all else. Indeed, sometimes it is hard for us to contemplate these marvellous works, and it becomes easier and easier to discard them as myth and fable. But in harmony with the nature of this psalm, we must acknowledge that all things are governed according to His will and good pleasure. We need faith. We need to pray for faith, that we might believe all things God has told us in His word, not doubting anything, and to praise His name for all the wonders He has wrought. Sing Psalter 306:4.

November 15-23 by Mike Feenstra

November 15 Read Psalm 114

Psalm 114:1-2 Many times in the Holy Scriptures God reminds His people of the wondrous works that He has done in order to exhort them to fear Himself, the Almighty and Sovereign of the universe. Many of the mighty wonders which God uses to remind His people are the great stories of the Old Testament which most of us have heard since we were little children. We need these reminders because we, as Israel of old, constantly sin against God and daily increase our debt to Him. However, God also gave these writings such as Psalm 114 to assure us of His covenant friendship with us. In fact, commentators say that this Psalm was sung by the Jews in connection with the covenant feast of the Passover. There, the Jews would sing of God's mighty sovereignty in saving Israel from the Egyptians, whom the Psalter calls a "people of a speech unknown" or, in other words, "a people of a barbarous language." This salvation was accomplished as a type of God's salvation of His people so that He might dwell with them in covenant communion. Sing Psalter #307:1-2.

November 16 Read Exodus 14:19-24

Psalm 114:3 In verses 3-4, the Psalm records that the mighty mountains and waters of this world tremble at the presence of God. The references made are three well-known stories of the Old Testament, the crossing of the Red Sea, the parting of the Jordan and the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. Today's reading was about the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. Young People, do you believe that this really happened!? I ask this because just as we must confess with confidence a literal 6-day creation we must also loudly confess in Psalter number 307:2 that the waters of the Red Sea became as walls on either side of the Israelites. The Bible makes clear that if we deny creation and the miracles we certainly cannot believe that God can regenerate a dead sinner! (See Psalm 124:7-8). Have you ever thought of that!? The sea trembles before God. We ought also to reverence and fear the great Creator! Sing Psalter #307:2.

November 17 Read Exodus 19:16-25

Psalm 114:5-6 Young People, you well know that there are many languages in the world. But, did you know that the creation has a voice (Psalm 19:3). In fact, God makes sure that its voice is heard over all the world so that it leaves men without excuse (Romans 1:20). In Psalm 114:3-6 we hear of that voice in the three miracles which we mentioned yesterday. In those miracles it was as if the creation was shouting out to men that they must fear the Lord. This was so true that the inspired Psalmist actually asked the mountains and the waters why they cringed in fear. The answer, of course, is found in verse seven. The mountain quaked at Sinai and the waters divided at the Red Sea and the Jordan River because of the presence of the God of Jacob. Therefore, we ought to stand before the presence of God with holy fear. However, we ought not to fear God with the fear of terror but with godly fear, that is, the fear that is characterized by awe and reverence. Sing Psalter #307:3.

BEACON LIGHTS

November 18 Read Exodus 17:1-8

Psalm 114:7-8 After the Psalmist interrogates the mountains and the hills, he finally confesses the majesty and glory of God by charging the earth to tremble before Jehovah. He could do that for this reason: God is God alone. Therefore He is the One who only is able to cause the elements to shake. The Psalmist says as it were, "Tremble because this God is the God of Jacob who made water to gush forth from the rock!" Young People, this was a marvelous miracle! If any of you have ever been in the wilderness parts of the Western United States, maybe you can understand the wonder. Imagine a rock standing in that wilderness. There is no sign of water for miles. God made water to gush from a rock such as that! Obviously, God was not helped by any man. Neither did Moses hit a "thin" spot on the rock where a spring was. It was all of God. Such is the case with our spiritual life. We live in a dry and thirsty land. Praise God for the Rock Who gives us spiritual drink, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ! (See I Cor. 10: 1-5.) Sing Psalter #307:4.

November 19 Read Psalm 115

Psalm 115:1-3 Young People, when you go out into the world to work or to engage in recreation, does the wicked world ask you, "Where is now your God?" They may ask you this because they see that your life, according to them, is a failure because you are not involved in their pleasures. They may even ask you this after you have experienced a tragedy in your life. Now, of course they will not always ask you in the exact words of Psalm 115:2. Nevertheless, they ask you this by their stares and by their mockings. The writer of this Psalm heard this same question because Israel probably was in a time of deep affliction. Since God's people in all ages must deal with this question, it is good for us to heed God's instruction in Psalm 115, namely, that God is the Sovereign of the Universe. Therefore, the inspired Psalmist begins his prayer with these beautiful words, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory." Yes, our answer to that wicked question is: "Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." The Truth of God's Sovereignty is our strength and song all the days of our life. Sing Psalter #308:1.

November 20 Read I Kings 18:17-40

Psalm 115:3-8 "O Baal hear us!" Young People, can you hear it!? Can you hear the emptiness in the cries of the wicked when they call to their idols? Yes, our nation has idols too even though we claim that we are "modern!" Young People, do you have the discernment to hear the cries of the wicked? Pray to God that you can recognize the idols in our land and the idols in our own hearts. Are idols only those graven images of pagan countries? Our Heidelberg Catechism does not say so. It says that idolatry is "instead of or besides that one true God, who has manifested Himself in His Word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust" (Question and Answer 95). I say again, do you hear the cries of the wicked who worship man, money, and pleasure? We do well to listen to the Apostle John in I John 5:21: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Let us pray that God, by His grace, will guide us to heed His Will and crush those idols in the dust. Sing Psalter #308:2.

