

Beacon Lights

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Wondering what to study for this upcoming society season? A new study guide is available on the book of Judges. Check inside for more.

*“Oh, how love I thy law!
It is my meditation all the day!”
(Psalm 119:97)*

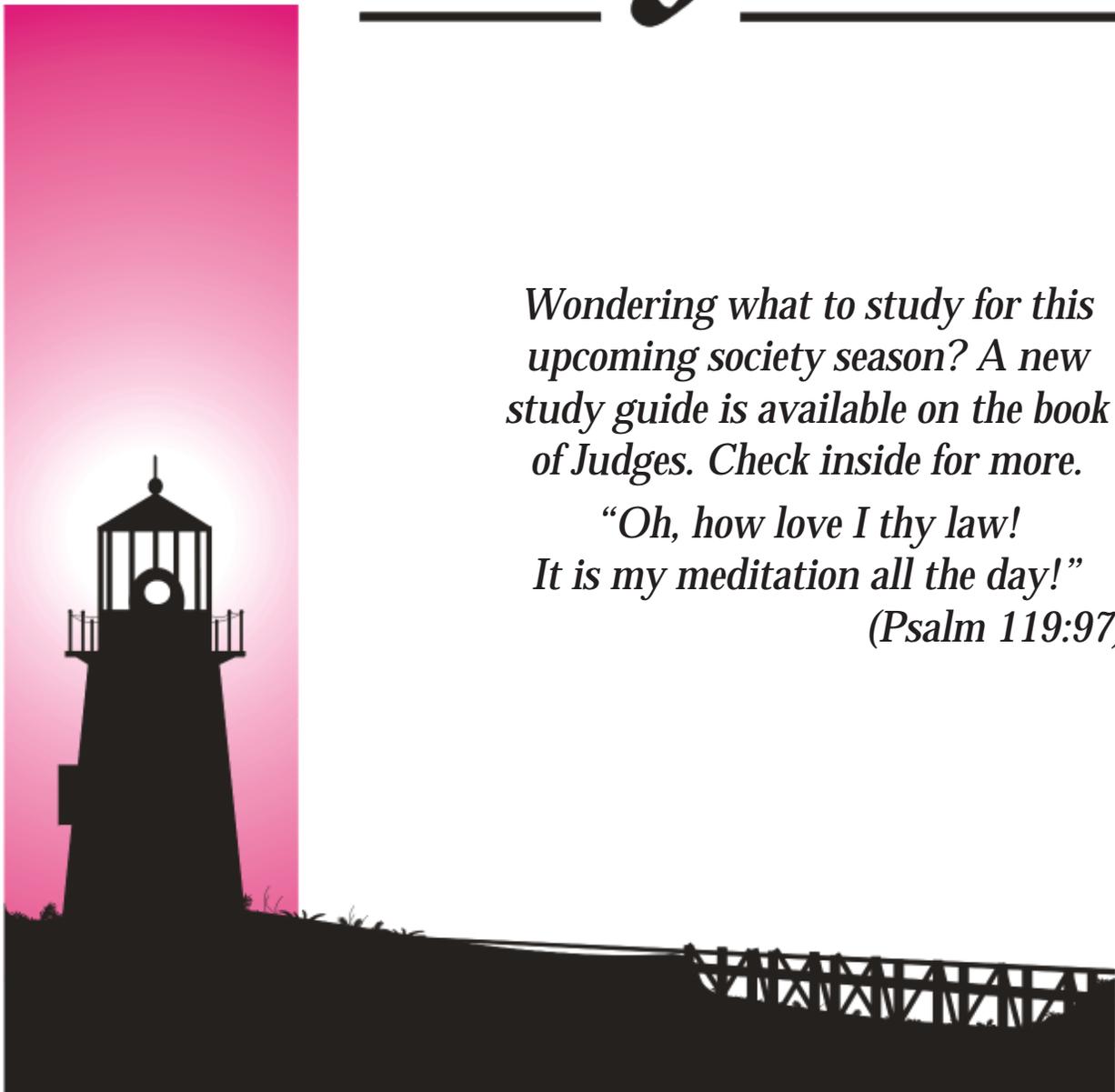


Table of Contents

	EDITORIAL
3	I Was There
	OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEDERATION
4	Bible Study Basics
6	Study Guide on the Book of Judges (1)
	DEVOTIONAL
10	Watching Daily At My Gates—July
12	Watching Daily At My Gates—August
	CHURCH FAMILY
15	Between You and Me
	BOOK REVIEW
18	The Cat of Bubastes
	MEMOIR OF REV. C. HANKO
20	Chapter 14: Shadows
	LITTLE LIGHTS
23	A Turn of Events: from Chaos to Comfort (Part 5)
	CHURCH NEWS
	Back Cover

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I Was There

by Tom Cammenga



I was there when they crucified the Lord. Were you? I was there in the garden when the shouting mob of soldiers and ruffians came to arrest Him, armed with swords and staves and bearing torches with which to light the way. I was there in the Judgment Hall as the Pharisees and chief priests hurled at Him their false accusations; I saw them mock Him and curse Him and spit on Him. I was there when the angry mob screamed for his life to be taken so that a filthy insurrectionist, robber, and murderer might go free. I was there in the streets as He struggled under the weight of the cross that He bore on the way to the place where He would die. I was there as the soldiers viciously nailed Him to that same cross and then cast lots to determine which of them would receive his coat. I saw Him suffering torment unimaginable because I was there at the foot of the cross at Calvary. I was there when total and complete darkness consumed all for three hours. I heard Him cry in anguish, questioning why his Father had forsaken Him, and finally, I heard Him when He said that his work was finished. I was there when the Roman soldier thrust his spear into the side of Christ to insure that death had indeed come to this man. I was there when they crucified the Lord. Were you?

In fact, not only was I there when all this took place, but I was a willing participant in it all. With my own voice I accused Him and mocked Him and cried out for his life. With my own hands I slapped Him and pressed on his head the crown of thorns. I personally chose the nails that would fix Him to the cross and then brutally pounded them through his hands and his feet. I thrust the spear into the side of this righteous man who I knew to be the very Son of God. My hands were covered with the blood of the Savior. Not only was I there at that time, but I am there every day of my life. I am even there many times each day. Are you? Are you a sinner? Then you too are there with me as we crucify the Lord Jesus Christ. You too wear the blood stains of Him who was crucified.

How can that be you ask? In a way I have already answered this question. You see, every time we sin we crucify Christ anew in that by our sin we deny the redeeming work that He accomplished on the cross. Each time we sin we fail to mortify our old man. Each time we sin we drive the nails through his hands and feet. Each time we sin we mock Him and beat Him and spit upon Him.

It is the very guilt of our sins that made the cross necessary. Have you ever stopped to think about that young people? Do you think about that when you sin? When you disobey the rules that your parents have set forth, do you see the cross? When you swear and take the Lord's name in vain, do you see the cross? When you attend parties and become drunk or high, do you see the cross? More importantly, do you see Christ on that cross? You must! I must! It is because of us that He hung there and endured not only the wrath of God but was utterly and completely forsaken by his Father. He only was able to obtain satisfaction for your sins and my sins.

Do not think however that Christ must bear the wrath of God each time we sin. Do not think either that the one sacrifice of the cross was not enough to save us but that He must constantly be crucified in order to obtain salvation for us. This is the error that the Roman Catholic Church holds to in the mass. This is the error of which Question and Answer 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism (speaking of the mass) says: "...so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry." What kind of Savior would He be if his one sacrifice was not enough to pay our debt? The obvious answer is that He would be no Savior at all. And if Christ is no Savior, then God is not God. And if God is not God then our faith and our religion is vain.

And yet knowing and confessing this great truth we sin so easily. We heap sin upon sin without a second thought. Especially it seems, although most certainly not exclusively, when we are young, because

after all we are invincible are we not? It seems to us that we have many years ahead of us and though we sin often in our youth we will eventually mature and sin will become more of an issue in our lives. When we get older we will become more concerned about it. But while we are young we want to have fun. And if we are going to have real fun we must sin, at least a little bit because that is really what fun is, isn't it?

If that is our mindset, and sadly it is, we are running at break-neck speed down the broad path that leads inevitably to hell. If that is the way in which you are going, young person, stop! By the grace of God stop! Life does not go on forever. There are no guarantees that you will live eighty or ninety years. It may be that God requires your soul before this day is done. Are you ready for that? Are you ready to face Jesus Christ, the righteous judge and give an account of your life? Sure, it is easy for those left behind to think about this when God takes a child or young person home suddenly. It is simple in the time surrounding such an event to admit to ourselves that life is fleeting and we are but a breath. It is even quite easy to live our lives for a short time with this in mind. But this must be our confession every day! We must live our lives as though each hour could be our last. Not, of course, to get as much out of life as we can but to give our all to God. He has saved us, after all. He gave his only Son, rejected and despised, and suffered Him to be crucified. For us. For you and for me.