November 21 Read Proverbs 3:31-35

Psalm 115:9-13 After the Psalmist confessed that the idols of the heathen lands were dead and useless, he exhorts Israel to trust in the one and only God. He says this to three groups: the house of Israel, the house of Aaron and the those that fear the Lord. Note in the succeeding verses the confidence that the Psalmist places in the Sovereign God. He exclaims that God will certainly be the help and shield to the house of Aaron, to the house of Israel and to those that fear

Him. Is there any mention in that list of the wicked? Absolutely not. If God is our Shield (that is, our Protector from all our enemies), why would He help those that are against us? Surely, the Bible again shows the folly of common grace. Sing Psalter #308:3: 309:1.

November 22 Read I Timothy 6:1-12

Psalm 115:13-15 Isn't it comforting to know Young People that you are blessed by the Creator of the heavens and the earth? Just think about that for a moment. What would you say if someone said to you that he was able to protect you from *anything* spiritual or physical. This happens to us every day. The world proclaims that education will protect us from bad morals, or that money will keep us safe. Now, we should ask ourselves, "Did money and education make the heavens and the earth?" The answer is, "Of course not!" It follows that the believer can only trust in the One Who made everything. God promises us that He will bless us and increase us. Therefore, we can be comforted when we are mocked by our enemies. The elect of Israel in the Old Testament needed this comfort. We need it too. Sing Psalter #308:4; 309:2-3.

November 23 Read Psalm 115

Psalm 115:16-18 When we sing Psalter 308:5, we cry to God that, "the dead praise not the living God." In this phrase, which is difficult to explain, the child of God is petitioning God to glorify His Name by saving His Church. To understand this, we must remember that God made the earth and gave it to man for the express purpose of glorifying Himself by saving His elect in Jesus Christ. Now, according to Calvin, the meaning of this is the following: "The prophet concludes that the whole course of nature would be subverted, unless God saved His Church. The creation of the world would serve no good purpose, if there were no people to call upon God. Hence he infers that there will always be some left alive upon the earth. And he not only promises that the Church shall be preserved, but also calls upon all who are thus preserved to offer a tribute of gratitude to their Deliverer" (Comm. on Psalm 115:17-18). Therefore, we sing, "Yea, we will ever bless His Name; Praise ye the Lord, His praise proclaim. Sing Psalter #308:5; 309:4.

Nov. 24 - 30 by John Huizenga

November 24 Read Psalm 116

This Psalm is a summary of the gospel. It is so simple and beautiful and yet so profound. God saves the sinner from destruction, and the repentant sinner lives in gratitude and thanksgiving. The Psalter numbers capture the essence of the psalm in the titles "Redemption and Grateful Love," "The Living Sacrifice," and "I Love the Lord." The psalmist says, "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice." Do you cry unto the Lord for salvation? That knowledge of sin that we have comes from God's gracious work of God within our hearts. The work which God begins in regeneration, he also completes by answering our prayers, giving us the joy of salvation, and bringing us into glory. Sing Psalter 310:1, 2; 312:1, 2; 426:1, 2.

November 25 Read II Corinthians 1:1-12

Psalm 116:5-7 The word "simple" in the Old Testament often means "foolish." Our constant stumbling and falling into sin reveals our spiritual foolishness. We are like sheep. Our knowing that we are by nature very foolish is important because it brings us humbly to our Savior. When we are proud and see no need for salvation, we are in great danger and we continue to live in foolishness. The spiritual knowledge and wisdom that we are given by God seems foolish to the natural man. The gospel of salvation is foolishness and simplicity to the world. Even so we cleave to that which the world calls foolish because we know by faith that it is the work of our God. In the simplicity of the gospel we find peace and life with God. Sing Psalter 310:3, 4; 312:3, 4; 426:3, 4.

November 26 Read II Corinthians 4

Psalm 116:8-11 The words of the psalmist "I believed, therefore have I spoken," are also the words of Paul and his fellow laborers "we also believe, and therefore speak." These words were spoken in a time of great physical and earthly trial. The trial came because these men were living as believers in the midst of a wicked world. They were persecuted. But one who believes can not help but speak of salvation by his words and daily life. The believer is also willing to endure all the suffering that comes with the name of Christ. Do you believe? Then you must also speak. May we rejoice in our salvation and speak forth our praises of thanksgiving. Sing Psalter 310:5, 6; 312:5, 6; 426:5, 6.

November 27 Read II Corinthians 5:1-15

Psalm 116:12 Having meditated upon the greatness of God's salvation, the psalmist asks what we can give to God in return. We have nothing of ourselves that we can give. Everything we have belongs to God already. God did give us something, however, which is designed to be used for our thanksgiving. God gave us new life in Christ. That life must not be lived for ourselves, but for Christ. Each one of us is given a unique life in this world by which we serve Christ. Let us continually meditate upon our salvation so that we daily ask "what shall I render to the Lord?" With that question before our conscience, we are guided each day to live our whole life for Christ. Sing Psalter 311:1; 313:1; 426:7.

November 28 Read I Corinthians 11:17-29

Psalm 116:13-14 The cup of salvation is a picture of the essence of salvation: knowing God and entering into intimate covenant fellowship with Him through Christ. This fellowship through Christ is seen by us visibly each time the Lord's Supper is administered in church. What a blessing it is to enjoy that fellowship personally. Young people, you must long to know God and live with Him. You must also be eager to confess that faith publicly before the congregation. This fellowship is not limited to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but continues each day and is made perfect in eternal glory. May we all long for that perfect fellowship in glory. Sing Psalter 311:2; 313:2; 426:7, 8.

November 29 Read I Samuel 25:23-31

Psalm 116:15-16 What does it mean that the death of a child of God is precious to God? Something precious is the opposite of something that is of no concern, worthless, and unimportant. Christ made death to be the doorway to heaven for the believer. God cares for his saints in this life, and is also very near when they pass through the terrible valley of death. It is very comforting for us to know that God in no way lets us go in death. Abigail expresses the nearness of God to the soul of David in verse 29. She says that David's soul was "bound in the bundle of life with the Lord." This word of comfort belongs to every believer. Let us rejoice and find comfort in this beautiful word of God. Sing Psalter 311:3, 4; 313:3, 4; 426:8, 9.

November 30 Read Hebrews 13:1-15

Psalm 116:17-19 Do you know the God of your salvation? We grow in this knowledge all through catechism and our hearing of the preaching. We must know our sins and our deliverance, but may not stop there. We must respond in gratitude. Gratitude is expressed in the confessions and praise of our lips. Our praise is our sacrifice of thanksgiving. Our gratitude must also be expressed by our doing good. Our speech and our whole life must be one that shows thanksgiving unto God our Lord and Savior. Important also is the truth that this thanksgiving is not something we do privately or out in the wicked world, but rather within the church with fellow believers. May the church be strengthened by the godly conversation of her members. Sing Psalter 311:5; 313:5; 426:10.

A Barren Womb

*Infertile, that is what they call me
For my womb is barren you see.
And although I am but twenty-three
This label really bothers me.*

*"You're still young," many have said,
"You've got many childbearing years ahead."
But I'm filled with doubts and sorrow
When I think about tomorrow.*

*The doctors put me on pills, shots and the rest,
They tell me they are doing their best.
But another month has gone by again
And once again childless I remain.*

*It's hard to explain the loss I feel
But believe me the loss is real.
It's a loss of hopes and dreams.
I have lost a child it seems.*

*A child I will never know
For in my womb this child didn't grow.
It's the child for which I wish and pray
And think and dream about each day.*

*Although I know I ought not
Sometimes I wonder has the Lord forgot?
Does not the Lord remember me?
When I pray to Him on bended knee?*

*A child is all I ask for
I need not more.
I know the Lord's will is best
And maybe this is just a test.*

*To teach me in the Lord to trust
And show me that acknowledge Him I must.
For I know that all I have and all I am
Come to me from Him, the Lamb.*

*I ask the Lord to give me grace through this trial
So that I am able to accept His will with a smile.
Believing that the Lord dost know
What's best for me-to make me grow.*

*Then if it is His will, I pray
That He will bless my womb someday.
And if a child the Lord dost give
I pray that for the Lord my child will live.*

*And when my child's life on earth done
I'll know that victory over death my child has won.
For through God's grace
He guides His children to His "Holy Place"*

*Where there are not fears, troubles, or sorrows
But only love, and life, and happy tomorrows.*

By a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Shining Into the Darkness of the World

by Rev. Vander Wal

Speech from the 1999 New Jersey retreat.

II Corinthians 4:6, 7: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

As Protestant Reformed Reformed Young People, do you know what a treasure you have? Light! Pure, clear, shining light! In order to understand the proper value of this treasure, all you need to do is look around you. Look into the world. See the darkness there. Utter, total darkness. A few decades ago, one might have said there is a great deal of light out there in the world. The world is a pretty decent place, filled with good people. Especially as these few decades have gone by, sin has become more and more manifest. You and I know that the world is ever dead in sins and trespasses. But that depravity had been covered over with a veneer of a semblance of righteousness, external good works. But more and more you see that thin veneer wearing thinner and thinner. All you need to do is look at the world of entertainment. You see all the lewdness and lasciviousness paraded before the eyes of men and women. The world is getting darker and darker. Contrast that darkness to the light that you have.

Look to another quarter. Look to the world of the church. There, too, you find darkness growing thicker and deeper with each passing year. No longer is the truth being proclaimed, but emphasis is placed on feelings, the feelings that are generated in worship. The goal of worship is simply feeling good about yourself, feeling

good about your worship. But there is after all very little light sinking into darkness. You, on the other hand, have this marvelous treasure of light. As I say that, I feel a little jealous. From a very strict point of view, I was not brought up in the same light that many of you have been brought up in, raised from your earliest childhood, taught by your parents from your earliest memory, having had a thorough instruction in your catechism classes through the years of your childhood. You've sat under the preaching, Protestant Reformed preaching, clear and distinctive, almost since you've been born. You've had light. You've also had that light placed within your heart by the Holy Spirit of God, the same God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has caused that gospel to shine in your heart, so that you become light-bearers. What a marvelous treasure you have.

But that gift is not meant for you to hold in yourselves. Simply to say, "I have light. I have the conscious enjoyment of God's fellowship and friendship. And it's mine, simply to have by myself, or simply to have in the communion and fellowship of those who, with me, have that same light, the church." You are given a calling to let your light so shine before men. All of you, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, being in that kingdom of light, being described so beautifully by our Lord Jesus Christ at the beginning of Matthew 5, the poor in spirit, those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the peacemakers. You: you have that light. And now the calling comes to you, "Let your light so shine before men." You are called to take the light that you possess, and to project it, to cast it in a certain direction. Not among yourselves, not within yourself, but into the darkness of the world. A calling, but also a glorious privilege. A marvelous privilege, because God is pleased in the way of carrying

out this calling to let your light so shine, to bring that light to others, who will glorify God your Father in heaven. God has a purpose with you. We might call it the purpose of evangelism. And there is no more blessed thing than to be used by God in that way, to shine that light to someone, and to have that someone say: “I love that light that you have shown to me. And I rejoice in that same light. I want you to know more about that light. Tell me about that light.” And through that you bring them into the church of Jesus Christ. A calling and a privilege, to shine into the darkness of the world.