And so those who crucify are also crucified. The old man of sin who cried out among that mob for the Lord Jesus Christ to be put to death is now put to death with Him. The old man of sin who at one time stood in opposition to the Savior now hangs along side of Him and hears the Lord's words; "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." In his death we also died, or more specifically, our old man of sin died. If that is the case, and it certainly is as we see from Romans 6, then we are also alive in Him. By and through his death He killed that old man of sin that lives in each one of us and thereby delivers us from the bondage of sin. This does not mean however that we no longer sin but that we are no longer servants to sin, unable to break the bands by which it holds us. Christ in his death and resurrection destroyed the dominion that sin had over us.

If our old man is dead then it follows that the new man in Christ lives. The new man rose from the dead with Him on that glorious resurrection morning so that now as He lives, you and I live too. No longer are we held fast by the power of sin but by His resurrection we are delivered from its control. What an amazing truth that is!

It is essential that we understand that these are not just abstract events in history or even simple fables as so many today would have us believe. Jesus Christ was hanged on a cross, He died and was buried, and He arose from the dead on the third day the victor over death. This He did because of you and me. This He did *for* you and me. Our Lord Jesus Christ died so that we may live. This fact humbles us to the dust as well it should. It also gives us the greatest joy. Greatest joy when we take loved ones to the grave. Greatest joy when we ourselves face that last enemy. Greatest joy because in and through his death we are already victorious.

I was there when they crucified the Lord. Were you? ❖

Our Young People's Federation

Bible Study Basics

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

Last society season, the Randolph Protestant Reformed Young People's Society began studying the book of Judges. This coming season, the Lord willing, we will conclude our study of this book.

To help the young people prepare for the weekly discussions, I prepared a list of questions on each chapter of the book. These questions are being printed in the *Beacon Lights* so that others might benefit from them.

But before delving into the book of Judges, it might be good to review a few basics.

The Privilege of Bible Study

Our sinful nature does not think of Bible study as a privilege, but as a chore. Ultimately, this is because Satan does not want us to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, but wants our spiritual life to become weak and stagnant. Looking within ourselves, we find that this is because we are so earthly minded. A weekly Young Peoples Sports Discussion would be enjoyable; but group Bible study is less so.

Nevertheless, godly, covenant young people have throughout history enjoyed Bible study, and we can too! Think of what we read in Psalm 1:2, of the blessed man: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” And seven times in Psalm 119, the Psalmist speaks of meditating in God’s law. He delights in this! “Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day!” (Psalm 119:97).

For him, Bible study was a privilege.

And it must be, and can be, for us as well.

Rather than my telling you why it must be, and how it can be, why don’t you begin the upcoming society season discussing this matter? Search the Scriptures to find Biblical answers to these questions:

- * why is it a privilege for us to be able to study the Scriptures?
- * why is it that we do not always think of this opportunity as a privilege?
- * what benefit will Scripture study give us?
- * what can we do to enjoy Bible study?

How to Study the Bible

If one does not even know generally how to study the Bible, he or she will likely not do it.

So the following are some rules that we all—ministers, adults, and young people—ought to follow when studying Scripture for any occasion, whether for private study or group devotion. I quote this list from Rev. Ronald Hanko’s article “The Principles and Practice of Bible Study (Part II),” found in *The Standard Bearer*, Volume 58, page 445.

“Rules For the Study of Scripture

A. Rules for Spiritual preparation.

1. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Leave time for meditation upon the passage under study, probably after all other work with the passage is finished.

B. General rules.

1. Determine what kind of literature is being studied: poetry, prophesy, history, etc.
2. Attempt to divide the passage into sections or determine where the passage being studied begins and ends.
3. Define the theme of the book in which the passage is found and the place of that theme in the rest of Scripture.
4. Write down all questions.

C. Rules concerning the actual interpretation of the passage.

1. Determine the main point of the passage.
2. Take note of any problems of grammar or interpretation.
3. Identify the important words or concepts in the text.
4. Study these words or ideas in the light of the rest of Scripture by looking up and studying all the important texts where the same word or words are used.
5. Compare the text as a whole with similar or related passages from the rest of the Bible.
6. Take a close look at the passage in light of the immediate context as well as the context of the whole book and ask how the text fits into that context.
7. If necessary look for background material on history, chronology, customs, etc.
8. Look for Christ in the passage and how the text brings the Gospel of Christ.
9. Try to set out clearly the application of the text—what the Spirit says to the Churches.”

Look overwhelming? Don’t worry—good study guidelines have done part of the work for you, and give you aids on how to do the rest.

But, in sum, notice two things: first, Bible study takes hard work. It will take time. And second, it requires prayer. Only God has the power to enlighten us. So pray...and work!

A few questions for you young people to face, then, as you begin a new season:

- * Are we resolved to pray, both at home and in the society meeting, for God’s grace and help as we open up His Word?
- * Are we resolved to make Bible study a matter of priority, and give it the time it requires of us?

How to Conduct a Bible Study in Young People's Society

I don't mean to imply that I know the only or best way to lead a young people's society. Each group of young people is different, each leader is different, each topic is different—so there is no one right way.

But I do have a few suggestions, especially for the leaders.

First, *lead!* Lead the young people in discussion!

By this I mean, don't be so quick to tell the young people the answers to the questions, and the meaning of the text. Don't speak for the whole time, or even most of the time. Don't be so quick to speak when the young people are silent, because you fear silence.

Rather, prepare well at home so that you understand the passage yourself—but then in the Bible study let the young people discover the meaning of the passage and make its applications. This requires the leader to lead the young people through the text, forcing them to ask the right questions and to look in the right places for the answers.

Young People's Societies are not only opportunities for our young people to grow in their understanding of Scripture, but also to grow in their ability to study Scripture. This will not happen as well, if the leader is too quick to answer all their questions.

Second, although a Bible Study should not have the format of a catechism classroom, it still benefits the young people to require some work of them. So hold them accountable.

One way in which I have done this is to require all the members of the society to come with at least one question regarding the passage. Especially in the earlier part of the season I insisted on this. When the members had demonstrated that they were able to do their work without being held accountable, I relaxed this requirement a bit.

Or, certain young people could be assigned specifically to answer certain questions for the next week, thus forcing them to prepare.

Now too much structure can stifle discussion—and discussion is exactly what is desired in the society. So the leader has to know how to find a balance—and this again is not easy to do.

In closing, a few more questions to discuss at your first meeting this year:

- * Leaders, will you pray daily for the young people that you lead, that they be diligent in their preparation, and that their study meetings help them grow?
- * Young people, will you pray daily for your leaders, that God give them grace to lead you as you grow in your knowledge of the Scriptures?
- * And young people, will you resolve to honor your leaders, and respect them for the work which they are doing? ❖

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Study Guide on the Book of Judges (1)

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

Week 1

Introduction to the Book

The book of Judges is historical in nature. It relates the history of God's covenant people from the time of the death of Joshua until the time of

the birth of Samuel, who was the last judge, and by whom God anointed the first true king, David.

That the book is historical has implications for how we study it.

First, a historical passage need not be studied word by word and verse by verse. It works best to study his-

torical books by dividing the book into sections, and discussing it section by section. The section might be a whole chapter, a part of a chapter, or several chapters. In order to keep our study of Judges manageable, we will usually discuss it one chapter at a time.

Second, we must know as much as possible about the times in which this history took place. In fact, the book of Judges itself will give us much of this information.

Third, we must realize that the history of God's covenant people is always the history of God saving sinners through Jesus Christ. So one question which we must ask repeatedly is this: how do the events recorded in this passage speak about the salvation we have in Christ? In fact, we do well to begin asking the question generally, with regard to the book as a whole.

And fourth, the history of God's covenant people in the Old Testament always has application to our daily lives. I Corinthians 10:11 drives this point home. Having written of the sins of Israel in the wilderness, and the judgment of God upon her for these sins, the apostle Paul says: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." So repeatedly we must ask ourselves, when studying the book of Judges: what application do the events narrated in this book have to us as God's children? We ought not make the mistake of thinking that this practical question is the only real important question. First let us see that we too have been saved in Christ. *Then* we can ask how the question applies, reminding ourselves that a holy life shows gratitude for salvation, and that the power to live such a holy life is found in Jesus Christ, our King.

Study Helps

Every student of Scripture does well to use good reference works. These might include commentaries, handbooks, and/or studies of Bible history. I'm sure there are a number of good reference works to help one study the book of Judges.

One which I particularly recommend, however, is Prof. David Engelsma's book, *Unfolding Covenant History, volume 5: Judges and Ruth*, which is published by our Reformed Free Publishing Association.