Now, I suppose I have to tell you exactly what this thing is that I have to present to you. Two words have already been taken. Professor Dykstra has taken the word “leech.” I can’t use that. Rev. Terpstra has taken the word “lermon.” I can’t use that either. I don’t know what to call this thing. My wife suggested I call it a “splecture.” That sounds like a plum dropped off the top of the Empire State Bulding. I can’t use that. I think about—not too long ago—when I was in seminary, and Professor Engelsma called me into his office, and said, “I’m happy to report to you that you have been licensed to speak a word of edification.” I’ll call it a Word of Edification. And if you like a handy acronym, you can call it a WOE. When it was announced to me that I had been licensed, I thought, “Woe is me! I have to stand before all these people, and I have to bring them a word, something to say. How can I do that?” But you have to trust that what God calls you to do, He equips you to do it. The same thing is true of you. As light-bearers, having received this commandment, believe and know that God will give you the power, the strength, and the desire to shine your light before men.

The Fundamental Antithesis

One of the most beautiful things that you can understand about Matthew 5:16, seen in the light of the entire Scripture, is that there is displayed before us a fundamental antithesis. What could be more unlike, what could be more opposite than darkness and light? And that, too, bringing us back to the very first day of creation, when there was only darkness. God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. Pure, shining, clear, beautiful light. You see the setup, then. God placed that fundamental antithesis there so that we might hear our Savior speak these words to us, “Therefore let your light so shine before men”, that is, into the darkness of the world, so that you can understand that we are dealing here with a fundamental antithesis. You as light, and the world as darkness. Now there’s a beautiful reason for this statement.

Because this is so antithetical, you as possessors of the light, having that treasure, know exactly where you stand. Either darkness, or light. One possibility or the other. So that, if you know the light, if you love the light, you know exactly where you are. You are in the kingdom of heaven. You are these described by Jesus in Matthew 5. Therefore you know your calling, to shine your light into the darkness. There are not shades of gray here. You must not say you are only a little different from the world. You are totally and completely different, as different as light is from the darkness.

Now, let’s take a look at that one side of the antithesis, the darkness. We must understand exactly the character, and the nature of this darkness. Of course, this darkness is gross. It’s black, and sweeping, as dark as it was before God said, “Let there be light,” so dark is it in the world. You must understand exactly what that darkness is. That darkness is not first of all a moral and ethical darkness. When I say that, I’m looking at it strictly from the viewpoint of external deeds, on the front or on the cover of things. If you look at the world from that point of view, you might come to the conclusion that the world might still be a pretty good place, after all. There’s much light. There are many people doing very many good things. Is there light there? Not, according to Scripture. What is the difference? The difference has fundamentally to do with the truth. The truth as it concerns God, as it concerns the Christ of God. You bring up that truth as the standard, then you can very easily distinguish between light and the darkness.

That darkness is a willing darkness. It is a darkness that is filled with love, with a desire for that ignorance. That darkness is therefore antithetically opposed to the light. You might understand from the nature of light and darkness as physical things, that darkness represents a certain void that is somewhat neutral, or a vacuum, so that when that light shines into the darkness that it is desired or wanted. But such is not the case at all with the darkness of this world. This darkness is an avowed, sworn enemy of the light. That darkness will surround the light and try to extinguish it. “And the light shineth into the darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” “He came unto his own and his own received him not.” That darkness is absolutely opposed to the truth. Of course, you don’t need to go into the world to understand that, because you and I always have that same fight within ourselves. Rev. Terpstra spoke of that last night. You have that old man of sin. That old man of sin is darkness. The new man of sin is the light. Knowing that

struggle, you understand how that antithesis manifests itself in the midst of the world.

On the other side of that darkness is light, the opposite. But before we can understand what light is, we need to draw another contrast between “light,” or pseudo-light, and true light. First, that pseudo-light. There is a bookstore down the hall to the right. You can buy much more than books in that book store. T-shirts, hats, bracelets, necklaces, you name it. Go into any Christian bookstore. When you walk into a bookstore, what do you see first of all? Paraphernalia! You almost have to ask, “Where are the books?” You have to make your way through all kinds of Christian stuff before you can find the books. But it is Christian stuff. You put on the earrings. You put on the bracelets, you put on the t-shirts and the jackets, the hats. Are you a light-bearer? Is that light? Where is the light? Can you put that light on your outside, on

**You put on the bracelets,
you put on the t-shirts and
the jackets, the hats. Are
you a light-bearer? Is that
light?**

your exterior. I don’t think so. That is a pseudo-light. Think about it. Is it light at all? Or is it darkness? You can do a little research. You find an individual wearing these things and using these things. You ask them what they think. “Tell me about Jesus. Tell me about God.” And you will very likely find in talking to them, that they are stuck deep in darkness, that they don’t know anything at all about what they supposedly believe. Wearing the name of Christ, do they really believe in Christ?

That must bring us to the opposite, the true light. That light is first of all knowledge. That’s one of the greatest assets that you people have. You have been trained from your youth in doctrine, in the knowledge of Scripture. I tell you I would much rather hear you tell me about the truth, than I would any theologian from any other denomination. Because I know that you know. I have heard professors from other Christians institutions give lectures that you would put to shame by your simple witness in the office of very believer. You have true light, the knowledge.

That knowledge has to stand as foundational to your good works. We have to unpack the words of our Savior recorded in Matthew 5:16. How are you going to do that? Can you simply say, “I’m going to go through my whole life, just doing these good works, and then people are going to automatically say, ‘I glorify God because of what I have seen so and so doing.’” Can that happen? I think the first the conclusion they will come to is that you are a pretty good person. And, if they say that, who are they giving glory to? Not to God. They will give glory to you. Something else has to be there. You have to confess. You have to identify very clearly and sharply the God of your salvation, Who He is, how He has revealed Himself, through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. You have to go through the world, specifically identifying yourself as a Christian. Not with the t-shirts, necklaces, etc., but by your speech, your confession of the truth. That stands as foundational.

But that knowledge cannot exist only in your mind. II Corinthians 4:6 gives the real place where that light exists. Not in your minds, but in your hearts. That’s where the light has to be. Light does not only involve a certain logic or reasonableness. You cannot arrive at light simply by logic, by weighing two sets of propositions, and coming to the conclusion that one is true, and must be assented to with your mind. If that happens, you can never desire, embrace, or love the light that you have. But God’s grace is such that He shines that knowledge into your heart, so that you say that knowledge is beautiful to you, rich and vibrant. “This is the light that is truly life, And I love the life that this light brings to me.” If this light exists only in your mind, then it is just as superficial and false as the t-shirt that you might put on.

That light must also be manifested in good works. There can be no doubt that our Savior lays stress on good works. “Let your light so shine that they may see your good works. What do good works have to do with the truth, that light? Those good works are a seal on that light. Is that a genuine light? Is it powerful? Do your good works set the seal upon your light as genuine and true? Are the people among whom you work, among whom you study, looking at you, and saying, “I see in that person a power and a strength so that what they confess is actually lived out in their life.” Can they see that in you? That has to be where the light, the truth, and the life, shines: good works. The idea of good is that there is a harmony and a consistency, between light and good works. It comes out, making itself manifest.

The Illuminating Activity

What I want to emphasize here is that this activity belongs to every one of you. Prior to the Reformation, it was believed that your average, ordinary church member was not light. If you wanted to see light, you had to see certain people: the holy ones. You would have to see monks or nuns, or certain priests. If you wanted to see more light, you would have to see bishops, or the pope. There was the holiness that your ordinary person did not have. The ordinary and common folk had to cling to the works of those other people, to have assurance and confidence. The Reformation put a stop to that. It stated that all of you are light bearers. The priesthood of every believer was an important Reformation principle. The truth of Matthew 5:16 was recovered in the Reformation and given to every believer.

Secondly, in every place. This was another beautiful thing about the Reformation. Holiness was not confined any more to the church, to be in a certain group in contact with holiness. Every believer must say, “I am holy, I have light, and it is my calling to shine my light in every respect, every activity that I enter into.” Not only in specifically religious activities, devotions, sitting under the means of grace. You go to school. You work. And in those areas your calling is to let your light shine before men in the way of doing good works. You see your calling and vocation, no matter what it is, as an activity of holiness. You might think that the gospel ministry and teaching in the Christian school, are sacred activities. And then, working in a factory, studying in a college, parenting, those are lesser. In all these activities, no matter how low they may see, you must let your light so shine.

This idea of place brings in a limiting factor. You cannot shine your light everywhere. You cannot go into the places that are distinctly worldly, distinctly darkness, the theaters, the bars, the clubs. Why not? Your light cannot shine there. That is the limiting factor. This

You cannot go into the places that are distinctly worldly, distinctly darkness, the theaters, the bars, the clubs. Why not? Your light cannot shine there.

is not legalism, but the application of a principle. You think about going to a place, whether it is right or wrong, and this is the criterion: “What if I go into this place, and someone asks me very specifically and pointedly, ‘Are you a Christian?’” What would you say, and how would you say it? You would have to have a bushel basket over your head! If you can’t let your light shine there, you don’t belong there.

With this calling, you may be sure that the Lord will give you opportunities to let your light shine into that darkness. Look for them. Await them eagerly, anticipate them, because when they arise, you don’t need to worry about how you will let your light shine. How long have you been taught about that light—twenty to thirty years? You know it, and you can be assured that God will give you the grace to say the right thing, even though you may not be so sure.

Shining the light. That means first a confession of the truth. Stand up, say, “I am light.” Let that light shine forth, and adorn that light with good works, that show the great and marvelous power of that light. As you go about your life, walking consistently in good works, always point to God. God has shown that light in your heart, and always shines that light from that center so that it radiates out, so that you show it forth. We have this most beautifully portrayed in the creation of the world. When God created the light, he did not first create the light-bearers, but He shined it forth immediately, without means. Four days later, he created the light-bearers. He did not need them, but he was pleased to use them. The same thing happens in your life. God could have shone that light immediately and directly, but he chose you to bear that light. As a result, you can never claim that light as your own, that you are its source. But you must always be pointing back to God, calling attention to Him and to Christ.

The Two-fold Purpose

As you go through with this activity, you are undertaking a purpose. God has a purpose when he has given you that light, and the calling to shine it.

You might think—and this is a definite purpose—that the very *first* purpose is a fight and a battle. It is certainly true that the world hates the light and fights against the darkness. This is persecution. You are being persecuted right now. You are not being beaten, persecuted, killed for your faith. But you identify yourself with that light, and the world tries to extinguish that light. You feel that. As you go into the world, there is a tremendous pressure put on you not to let your light shine.

They may like you for your good works. But the minute you open your mouth to speak of God and God distinctively as sovereign over all, there is the opposition. You can sense it. Don't talk about it, don't talk especially about the sovereign, almighty God. We'll let you live among us, work among us, run with us, but don't say anything about the light. When you identify yourself so closely with the light, and you see the world putting pressure on you not to let it shine, that is persecution.

That brings up another side of that persecution. You will understand that there are certain persons who will not have anything to do with you. They will shut you out of their company. You will be to them as an alien. Be ready for that. Know that it will happen. That will develop further as the darkness grows in its manifestation. More and more that persecution will grow in ferocity. But when you have spoken the truth, and shone your light, you will be ready for that persecution. You will have been practicing the experience of that opposition. Through that activity you will be impressed with the difference between yourself and the world. You will know yourself to be saved and redeemed, that all the persecution in the world cannot tear you from your Savior.