Why this book? Primarily because Prof. Engelsma deals with the historical events recorded in the book of Judges as the history of God's covenant as it is realized with Israel. In the light of the covenant, he evaluates the history and the sins of the people recorded in this history.

Is this book suitable for young people to read, in preparing for Bible study? I believe it is. While the book is not written specifically for young people, it certainly is not written "over their heads." The most important thing to remember about using this book is that reading it will take some time - but we must be ready to set aside some time to prepare for our Bible study.

And, take it from the one who prepared these outlines - if any questions ever have you stumped, read what Prof. Engelsma has to say!

Outline of Judges

We must have an overview of the book's contents. The outline which I present below is adapted from one prepared by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema, in his syllabus "Old Testament Isagogics." I'm giving only the main headings. Part of your work in preparing for discussion will be to see how these main headings can be further divided.

- I. Introductory section, 1:1-3:6.
 - A. Israel's attitude and relationship with the inhabitants of the land after the death of Joshua, 1:1-2:5.
 - B. Israel's apostasy after the death of Joshua, and the relation between Israel and the Lord, 2:6-3:6.
- II. The judges, 3:7-16:31.
 - A. Othniel, 3:7-11.
 - B. Ehud, 3:12-30.
 - C. Shamgar, 3:31.
 - D. Deborah and Barak, 4:1-5:31.
 - E. Gideon, 6:1-9:57.
 - F. Tola and Jair, 10:1-5.
 - G. Jephthah, 10:6-12:7.
 - H. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, 12:8-12:15.
 - I. Samson, 13:1-16:31.
- III. An appendix in which Israel's apostasy is illustrated, 17:1-21:25.
 - A. The history of Micah and the Danites, 17:1-18:31.
 - B. The history of the Levite, his concubine, and the Benjamites, 19:1-21:25.

Questions for Discussion

1. The book's name is taken from the title of the men whose history it recounts. They were "judges." Why are they called judges? What was their primary work?
2. Christ holds a threefold office. In the Old Testament, all three aspects of His office were manifest by different offices in Israel. What are these three offices?

Which office was lacking at the time of the judges? And how does the position of judge relate to that office? In this connection, find the recurring theme in Judges 17-21. And, because the book of Ruth records history that takes place during the time of the judges, briefly explain the importance of Ruth 4:18-22 in light of the history of the judges.

3. Try now to state the main message of the book of Judges. What does it teach about Israel, as she is by nature? What does it reveal about her greatest need? What does it reveal about Jehovah in His dealings with Israel? And how do these points apply to us?

Week 2

Judges 1: Israel's Failure to Complete the Conquest of Canaan

Although the Israelites had inherited the whole land of Canaan, not all of the Canaanites had been destroyed. When dying, Joshua had reminded the Israelites that they must not join themselves to these nations, but fight them, and that God would drive them out. Failing to do this, Israel would experience God's judgment on her (Joshua 23).

Judges 1 records Israel making a good beginning at driving out the rest of the nations. But it also indicates that this good beginning was short lived: as was so often true of Israel, she found it easier to disobey, than to obey. How are we like this?

Questions on the various verses

1. Why was it significant that Israel wanted to fight the Canaanites, and sought God's will in this matter, verse 1?
2. Why did God say that Judah should go first, verse 2?
3. What blessing did God give on this readiness to fight?
4. Why, when the chapter speaks of so many other nations being destroyed, do we read in verse 15 of some non-Israelites which joined themselves to Israel?
5. We read in verse 19 that the LORD was with Judah - yet Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had instruments of iron. Is this a contradiction? What might have been the reason why the Lord did not want the inhabitants of the valley driven out?

6. Why did many of the tribes of Israel not drive out or kill all the Canaanites, but rather cause them to become tributaries?

Questions on the chapter as a whole

7. Some who hate Jehovah consider Him to be blood-thirsty and mean, because He permitted Israel to kill so many people. Is this true of Jehovah? Was there something in particular about the Canaanite nations that made them ripe for destruction at this time?
8. What does the passage teach us about living the antithesis in our day and age? What is the antithesis? What is the danger of not living the antithesis? How should we manifest this antithesis?
9. How does the passage contain a warning against apostasy? What is apostasy? How is it prevalent today? How should we guard against it?

Week 3

Judges 2:1-3:6: God's Judgment on Israel for Not Completing the Conquest

Through Joshua, God had promised judgment on Israel if she did not drive out the Canaanites (Joshua 23). Judges 2:1-3:6 reveals that God is faithful in His justice. He judges, as He has promised!

The passage also indicates that God's justice would be manifest again and again by sending neighboring nations against Israel to oppress her. This would happen repeatedly, each time according to the same cycle of events. The lesson is clear: sin is the cause of misery; loving Jehovah is the way to happiness.

Questions on the verses

1. 2:1-3: What do these verses indicate about God? Does He change His mind (notice also verse 18)?
2. 2:4-5: Why did the people weep? Why did they not take this rebuke as an incentive to fight the Canaanites? What is the meaning of Bochim?
3. 2:10: What factors contributed to a generation arising which knew not the Lord? Is it a danger that your generation in the church knows not the Lord, or the generation you will raise, the Lord willing?
4. 2:11-19: What are Baal, Baalim, and Ashtaroth?

Questions on the section as a whole

5. Last week we spoke of Israel's apostasy. This section shows that Israel developed in her apostasy. How did she develop in it? How is this a warning to us? This section also speaks of the root cause of her apostasy - what is it?
6. How does Israel further show in these verses her lack of appreciation for the antithesis?
7. 2:11-19 records the cycle of events which would happen throughout the time of the judges. What different aspects to this cycle can you find? What is the lesson to us?
8. Is there any indication in this section that God's chastisements on Israel were evidences and instances of His grace and love to her?
9. How does this section reveal Christ? Or doesn't it?

Week 4

Judges 3:7-31: Judges Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

We come now to study the history of the judges proper. Chapter 3:7ff records three instances of deliverance from Israel's oppressors. The repeated cycle of events of which we read in Judges 2:11-19 begins and repeats itself twice within the history of this chapter.

Already one is struck with the evidence of Israel's stubborn refusal to learn her lesson for good. And one is struck with the fact that the blessedness which Israel enjoyed under the different judges was relatively short lived.

But all this points us to the need for our Judge who is also our King, Jesus Christ. We need a judge and king who will cause us to obey the law inwardly, and not only outwardly. Jeremiah would later prophesy of such a day (Jeremiah 31:31-34). And this day has begun, in the incarnation, death, and exaltation of Jesus Christ, and in the work He does today through His Spirit.

Living in the New Testament, enjoying the fulness of Christ's work, we have all the more reason to be different from Israel. And yet, we are Israel in the New Testament - at times stubborn in our sins.

May we be instructed and warned from Israel's history.

Questions on verses 7-11: Judge Othniel

1. What does it mean that God "sold" Israel?
2. Regarding Cushanrishathaim: What does his name mean? Whose descendant is he? Of whom is he king? Why is this significant for us?
3. Regarding Othniel: What does his name mean? From what tribe was he? Whose relative was he? Why is this significant for us?

Questions on verses 12-30: Judge Ehud

4. Regarding Eglon: Over which nation did he reign? With which nations did he make a league? Think of the origin of these nations, and consider what point is being made about who are the fiercest enemies of the church.
5. Regarding Ehud: Why is it significant that he was a Benjamite, and left-handed? What other gifts does he possess?
6. Ehud killed Eglon, the man who was in authority over Israel. Did Ehud violate the fifth and sixth commandments? Why or why not? And what implication does this have for us?

Questions on verse 31: Judge Shamgar

7. Who was the enemy at the time of his judgeship - and why is this significant?
8. About when did Shamgar live? (You will find a hint somewhere else in the book of Judges - you may need to use a concordance).
9. What is striking about his victory over the Philistines, and why is it significant for us?

Questions on the chapter as a whole

10. What evidence do we have in this chapter that Israel develops in her sin of apostasy?
11. What does Israel's repeated affliction by her enemies teach us regarding the consequences of our sins?
12. What blessedness did Israel enjoy under her judges, and of what is it a picture for us? ❖

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”

by John Huizenga

July 16 Read II Chronicles 14:1-8

Psalm 24:7 Many texts in the Old Testament speak of the city of Jerusalem’s picture of the church of God. The walls of that physical city served as defenses from many enemies. The gates had two purposes. They were used to not only keep out unwanted intruders, but were also used to let in the King. Today’s church has the Word and the doctrines of that Word to serve the same purpose. Even as Asa was diligent in building up Jerusalem, so we must be diligent to learn the Word of God so that we may fight Satan and his hosts. Sometimes we think that summer time is a time for resting from studying. Satan never rests! Should we? Sing Psalter 58:1 and 59:4.

July 17 Read II Chronicles 14:9-15

Psalm 24:8 Yesterday we read how Asa built up Judah’s defenses. Today we read how he fought a war, and won that war by the power of God. God is the King that lives forever. His Son is the King who will make a triumphal entry into heaven with the whole church. Our King of glory is mighty. Israel of old had to see that in a very real physical manner. We must believe it as we read the accounts of the battle and know that He is fighting no less hard for us in our daily battles. That we are in a battle, there is no doubt. That God will fight for us is also sure. Are we thankful? Do we want a mighty God who fights spiritual battles for us? Do we confess daily that He truly is a King of glory? Sing Psalter 58:2 and 59:5.

July 18 Read Matthew 21:1-11

Psalm 24:9 Yesterday I alluded to the triumphal entry of Christ. Today we read the account of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The church of the old dispensation could not appreciate the true meaning of this event. God has given to us His Word and we must appreciate its meaning. Do we? Do we truly believe in the King that we have been given? Do we confess Him in and by our lives? Do we hold our heads high and proclaim that we are Christians waiting for the coming of our King? Are we ashamed of having the King that we do? Young people, will those around you know that Christ is your King tonight as well

as every night? It will not be easy to do this in the final days on this earth. But that we must do this; of that there is no doubt. Sing Psalter 58:2 and 59:6.

July 19 Read Psalm 24

Psalm 24:10 Yesterday we spoke of the necessity of confessing the King of Glory. We also saw that this is not an easy task. People of God, we do not have to do it alone. God does not require that we face the wiles of Satan by ourselves. We see in today’s verse that our King of Glory is the Lord of Hosts. First of all we can see that those hosts are the many other Christians in the world. Do not forsake them in your lives. Young people, make them your friends and companions. Fighting Satan and evil will be much easier. Secondly we know that there are hosts of angels encamped about us. God has given His angels charge over us. By His Spirit He will help us during all the battles that we face. Pray for the grace to trust in the King of Glory—the Lord of Hosts. Sing Psalter 58:3 and 59:7.

July 20 Read Psalm 25

Psalm 25:1-3 David begins this prayer asking that he and other people of God be not ashamed because they are believers. People of God, young people, are you ashamed because of your faith? Do God’s enemies cause you to hide your faith as you go about your daily work? How can it be possible that we might not be ashamed as we may be ridiculed for believing the way we do? With what confidence can we take a stand that is clearly opposite from what most people may do? The answer is found in verse 2. Because we can trust in God, we will never be ashamed. True, our faith may waver at times; we may become weak and be ashamed, but yet by trusting completely in our heavenly Father, we can have confidence in Him. Let us say with the apostle, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Romans 1:16a. Sing Psalters 60:1-2 and 64:1.

July 21 Read Proverbs 8:12-21

Psalm 25:4 & 5 To not be ashamed of the gospel necessarily demands that we only walk in the ways of God. With David we must make the request to be lead in the paths of truth. This means that we must seek the wisdom that is

found only in God. This means that we must be well acquainted with His Word and seek it all the days of our life. Church attendance, catechism preparation, and other Bible studies should not be a chore but should be a delight. In asking for God to lead us means that we will walk that path even when it may not be physically appealing. Each of us no matter what our age must wait upon God. When we pray for such help, and when we with contentment walk His paths, we will feel His blessing. Sing Psalter 60:3-4 and 67:1.

July 22 Read Isaiah 63:7-14

Psalm 25:6 In reading this verse, we might be inclined to say that this is only the experience of the aged saint. It would be only one who with experience has felt the lovingkindnesses for a long time. David was probably not so old when he penned these words. He knew of God's mercy because of the experiences of Israel of old. His parents had taught him about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Israel. He knew their experiences, and by faith he knew that just as God kept them, He would keep him. Is this your confidence, young people? Do you see that God has given us history to show these attributes of mercy and lovingkindness? Because they have been of old, they are good. Sing Psalter 60:5, 64:2, and 67:2.

July 23 Read Isaiah 63:15-19

Psalm 25:7 The first line of this verse is hard for any child of God to say. First of all we must confess that we have sinned. Who among us can easily admit his faults? When we are young we feel we know it all and what we are doing must be right. According to this verse we must stop and realize the paths of youth which we walked were probably not so good. We can confess these sins only by the mercy of God. Our old man of sin would try to cover our sin. The new man asks God for help in this difficult way. The new man also knows by grace that God's mercy is good. Young people, confess your sins now. It will make it easier when you are old. Sing Psalter 61:1, 64:3, and 67:3.

July 24 Read Mark 6:1-6

Psalm 25:8 & 9 While Jesus walked on this earth much of his time was spent teaching and preaching. His parables were constructed for this very purpose. Even the miracles were more than acts of healing or help. In those miracles the child of God must see grace. David knew that he needed God to teach him. Do we know that? Do we confess that? Are we willing to listen to the great teacher? Who does He teach? He teaches the meek sinners who turn to Him in their distress. Turn to Him, people of God, and find the rest that He has prepared for us. His teachings are good and refreshing. Sing Psalter 61:2 and 67:4.

July 25 Read Proverbs 19:13-29

Psalm 25:10 Yesterday we saw who the teacher was. Today we see who the successful students are. These students are not necessarily the most intelligent. They may not be voted most likely to succeed. They may never make the honor roll of the world. But they will make God's honor roll. How will they do that? Not on their own strength of course. But rather, by God's grace which will let them keep His covenant and obey His testimonies. These students will seek Him through the help of the Holy Spirit. People of God, are you striving to be such students? Are you praying for the help needed in God's classroom? Sing Psalter 61:3, 65:1, and 67:5.

July 26 Read Romans 7:12-21

Psalm 25:11 After describing the teacher and student, David returns to an earlier theme. This theme is the necessary pardon for sin. After seeing the way he must go, he realizes that he has departed from that way often. This is our experience as well. After hearing the law each Sunday, we see our sin and know that we have need of a savior. Not only to we see sin, we see great sin. Paul's experience was no different. Neither is the experience of any other saint. I have heard many of them confess with Paul that they are the chief of sinners. We must confess that our sins are great. Buy we may not to stop there. By God's name sake we can ask for pardon in the confidence that He will abundantly bless us. Sing Psalter 61:4 and 65:2.

July 27 Read Luke 12:13-21

Psalm 25:12-13: The passage that we read in Luke spoke of a man who thought his soul would dwell in ease. He thought he had it made. His life was before him, and he would have not troubles. How mistaken he was! David speaks of a soul resting in ease as well. But this soul will rest in ease only because he is elect of God. Only because he fears the Lord and walks in His ways. This should be our desire. We should look for the ease that obedience to God's Word brings. Only in that way will we find contentment. Only in that way will we see the blessing of God's covenant upon us. We see the evidence of that covenant in the last part of verse 13. This is God's sure promise to us. We must establish schools for our children in the faith that God will cause them to prosper and our children will inherit the land which is heaven. Sing Psalter 62:1 and 68:3.

July 28 Read I Corinthians 4:1-6

Psalm 25:14 Do you enjoy secrets? I am speaking of good secrets. I am not talking about secrets which will hurt someone when they are told, or secrets which are about someone's sin. I am talking about a secret in which someone is surprised because something good happens. Our God has a secret for us. It is a secret that is so wonderful that when we find it we will be happy forever. This secret

is not for everyone. This secret is only for those who fear Him. This secret is only for those who walk in His covenant. What is that secret? Of course, it is salvation. It is the promise of living in eternal covenant fellowship with the Holy Trinity in heaven. What a secret! Look for it to come true. It will. Sing Psalter 62:2 and 68:4.

July 29 Read Exodus 14:10-20

Psalm 25:15-16 Once again David reminds us of the plight he was in and we are in. Egypt is always around us. It may take the form of Pharaoh, Goliath, Saul, Absalom, the Pharisees, or any of the cruel tricks that Satan plagues us with. Satan's traps are around every corner. He is looking for the opportunity to cause every child of God to sin from the youngest to the oldest. No age group is immune from his wiles. But we like David need not fear. With our eyes on Jehovah, we can have the confidence that he can pluck us out of any net which is entangling our feet and is about to trip us up. God may use Satan to chastise us, but He will never let us fall from grace. Sing Psalter 62:3-4 and 66:1-2.

July 30 Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14

Psalm 25:17-19 In this account from David's life we see the truth of God explained. David, even as he was fleeing from Absalom, was cursed by an enemy. David, like Christ, did not revile his enemies. David saw that God by His sovereignty had even this incident planned. Even this

was for David's good. In the verses we consider from Psalm 25 we see that even though his experience is that he is oppressed by Satan, he needs to ask for forgiveness for his own sins. David is not ready to blame those around him for all of his troubles. He sees the necessity of pointing the finger at himself and asking God for help. We, too, must not blame our troubles on those around us. We must examine our lives and make sure that they are lives pleasing to God. Sing Psalter 63:1-2 and 66:3.