But all that is not the main purpose. Our Lord has a very specific word that identifies that purpose. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and *glorify* your Father which is in heaven." You know that the vast majority of people toward whom you shine that light, will reject it. And then you might draw the conclusion that that's the first purpose, the primary goal of your shining the light. But remember that we are not interested in numbers. We do not decide by majority what is first and what is foundational. You know that from the light itself; it is what it is not because of what the majority of men say, but because of what God says.

The first purpose is that a certain number of those in the world will see your good works, and they will turn to give the glory to God. That brings in something beautiful. Your goal, the whole purpose of your life must be the glory of God. But you are not alone in that work. God has elected a whole church for that purpose. There are others in the world in the darkness, who must be brought to that same purpose and goal, and into that same church. That's the first purpose for letting your light shine.

We consider other passages to see this more clearly. Isaiah 42:6, "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and

give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." Isaiah 49:6, "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." The idea here is that God is sending His servant the Messiah, not to be salvation for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles. At that time, the light was only with the Jews. But, God states in these passages, that He will also bring that light to the Gentiles. This same verse is quoted in Acts 13:47. You see an important difference there. In Isaiah this passage was spoken of Christ. But now Paul takes that verse and applies that to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The background of that is the preaching of Paul in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia. The Jews rejected that light which Paul preached to them. Paul gives the explanation out of Isaiah, applying the idea to Himself. God commanded *them* by means of the passage of Isaiah. In the record of the Gentile's reaction (verse 48), we find the same word as we have in Matthew 5:16. Paul shone the light to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles turned to glorify God. Paul fulfilled Matthew 5:16. It's not the exclusive work of apostles, ministers, and professors to shine the light. All of you: so let your light so shine before men. That's the office of every believer. You are a light-bearer. And as you bear that light into the world, you

**As you shine that light,
expect God to use you to
turn others out of darkness
into his glorious light.**

can see God using you as His instrument. As you shine that light, expect God to use you to turn others out of darkness into His glorious light. May God be pleased to use you for the glory of His Name, not just with yourself, but with others, who come to the light, through your shining. Go out, shining your light into the darkness of the world. ❖

Rev. Vander Wal is pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Wykoff, New Jersey.

Early Church History— The Apologists

by Rev. John A. Heys

We have called your attention to the fact that during the Apostolic Age there was little doctrinal development in the church. The Apostles had spoken infallibly by the power of the Spirit Who was upon them, and their immediate successors, the Apostolic Fathers, who were not infallibly guided, merely repeated their teachings with little attempt to develop them and explain the significance of the various truths in relation to one another. Rather were their writings a series of confessions and admonitions to continue in that truth.

**The church must “dig” into
these truths and develop
them.**

This must not continue for long. The church must “dig” into these truths and develop them. There were many doctrinal matters which the early church had to investigate, and to which it had to give expression as to what it believed to be the truth of the Word of God. It must obtain a clear conception of the natures of Christ and their union in the person of the Son of God. It must formulate an opinion based upon the teachings of the Word of God, as to the Triune existence of God now that it has the fuller revelation of this truth from the teachings of the Apostles in their infallibly written epistles and from the infallibly written gospel narratives wherein the words of Christ are recorded. It must understand more clearly the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification now that the types and shadows are past and the Lamb of God is come and has been sacrificed. These are only a few of the many doctrinal matters which the church must investigate, and which it has studied since the time of the Apostolic Fathers. The marvelous work of salvation which God has wrought, together with all that which is related to it, God wants His people to behold in order that they may fear Him and His may be the praise and the glory.

This the church cannot do over night. There will be a gradual development of these truths which continues through the ages and is not consummated until we no longer see these truths darkly through the glass of human language and speech but clearly as we see God face to face.

A small beginning of this was made in the period of the Apostolic Fathers which we have considered thus far. In this age such doctrines as “Premillennialism” and “Common Grace” were not discussed and studied. The time was not there for the development of the truth in regard to these heresies. The peculiar problems of that age and the doctrinal issues around which there was debate and discussion were those that had to do with Christology or the doctrine of Christ. This is to be understood. The Apostles preached Christ as the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy, and rightly so. For the Jew this was a matter that could bear much discussion, and they had many objections which to their mind were serious and required explanation before they could accept this teaching. The Gentiles believed in another god than Jehovah the Holy One of Israel. The doctrine of His Son coming in our flesh was quite a novelty to them, and serious objections they also found to raise against it. The Apostolic Fathers did make an attempt to develop this truth and to defend it. There was a beginning of doctrinal development.

In one of our previous essays we declared that we liked Ignatius because of his vigorous attempt to defend the truth of Christ’s human nature. He emphasized the truth that He was truly born, tempted, persecuted, crucified, died and resurrected. He pointed to His suffering under Pilate and Herod as proof of the reality of His human nature. The occasion for this was the fact that there arose already in his day those who denied the human existence of Christ. When this heresy lifted up its proud head, Ignatius being moved by the Spirit resorted to the Scriptures and studied it for an answer. This was a beginning of doctrinal development.

It was in the age that followed, however, that this development made far more rapid strides. In the days of

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the Apostolic Fathers the Church had not as yet been led by the Spirit to decide which books belonged to the New Testament Canon. Copies of various epistles and books were still very scarce. In the following age men who

were called Apologists began to attack the heresies which were making a bid for followers.

Here is another point that we like to make at this time. These heresies well nigh always preceded the development of the truth. In fact, God used these heresies to spur the church on to deeper study of His Word and thus to the development of the truth.