July 31 Read Psalm 25

Psalm 25:20-22 As David finishes his prayer he teaches us one more lesson. We have learned that we must trust in God at all times. We have learned that God is our teacher and his lessons must be learned well. We have also been instructed in the necessity of asking for forgiveness for every one of our sins. Now in these verses we see that we must remember God's church in our prayers. Even though this is a very personal prayer which we would do well to model, it is also a prayer for God's people everywhere. God's church has troubles even as the individual has troubles. Because we are members of that church, we must pray for it. Each of us at whatever age has that responsibility. We do this in the realization that one day we will all be joined together around the throne with the Lamb who has redeemed us from all of our troubles. Sing Psalter 64:3-4 and 66:4.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
by Skip Hunter

August 1 Read Psalm 26

Psalm 26:1-3 David makes four requests of God in these three verses. He asks God to judge, examine, prove, and try him. He does this not in a boastful way but rather in a way in which he humbles himself completely to God. Are we able and willing to ask these things of God. Are we willing to put our lives under the scrutiny of God's laboratory. I use this term because it is as if God is a scientist testing a material or process to see its worth. Of course we

know that of ourselves we would be found wanting. David knew that as well. But David had a certain confidence which allowed him to make that request. We will investigate that tomorrow. For now pray for the grace to make these requests of God. Sing Psalter 69:1.

August 2 Read Jeremiah 31:1-9

Psalm 26:1-3 Yesterday I spoke of the confidence which David has to make his bold requests of Jehovah. We find them in verse one and three. There are four of them. Be-

cause of their length I will not rewrite them, but you try to find them. Once again we must know that David's confidence is not found in himself. There are those who would conclude that from these verses. But rather David's and our confidence must only be founded on Jehovah's lovingkindness. That is the thrust of these truths. Because our trust is in the Lord we may have confidence that we will not slide into sin. Only because of the truth of salvation by grace alone will we and all believers have the confidence which David expresses in these verses. We must pray daily for the grace needed to give us this confidence and that we may live lives pleasing to Jehovah for all that he does for us. Sing Psalter 70:1-2.

August 3 Read II Peter 2:1-10

Psalm 26:4-5 Young people, can you make the statement that David makes in these verses, or are you found in the company with those who hate God? Parents, do you let your young people keep company with those who have no use for God and His church? Do you like Eli refuse to rebuke your children and give them over to Satan so that they become sons and daughters of Beliel? We definitely live in the world, but we must just as definitely not be of the world. You cannot go into the fire even a little bit and not get burned. We must walk an antithetical walk all the days of our lives. We must teach our children and young people how to walk this life as well. Pray to God for grace in this matter. Sing Psalter 69:2.

August 4 Read Daniel 6:1-22

Psalm 26:6-7 In this familiar passage to all of God's saints, young and old, we see that Daniel was saved because of the innocence he possessed by the grace of God. With confidence he walked into the lion's den knowing that Jehovah was able to save him from death if it was His will. He did not fear death in any form because he knew the reward that awaited him. When he was delivered Daniel made a confession of faith to the king. David knew because of the righteousness granted him by God he, too, could make a confession of faith. Is this our experience? Young people, as you contemplate making confession of faith, are you doing it for the right reason? Are you convicted of your innocence even as David was? Those of us who have made a confession of faith, are we living it? Sing Psalter 69:3 and 70:3.

August 5 Read Micah 4:1-13

Psalm 26:8 Two days ago we went to God's house. Did you enjoy it? Did you love it? Were you content to spend a nice summer day listening to the word of God which may have pointed out our sins? Young people were you able to forego your pleasures willingly and participate in the pleasure of the church? Adults are you willing to tell your co-workers what you did on Sunday? David loved God's

dwelling place because he knew of its importance to his life. He knew that here he found his salvation and was willing to forsake all earthly pleasure to frequent the house of God. Let this be our joy in this life and know that this is just a foretaste of the Sabbath rest that will be ours in the life to come. Sing Psalter 69:4.

August 6 Read Acts 13: 4-12

Psalm 26:9-10 Once again David returns to life with the wicked. He once again wants not to be found with them. He does this in the knowledge of their end namely Hell. David knows what will happen to those who will not take the name of Jehovah on their lips in praise. David knows what happens to those whose whole life is consumed with doing evil. He knows that God sees every man in every sin, and he does not want to be found with evildoers. We, too, must have this desire. Our actions must not be driven for our pleasure because then usually we will seek mischievous ways. Let us pray for grace to live lives pleasing to God and the desire to do so. Sing Psalter 69:5 and 70:4.

August 7 Read Psalm 26

Psalm 26:11-12 In the close of this Psalm David returns to making a request of God. He asked that he might be redeemed by God. He knows that of himself he is no better than the wicked of whom he spoke earlier. He knows that there is only one place for him. It is the place which has been made smooth by God's grace. His place and our place is among the congregation of God's people. There is no other place of refuge for the elect. His place and our place is doing the will of God in accordance to His Word and to His glory. Is this your desire, people of God? Sing Psalter 69:6-7 and 70:5.

August 8 Read Psalm 27

Psalm 27:1 This Psalm has long been a favorite of God's people of any age. I have heard many an elderly saint refer to its most comforting words. In the first verse already we read of the confidence that every child of God may have because Jehovah is his light, salvation, and strength. Like Paul in Romans 8 David confesses that the elect saint need not fear anything or anyone. Sometimes we fear what may happen to us in some earthly situation. We do not need to fear anything at all. God will care for us. More importantly we need not fear any spiritual situation because the same God will care for us here as well. Do not be afraid, people of God, Jehovah will guard in this life and bring you safely into the life to come. Sing Psalter 71:1 and & 73:1.

August 9 Read II Timothy 1:12-18

Psalm 27:2-3 David becomes more specific in his confidence in his Savior. David spent much time in the early part of his life fleeing from enemies. Some of the those

enemies could be found in Israel while others were from outside. No matter what the occasion David could trust in God. We, too, can have the same faith. We can have it because God is God. He has promised to care for His people, and His promises are sure. Throughout history saints have undergone persecution. That will be our lot as the time of the second coming draws closer. We have but one concern that is to speak of the hope that lies within us. Everything else is in the sovereign hand of our King who reigns on high. He will keep us from one or one hundred enemies. Even if they kill our earthly body, our souls will sing with the church triumphant. Sing Psalter 71:2.

August 10 Read Isaiah 26:1-9

Psalm 27:4 This is a most appropriate verse to consider today. For today is the Lord's day. This is the day in which we ready ourselves to spend the eternal Sabbath in heaven. Is this your one desire, people of God? What about you, young people? Is this day precious for what it is rather than what you wish to do today? Did you behold the beauty of the Lord even as God's Word was proclaimed in church? Did you go to church with the purpose of inquiring about the will of God in His house? Are we seeking the things of Jehovah today rather than our earthly pleasures? Maybe another look at the Heidelberg Catechism's exposition of the Fourth Commandment would do us all good. We can only trust in our God when we seek the beauty of holiness in His house. Sing Psalter 71:3.

August 11 Read Zechariah 9:9-17

Psalm 27:5 David knows how he will be victorious over those who hate him. He knows that God will take him and hide him in His presence. David will not win a huge military victory over his spiritual enemies. Those victories were only pictures of the victory that will come at his King's hand. His victory and ours is found at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only there will the child of God win the victory that will last forever. It is only in the shadow of the cross that we can find any real refuge from our spiritual enemy Satan. We must never hope to win any earthly victory but must be content to rest in the arms of Jesus. Sing Psalter 71:4.

August 12 Read Revelation 5:1-14

Psalm 27:5-6 I have included verse five with today's verse so that we can see the cause for our rejoicing. After seeing the victory won by Christ, the child of God wishes to express his gratitude for his deliverance from Satan. David says that he will go to the house of God and sing the songs of joy given to him by God. Is this our reaction? Do we wish to sing? Do we wish to sing songs which only speak about God and his greatness? There are many songs in today's world which seem to be Christian. But do they speak of God's glory or man's glory? Do they give man

some credit for a victory over sin? These are not the songs which will show true gratitude for salvation. Look for the songs inspired by the Holy Spirit and sing those songs in gratitude for deliverance from sin. This will be a true sacrifice of joy! Sing Psalter 71:5.

August 13 Read John 15:1-10

Psalm 27:7-8 After expressing his confidence in God, David breaks into prayer. He prays that God will hear him at all times. He does this not because he lacks the needed confidence, but because he knows that he must be continually praying for deliverance. Every day we must lift our hearts in prayer to God. He has commanded this as we see in verse eight, and we must seek His face in obedience. Prayer is the means by which we can take our needs to our heavenly Father. We can pray knowing the God has answered saints in the past and cared for them. Our prayers must be cries of need. They cannot be the boasting words of the Pharisee. They cannot be the disrespectful words of many today. Our prayers must arise from our hearts asking for only things that are acceptable to His will and prayed in the name of Christ. Sing Psalter 72:1, 73:2, and 74:1-2.

August 14 Read Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 27:9-10 Children and young people, the worst thing that maybe you can think of would be that your parents would abandon you. I do not mean that God takes them from you in death, but rather that they just leave your house and leave you to whatever happens. This is what David considers in today's verse. He does this so that he can teach us more about God and His love for the elect. There is nothing that we can do which would cause our heavenly Father to forsake us. We deserve that you know. We sin daily against Him. We do not deserve the least of the benefits that He gives us. But we have the confidence that He will never leave us; He will always be at our side guiding and comforting us. Sing Psalter 72:2, 73:3-4, and 74:3-4.

August 15 Read John 16:1-13

Psalm 27:11-12 David realizes that his only deliverance will be through the knowledge of his deliverer. Therefore he asks of God for that knowledge. He knows that he can only receive it through God's teaching. David also knows that the knowledge will lead him in a plain path that is a path with one goal. That goal is the glory of God. Young people, many of you will be gathering for our Protestant Reformed Young Peoples convention. What is your goal? Will you ask God to lead you in a plain path? School will be starting soon. What is our goal in the upcoming school year? Will we seek the knowledge of our God and not our glory or pleasure? It is only through such knowledge that we can overcome sin and Satan. Sing Psalter 72:3.

Between You and Me

by Tricia Haak

Of all the parables that are given to us in the Bible, I have always loved the parable of the good Samaritan. Perhaps I might even acknowledge it as my favorite and I can't help but wonder if there are others who would agree with me. We are drawn to this story because it is so profound although it might not seem so at first glance. It is a simple story that relates to us the complex nature of sacrificial, selfless love. In our lives and throughout history this parable is the trademark, the very definition of compassion.

The act of compassion on the part of the Samaritan is so foreign to our natures although we don't like to admit it. We can relate to the man who was attacked. He fell among thieves and we can't help but think that this has happened to us as well. We also have fallen on hard times at the hands of others who were supposed to treat us fairly. They stripped us of all that we had, hurt us, maybe even physically and left us where they found us not caring whether we lived or died.

**...news of murder, rape, and
abuse is a violent noise that
troubles our ears. But it is not a
surprising noise...**

Such it is in the world, in a vast earth were so many walk not knowing true love because they don't know the Father from whom this love flows. But I am not surprised to find such mentality in the world and neither, I believe, are you. Their news of murder, rape, and abuse is a violent noise that troubles our ears. But it is not a surprising noise that catches us unaware. It is a constant sound that we listen to all the day. We see it in the newspapers, on the Internet, and in every form of media. The violence of this earth is as common as the element of air and it seems that so many breathe it in more consistently than the oxygen that keeps them alive.

But is it not so that the actions of the priest and the Levite are not as foreign to us as they should be? These

two men go out of their way to avoid helping the man who had been attacked. And so it can be, too often, within the church. We do not simply see around people that we feel uncomfortable helping. We go out of our way to avoid them. Perhaps they are different, but I have yet to meet an individual who isn't strange or different in their own way. Perhaps they have some quality that is displeasing or annoying, but do we think so highly of ourselves that we cannot see that we may contain the same? Left on our own, in our original state of sin, we are a foul stench in the nostrils of God. We are as waste that has deteriorated in the noon time heat. On our own we are undesirable, with no redeeming qualities, hardly worth the air we breathe. Sad to hear? But it's so true! The only good about us is nothing that we did ourselves; rather it is the gift of God. So how can it logically follow, that we who, outside of the salvation of Christ, are a rather disdainful group of people should come to value ourselves so much?

To find such a lack of compassion within can give us grief and cause a certain kind of ache in our hearts. The one place where we should feel the very safest can sometimes be the one place where we are not. This happens too often, a mark of our depraved natures yet we know that there is no excuse. How can it be, that we have been given grace so freely, find it impossible, if not improbable, to give grace to the ones that we live in fellowship with?

**How can it be, that we have
been given grace so freely, find
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We are never as compassionate as we should be. Our sinful natures hinder that. But it isn't enough to hide behind the excuses or to get comfortable with our feelings to the extent that we ignore how God wants us to

truly act towards one another. Our lack of compassion towards each other must always grieve us to the soul. No one is exempt from this. We have all fallen short. Perhaps we think, oh, when I am heaven then I will do right to that individual, then I will be kind and considerate to them. But that is not what God requires of us. He does not demand that we start to be holy when we get to heaven. He commands us to be holy now, just as he has commanded us from all eternity.

Compassion is an obsessive desire to put aside your needs and think of the neighbor first. Do you not like word obsessive? But that is how it must be. There is no other way to explain it. You must be consistent in compassion. It is an emotion that you must always keep on your mind because it is the hardest one to control. Satan told Eve to think of herself first and he has been telling us to do the same ever since. Compassion is so difficult because it is not natural. Yet when we succumb in this way to the devil we are robbed of moments that otherwise could have shined so brightly as an example of Christ.

There is only one way to give: completely, as Christ did. Compassion can not be done half heartedly. You must give completely of yourself, till you have nothing left, till your strength is spent. And then, when you are done, give some more. But even then all the giving that you do would hardly compare to everything that God has given you. So then keep giving. Give everything you have and lay it at your neighbor's feet. Christ gave his life willingly and He did not begrudge the sacrifice nor look disdainfully upon us though we caused Him so much grief. Instead He was moved to compassion and looked on us in love. So then take up the cross and give your love, your possessions, your life if you must.

Give up your opinions too. We are rational beings who have been given the ability to think and therefore it is only natural that we should have opinions. Now opinions that are founded in a correct understanding of the word of God are not opinions but rather a correct understanding of the word of God. Therefore I'm not talking about those opinions. And surely if we have an observation or an interpretation that others may not have, there is no wrong in speaking these things. Yet sometimes we take our opinions too far and we begin to treat them like cherished children, pet favorites that we simply cannot let go of. We begin to covet them and view them as worthy of being noticed regardless of what effect they may have on those around us. Perhaps so and so has sinned and even though they have repented we still do not think

it is enough and in our opinion they should do further penance for what they have done. Therefore we will ostracize them. In this example an opinion took on the heretical teaching of Rome that we certainly do not hold to. It became a man centered doctrine like so many of our opinions can become if we do not rein them in.

I find that I tire very easily of my own opinions. If they are not founded on the word of God, I must admit that I am not very impressed with them at all. We hear so often the phrase "your opinion is valuable too." I can't help but shrug my shoulders at this statement. I'm not very impressed with it from a Christian's point of view. I have seen my opinions do many things, mostly fail and prove to be a later embarrassment to myself. Perhaps they are valuable and worthy of being heard, who can say? I cannot presume too much on this matter. I can only value my opinion as it is founded on the word of God. My opinions will die with me, they contain no earthly value. They are nothing but petty differences that weigh me down as if I carried heavy stones in my pockets.

**We may hold onto our opinions
but only if we are ready and
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moment's notice.**

We may hold onto our opinions but only if we are ready and willing to let them go in a moment's notice. If your opinion should come between you and a brother and cause that brother to despair, don't hang on to it and let it grow in between you like some grotesque weed. You then must think nothing of it, but let that opinion go. We are not, after all, members of a church that is founded on what we think is right and best. We are members of the body of Christ and He demands that we live in unity and love that is founded in the truth of His word.

Young people too must live a life of compassion which is especially hard because it can be such a self absorbed age. If you are mean to another person at school or anywhere in your life, you will only regret your actions later. The memory of your cruelty will be an embarrassment to your soul and become a thorn in your flesh. Yes, God wipes your slate clean, but Satan will not let you easily forget.

When children are cruel to one another the world says "kids will be kids." A dangerous response to be sure,

yet at times is our response any better? People say, “well, what did you expect, they are totally depraved.” Yes, that explains why they sinned but it does not define our response to the situation. Is that our attitude towards God when we come to Him in prayer to confess what we have done? Do we think that God goes easy on us because we are hindered by natures that are prone to sin?

When we down play the sins of our children and young people we do an inconceivable amount of damage to their spiritual life...