In a following essay, we hope to treat some of these false doctrines and follow this with a consideration of some of these Apologists and their works. ❖

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

A Small English Church

by J.P. de Klerk

Centuries before the Reformation came to the British Isles, Scotland and England were always fighting with each other. There were dukes involved, monks and bishops, owners of castles and villages, churches and small as well as big armies. Peace was a rare item in those days. The inhabitants of Scotland are probably descended from a country in the area of the Mediterranean, who had to fight against Picts, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, etc. They made a defense-wall called the Wall of Hadrianus (in the year 142) between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Later they got support of the Scoti (people from Ireland). A man with the name Columba brought Christianity to Scotland (we know only that he died in 597). About a century later there was a king uniting various tribes (Kenneth I) who was attacked by invaders from Norway. He pushed them back, but they remained at the small islands before the coast for a couple of centuries. Next came king Duncan (1034-1040) further uniting the inhabitants. And still the fighting went on from time to time. In 1210 this church, named after the Apostle John, was built in Newton Arlosh on English territory from natural stones, protected against Scottish soldiers. It is as much a fortification as a church. The walls are enormously thick, with tiny slit windows. The tower served as a lookout point, with panoramic views. The main door is only thirty-one inches wide, causing problems for bridal couples and coffin-bearers.

The Church was restored in 1843 (Protestant) and extended sideways. Newton Arlosh lays fourteen miles west of Carlisle, close to the border with Scotland (in Cumbria). ❖

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





The 75th Anniversary Celebration is less than one year away. The dates are, D.V., June 19-23, 2000. Plans are already being finalized for this historic time in our churches. God has truly given us a heritage to be thankful for.

The Celebration has been organized to include many worthwhile spiritual activities as well as recreational activities. There will also be an international flavor with fellow believers attending, the Lord willing, from Singapore, Australia, and possibly other countries. We encourage you to bring your entire family to stay on campus. If you cannot stay on campus, we would welcome you to come for as many days as possible.

The daily schedule and activities being planned are as follows:

MONDAY

NOON TO 4PM Registration, check-in, and free time to enjoy fellowship

5:00-6:00PM Dinner

7:30-9:00PM Evening Program

- Singing
- Announcements
- Church History Video comemorating our 75 year history
- Keynote Address presented by Cal Kalsbeek

9:00-11:00PM Cookies/Coffee and Time for Fellowship

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY

7:30-8:30AM Breakfast

9:30-11:00AM Children's Bible School and Adult Sectionals

- Children ages 3-14 will break out into sectionals to discuss Christian Armor, work on crafts, sing, and make new friends.

- Adults will break out into several different sectionals, including topic on: Singapore, Pittsburgh, Spokane, Missions Overview, Singing, Devotions, Evangelism, Scriptorium (Old Manuscripts), Organist/Pianist Recital (share music and play), and Historical Overview of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The sectionals are an opportunity to learn, discuss, and share ideas about the above areas. Each sectional would have a moderator that would start with a short overview of the sectional. The moderator would then lead a discussion or a question/answer session on the subject. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy fellowship with other members of the same faith. You will meet new individuals and share your thoughts and opinions on the subject of the sectional. The sectionals will be repeated the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday which will allow all attendees an opportunity to participate in several of the sectionals throughout the Celebration.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage. Psalm 16:6

11:30AM-12:30PM Lunch

1:00-4:30PM Field Day or Leisure Activities

- Competition softball for the children
- Competition soccer for the children
- Competition volleyball for the adults
- Leisure Activities include:
 - Volleyball–unstructured
 - Pool/Gym
 - Church Tour, Visit Old First Church in Grand Rapids and Seminary Tour.
 - Horseshoes
 - Boccee Ball
 - Photo/Nature Trail
- Care Packages for Myanmar. We are looking for volunteers to put together small first aid and health kits to be shipped to Myanmar. We would ask all Celebration attendees to bring a small item for donation. Volunteers would sort, package, and box up small kits for shipping. We are also looking for donations to cover shipping costs.
 - Organ Recitals
 - Auto Harp
 - Animal Kingdom Videos (rainy day activity)
 - Closest to the Pin Contest
 - Off campus, unstructured opportunities include; shopping, golf, Fredrick Meijer Gardens, Van Andel Museum, Grand Rapids Children Museum, Gerald R. Ford Museum, and much more.

5:00-6:00PM Dinner

7:30-8:30PM Evening Program

- Singing
- Announcements
- Tuesday's Speech: Based on the Celebration Theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic of *A Beautiful Heritage* by Rev. Jason Kortering
- Wednesday's Speech: Based on the Celebration Theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic *A Present Necessity* by Professor David Engelsma

9:00-11:00PM Free Time

THURSDAY

7:30AM-12:30PM Breakfast, Children's Bible School, Adult Sectionals and Lunch are the same as Tuesday and Wednesday.

1:00-4:30PM Family Fun Day or Leisure Activities

- Moonwalk
- Powerball
- Velcro Wall
- Kids Caterpillar
- Bungee Run
- Rock Climbing Wall
- Giant Slide
- Pony Rides
- Face Painting
- Caricature Drawings

5:00-6:00PM Dinner

8:00-9:00PM Evening Program (later time to accommodate Young People's Banquet)

- Singing
- Announcements
- Speech: Based on the Celebration Theme *Living Out Of Our Heritage* on the topic *A Sure Light For The Future* by Rev. Carl Haak

9:30-11:00PM Free Time

FRIDAY

7:30-8:30AM Breakfast

9:00-11:00AM Pack up and say goodbye to old and new friends

The Celebration week is full of many spiritual and recreational activities for the whole family to enjoy. That is why we recommend staying on campus. It is a wonderful way to make new relationships with other believers from throughout God's world. In conjunction with the Celebration, the Young People's Convention will be held the same time and place, but they will have designated dorms for their lodging and many separate activities. The young people will already be there so make this a family week.

We believe that this 75th Anniversary Celebration will be something that your family will enjoy reminiscing about for many years. We also pray that God will use this to strengthen each of us in our faith and encourage us for His work in the future.

The 75th Anniversary Committee

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Cave

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Drip...drip...drip...