When we down play the sins of our children and young people we do an inconceivable amount of damage to their spiritual life and show them a severely lacking amount of compassion. We must hold them accountable, not only for the sake of the child who is being teased but for the sake of the child who is doing the teasing. Rather they face our wrath and displeasure now for a short duration than face the wrath and displeasure of God for all eternity. Unsure of what to do? Then follow the example of Christ. He looked on us in our state of misery and had compassion on us. Rather than leaving us there to wallow and drown in our sin, He caused us to repent and made us new.

Consider this. If we should be walking in the way and I see you walk right by the man who had been robbed and I say nothing, who showed a greater lack of compassion? You or me? Was it you who missed an opportunity to show the mercies of Christ to another? Or was it me who let you walk away from that opportunity, deeper into the displeasure of God?

The sacrifice and death of God’s son was a moment that forever altered our world. It translated our lives from despair to redemption and became a bridge that would close the gap that separated us from God. It even closed the gap between us as well. Not sure of what to say to another member of the church? Then speak of the cross for it is worthy of being mentioned and it will not fail you for words. Mention his sacrifice without fear for you will not be at a loss of what to say. Speak to each other about salvation for this conversation starter is the outline of all eternity.

The cross of Christ will keep us in place when we visit the hospital, nursing home, funeral home and we feel awkward and don’t know what to do. It helps us at

times when we are with people who seem to be polar opposites from us, especially with the elderly of our denomination. We wonder what we have in common with them. Our lives seem so different. But speak to them of the cross for it is language that they know and at times they speak it better and more fairly than any other person in our lives. They know the translation of heavenly matters so well because that is all they see. It is set before their eyes as a prize of a race well run. Indeed, the elderly in our churches are more proficient in a language and dialect that we are only gradually beginning to understand. So speak to them of these things and learn.

Why do we hesitate to show such compassion to one another? What more is there to do than living, bathing, glorying in the love of Christ? What else can we do but let go of the chains and malice that hold us down. Look at the brother or sister whom you have told to sit at your foot stool and see them as Christ sees them. Say that you would give your life for them. Impossible you say? Satan thinks the same thing. Impossible for Christ to love you! You have done great evil to him and worse! Yet Satan lies. There is nothing impossible in Christ. You do not deserve His love yet it is yours and He will never forsake you.

So don’t forsake the brother in Christ. In his saddest moment, when he is at his lowest, do not fail him. Let go of your inhibitions for they are the product of your old man and they will only paralyze you. So then let go. A thousand times if you must and you will have to because we are earthy and therefore always learning and starting over again. Let go and live and learn that the grace of God is sufficient to cause you to walk in the spirit of compassion. Ask this of God always, wrestle with Him if you must, but do not let go of Him till he blesses you in this way. Ask it in faith, never waver, and ask boldly. He will give this to you because He is your Father and He loves you for Christ’ sake. He would never give stones for bread.

Between you and me there are so many kind words not spoken, so many acts of compassion left undone. We could almost despair at the distance that is between us. It seems to be an abyss so wide that we cannot even begin to measure the length or the depth of it. Between you and me there is too much. So it only seems logical that we go our separate ways.

So we walk away from each other and we travel deeper into our own lives. We become consumed with the things that have to do with ourselves and we give very little time to think of one another. Yet God is com-

passionate. His mercies fail not. He brings us to our knees, whether it is at the rising of the sun or in the shadows of the moon. He brings us low. He causes us to journey a different way, a way less selfish, a way less ungodly. And we keep walking till He brings us to the cross. There is our greatest moment of grace, when we see the cross and we can not look away nor do we ever want to. It captures our attention and the power of it cuts through our souls so that we can breath, feel, and live as we never had before. And we know, because God causes us to know, that this is the sum of everything, this is the true center of the universe.

Yet God does not leave us there as if just the mere discovery were enough. He forms us to be tools that might serve and praise Him. And He does this in many ways. He does it by opening our eyes. And then we see as we had never seen before.

There are so many others here too at the foot of the cross. We are not the only ones. So many weak, wounded, and weary. So many who are here because they must

either be healed by the cross or they will die. Many are faces that are not familiar to us. Yet many are faces that we recognize. We find those we never thought we would have to think twice about ever again. We find those who we didn't think were good enough for our company, those that we secretly scorned. We even find those who, in our pride and contempt, we banished from our hearts. So many people we have wronged, how could we not be discouraged?

But here, at the foot of the cross, there is nothing that separates or divides us. When we meet here we know that the abyss was only our imaginations and fears. Truly Christ has showed us that we are one in Him. We realize then that between you and me there is nothing because we are engrafted into Christ and are no longer you and me but His. ❖

Tricia is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

Book Review

The Cat of Bubastes

reviewed by John Huizenga

The Cat of Bubastes, A Tale of Ancient Egypt, by G. A. Henty (1889)

The *Cat of Bubastes* is a story that will give readers of any age delightful insight into the life and customs of the ancient Egyptians. After reading this book with my students at school, and doing some research on Henty, I have come to believe that he brings together a rare combination of superb storytelling, scholarly insight into history, and the Christian faith. This is a perfect combination for any of our readers of *Beacon Lights*. At least in this book, some basic Christian doctrines and history were gently woven in a seamless fashion through parts of the story. The providence of God was touched on and it did not come across as Arminian. I was introduced to books by G. A. Henty by a dear friend and eagerly look forward to reading his other 100+ books.

What follows are some excerpts about these books gleaned from the internet:

Historian George Grant summarized the importance of Henty's writings:

When I was growing up, the great historical epics of G.A. Henty were already becoming difficult to find, but whenever I ran across one in our local library, I quickly checked it out, rushed home, and read it, usually without putting it down. In the years since, I have haunted dusty antiquarian bookshelves in an effort to collect as many of these gems as possible. Other writers have succeeded admirably in capturing a single culture or area, but Mr. Henty was equally adept at telling the story of the Crimean War as of the Peloponnesian War, of the Franco-Prussian conflict as of the Norman conquest, of the ad-

ventures of the Conquistadors as of the trials of the Pharaohs. Apparently, his virtuosity knew no bounds. The action-packed stories of courage, tenacity, and providential faithfulness left me as breathless and enthused reading them as an adult as they did some thirty years ago. (<http://www.henty.com/henty/#Message2914>)

99 books for \$99. The Robinson Books on CD promotion reads as follows:

I understand why my 12-year-old son Matthew has been up so late reading each night for the past few months because I have been up late reading, too—from the same books! Actually, we are reading copies of the books printed from the CD-ROMs that the other children—Noah, Arynne, Bethany, and Joshua have been working to complete. We prefer the computer-printed books from our CD-ROMs because we print them in larger sizes that are easier to read than the originals.

It is easy to appreciate why these books were so popular in British and American schools during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Children learn by example, and the examples set by Henty's heroes are unsurpassed for their high moral character, diligence, perseverance, courage, and other outstanding personal characteristics.

And—each hero is at the center of fast-moving attention-holding adventures that capture the readers attention and will not let go. I actually fell behind with my professional work last week—reading a Henty book set during the 18th century French Revolution. Then I regaled my colleagues with some of the history I had learned. I doubt that I will finish writing this text this evening. The British, you see, are simultaneously winning a naval war with Holland and enduring the Great Plague—and are about to experience the Great Fire of London. Our hero is involved in fighting the Dutch and the Plague and has already rescued three damsels from a burning mansion. He needs my help to turn the pages, so that he can continue with his exploits. Matthew, I think, is off to the Crusades with Richard the Lion Hearted, but perhaps he is now invading Mexico with Cortez.

From the fall of Jerusalem to the American Civil War, the books of G. A. Henty are superb teaching aids for history, excellent character and vocabulary building tools, and—so much fun to read that children and adults alike have difficulty putting them down. (<http://www.henty.com/henty/s86p1052.htm>)

Listing of Henty titles and historic date of content:

Cat of Bubastes (1250 BC)
The Young Carthaginian (220 BC)
For the Temple (70 AD)
Beric the Briton (61 AD)
Dragon & the Raven (870 AD)
Wulf the Saxon (1066)
Winning His Spurs (1190)
In Freedom's Cause (1314)
St. George for England (1340)
A March on London (1381)
Lion of St. Mark (1400s)
Both Sides of the Border (1400)
At Agincourt (1415)
Knight of the White Cross (1480)
By Pike & Dyke (1579)
St. Bartholomew's Eve (1580)
Under Drake's Flag (1580)
By England's Aid (1588)
By Right of Conquest (1595)
Lion of the North (1630)
Won by the Sword (1640)
Orange and Green (1690)
Bonnie Prince Charlie (1745)
With Wolfe in Canada (1759)
True to the Old Flag (1780)
With Clive in India (1786)
In the Reign of Terror (1793)
The Tiger of Mysore (1795)
No Surrender (1795)
With Moore at Coruuna (1808)
Under Wellington's Command (1810)
To Herat and Cabul (1840)
With Lee in Virginia (1860)
For Name and Fame (1879)
Dash for Khartoum (1885)
Facing Death (1800s)

Preston/Speed Publications is delighted to offer again the works of G. A. Henty. Action-packed exciting adventure awaits adults and a whole new generation. (<http://66.134.10.132/preston/index.php>) ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin and is the editor of Beacon Lights.