There was a damp, cold darkness beneath the earth. Water droplets plinked into shallow pools, plunking out the rhythm of their own lonely poetry. I shivered. I wouldn't want to be left alone, lost in such a place. But there were things here I had never seen before—large, strange, colorful, wonderful things. Who would've thought it?

"And to your left we see another area of large stalactites growing from the ceiling," the tour guide broke into my thoughts as he pointed out the various formations of the cave. "See how they have formed along a crack in the ceiling? We call this the 'lifeline' of the cave. Note the stalactites' reflection in the water below."

I looked over a railing into a pool. The reflection was mirror-perfect. And I was startled by the depth of the water! It appeared to be a very deep chasm, filled with the stillest, purest water. Yet our tour guide assured us it was only about two inches deep. Amazing!

We continued through another narrow passage that led into a spacious room containing huge, colorful stalagmites. It looked as if giant scoops of ice cream had been piled in heaps upon the floor, with mixtures of different flavors melting and oozing all over each other. And the heaps were twice as tall as I was! What amazing things.

Then, just before we were to continue down another path, I saw something. Could it really be? A sign was firmly attached to one of the stone walls. It read:

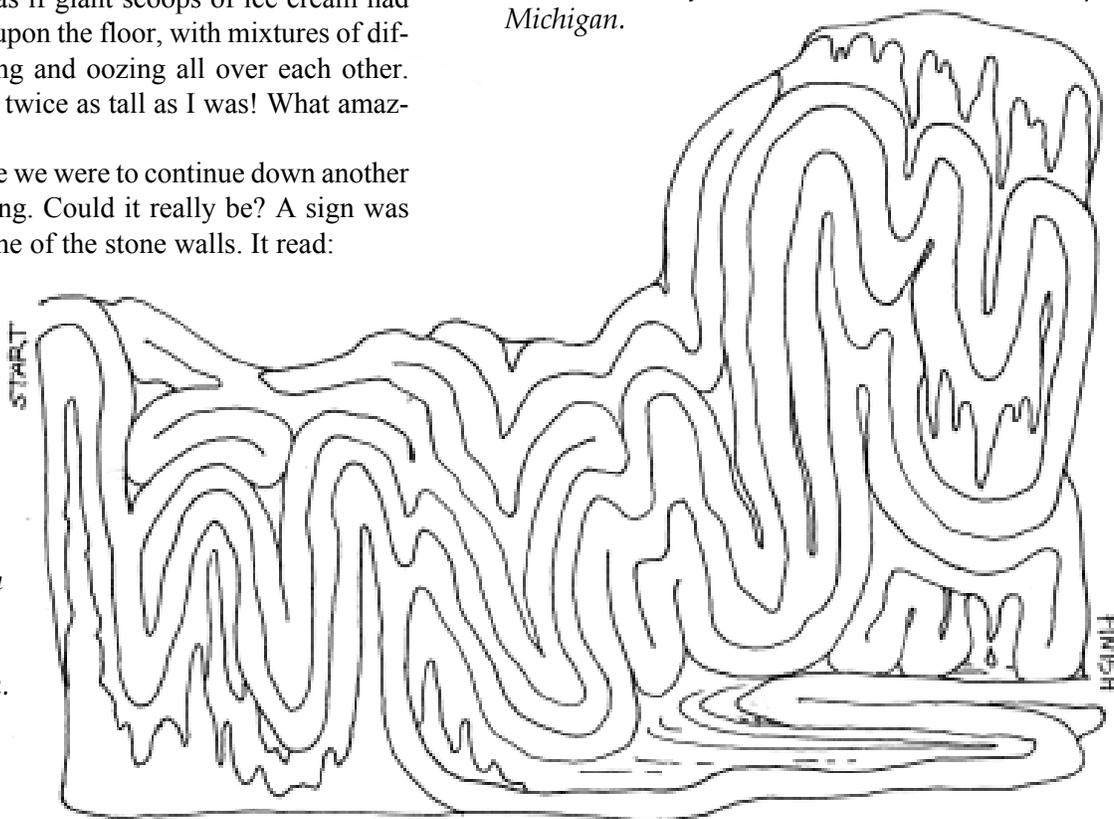
**O LORD, HOW MANIFOLD ARE THY WORKS!
IN WISDOM HAST THOU MADE THEM ALL:
THE EARTH IS FULL OF THY RICHES.**

Psalm 104:24

Before I had a chance to contemplate the words, the lights were dimmed and I was forced to follow the tour, on to more wonders and more discoveries. But I would not forget the sign. Someone had confessed the Creator in this place. My Creator. Did whoever install the sign know Him as I know Him? I cannot tell. But the words are there. God's word. God's word that is in my church, my school, my home—and even in my heart. And now I see His word is even in this cave—with or without the sign. Amazing.

"All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord." Indeed.❖

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



**These amazing things, along with the sign, can be seen at Cave of the Mounds in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin.*

BEACON LIGHTS

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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:

Daniel Jordan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gary Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Delanie Kay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Van Bommel—Doon, IA
Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jim VerHey—Edgerton, MN
Cassandra Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Van Gelderen—Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Joshua Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Geoff Penna—Georgetown, MI
Colleen Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Potjer—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:

Joshua Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
Erin Hassevoort—Byron Center, MI
Emily Snyder—Bethel, IL
James Hoogendoorn—Doon, IA
Mike Streyle—Doon, IA
Jeff TeSlaa—Doon, IA
Brent Wynia—Doon, IA
Mark Meulenberg—Grace, MI
Cynthia Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI
Paula Vander Veen—Hudsonville, MI
Derek Bruinooge—Southeast, MI
Ed Ophoff III—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES

*"...and they twain shall be one flesh."
Matthew 19:5*

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. John Kuiper and Miss Renita Veenstra—Hope, MI