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 14

Shadows

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Note: The years in Hull were happy ones for the young minister and his growing family. But, as the author points out, on this side of the grave there is no perfect happiness. Rev. Hanko tells us here of the grief that came to the Iowa community in the 1930s. This grief took many forms, that of trouble in the churches, sudden deaths in the congregations, and financial difficulty brought on by the Great Depression.

Shadows. Sunny days also have their shadows. Life in Hull also had its shadows. In fact, I was in Hull only three weeks and I already had made myself an enemy.

It came about this way. As a student, I visited with Rev. and Mrs. Verhil when he was minister in Hull. Almost every evening a certain couple came over to spend the evening. These frequent visits were bad enough, but this man was very abusive. One evening he said to Rev. Verhil, "You are so dumb that I could bend a nail trying to pound it into your head." After they left, I asked Rev. Verhil why he put up with language like that. He said that he was in Hull only for a limited time and did not want to offend this couple. But whoever was his successor should avoid these daily visits at the outset.

When my wife and I were settled in Hull, this same couple came to visit us. Before long he asked me to stop in his shop every morning when I went to fetch the mail, just as Rev. Verhil had done. I figured this was a good time to bring up the subject, so I told him that I would be too busy to stop in every day. Besides I did not think it wise to have special friends in the congregation. He stormed away in a fit of rage, leaving me to wonder what might be the outcome.

Soon he and his family sat as far back in the church as possible. Whenever I said something that he did not like, he would sigh loudly and shuffle his feet. When he saw that I seemingly paid no attention to this, he went to sit in the very first row of seats with his family and did the same thing. On the occasion of a lecture, he and his

family would stand at the door waiting until I had introduced the speaker and left the platform, and then they would come in and take a front seat. As soon as the lecture was over, they would storm out before I could get to the pulpit.

Since both the consistory and I ignored him for some time, he decided to ask for his papers, expecting a committee from the consistory. But the consistory decided to send him his papers at once. His reaction was bombastic, but there was nothing he could do about it.

Then his wife, who had not left the church, decided to take up the cudgel for him. She kept a diary of all my actions. It read something like this: "He visits Vander Kooi's at least once a week. Why all these visits?" "Today he went through the alley to go to the post office. Why did he do that?"

She refused to have any visit from me. But soon the consistory was compelled to visit her, until she refused those visits also. The outcome was that she was placed under censure. The matter went to classis. And finally, when it was announced that she would be excommunicated, she came to the consistory to read her diary. She read page after page. One of the elders asked me, "Aren't you going to stop her?" I answered, "Why?" To which he replied, "If you won't, I will." And he commanded her to stop.

It is always difficult to read the Form of Excommunication, but this was especially difficult because it involved me personally. Besides, I could not help but wonder whether she was normal. In fact, years later, she did commit suicide.

Another shadow. We arrived in Hull in September of 1929. A month later, in October, came the Wall Street crash. Calvin Coolidge had said in 1927, "I do not choose to run in 1928." He saw the crash coming. Uncle Jim Schriemer, who lived in Grand Rapids, had been to the bank to take out a big loan for building a number of houses. The banker had asked him whether he was not making a good living by building one house at a time.

He said he was, but wanted to expand. The banker warned him to let well enough alone. He was glad he did.

The well-known depression did not set in until the spring of 1930. Money became tight. Work was slackening. Businesses were folding up. Those who still had a rather heavy mortgage on their farms, lost them. Henry Kuiper of Doon lost house and farm.¹ Many who had only a small debt remaining on their property, lost everything. I never received the salary promised to me. In fact, one year my income was down to less than \$600. Months would go by without seeing any income. At one time, my financial worth was fifty cents. We learned that it was essential for our existence to do a lot of canning in the late summer and early autumn. We purchased a large canner that held 12 quarts at one time.

Since there was no work, the government introduced Works Progress Administration, giving some men opportunity to clean up the roads and to do other odd jobs. Every week they received a small pittance from the government and occasionally a hand out of food. The farmers still ate well, because they had their egg money with which they could buy the necessary groceries. But the ministers lacked that kind of income.

In 1934 came the drought and dust storms. We were coming home from Sheldon when suddenly the sky in the northwest grew threateningly black. Our first reaction was that a severe thunderstorm was approaching. As we neared home a fierce wind came up, and along with it heavy clouds of dust. One could hardly see the road even with the car lights on. This occurred almost every day. In the morning when we got up there would be little piles of dust heaped up by the doors. The window sills would be black with dust. Even our pillows showed exactly where our heads had lain. Every step showed plainly on the wooden floor.

During the service on a Sunday afternoon, the wind was driving tree branches against the roof and sides of the church building. The sky was so black that it was almost like night. When the

lights went out in the church, as often happened in windstorms, I could not see the people. The windows stood out in a ghastly gray. The next day the newspaper reported that many people thought the end of the world had come.

Along with the drought came the grasshoppers in South Dakota. These pests were so thick that fields would be covered with them. When the entire crop was devoured, the grasshoppers gnawed on fence posts. But in Sioux County it was the drought that took the crop.

It certainly seemed as if God's judgements were upon the earth. In June, classis west met in Oskaloosa. I took a car full from our area. Toward evening on Thursday, classis had finished so we decided to ride home yet that night. Soon we ran into rain, torrents of rain. As we approached Orange City, we had a flat tire. So we waited for the rain to let up and then changed the tire. When the tire was changed, we decided to wait until daylight before continuing on our way, because the roads were bad. Soon after daylight, right near Orange City we came upon a bad washout, which we might not have noticed in the dark. That night eight inches of rain fell in that entire area. The "million dollar corner" near Hawarden was completely washed out. Parts of wagons hung in trees.

Another shadow. On Memorial Day, 1934 the temperature had already reached 100 degrees. Six of the young folk from Rock Valley went to Lake Okoboji for the day. They were all in a boat when one of them who came from California decided to dive off the side of the boat. This scared the girls who were not accustomed to



The Hull parsonage

boating. So he tried it again. But this time the boat turned over. Henrietta of John Blankespoor and her cousin, also a Blankespoor, were drowned. They lived on opposite sides of Rock Valley, one north, the other south. Both funeral processions met on the main street of the town and lined up next to each other by the Reformed church. Since Doon had no minister at the time, I had the funeral for Henrietta. A rough estimate was that about 1800 people walked past those two caskets. John Blankespoor suffered from shock for a long time.

In Hull, the Ed Dykstra family suffered the loss of a still birth and of a two year old daughter within three hours. The baby was buried that same day and the small daughter, who died from an unrecognized ailment, was buried two days later.

Another shadow. On one occasion, Rev. Hoeksema, Rev. Ophoff and Rev. Dick Jonker stayed with us. They were the committee sent by classis to try to settle the feud in one of our neighboring churches.

For a long time, as the result of backbiting and gossip, fire had been smoldering there and gradually it involved the whole congregation. The lot fell on me to serve as moderator in that mess. Repeatedly members of the congregation would come to the consistory to accuse some other member, with the result that the accused heard about it and brought accusations against the accuser. Often the meetings would carry on long into the night. This went on for some time, until I grew weary of those late hours and told them that either they adjourn at 11 o'clock or I was going home. The result was that I went home, and after I left decisions were made that required my protest at the next meeting. The situation worsened so badly that it proved nearly impossible to call a congregational meeting. Everyone stood outside, but refused to come in, mainly because they wanted to oust one particular elder.

And so the classical committee came from Michigan to settle the matter. They met day after day for almost a week. They called the individuals of the congregation who were most deeply involved. They pleaded with them to reconcile with their fellow church members. Only reluctantly were they convinced to do this. One of the elders involved in the trouble reported to Rev. Hoeksema the following day that he had gotten up at five o'clock in the morning, had walked around his whole section, and had repeatedly said to himself, "Don't reconcile." Only as he returned to his own driveway did he finally say, "Do it." And he did.

Another individual seemed determined never to confess his wrong. Rev. Hoeksema pointed him to his obligation before his God. He warned him of possible discipline. But nothing seemed to move him. Finally Rev. Hoeksema said to him, "Two mountain goats were moving along the side of a precipice when they suddenly met face to face. There was no room to pass. Do you know what they did?" The response was a shake of the head. "The one bent down, and the other jumped over him. Will you bend down?" The answer was a gruff and emphatic "No." Yet the Lord moved also that stubborn heart to confess.

When all were reconciled with each other, the committee called a public meeting of the entire congregation on Friday evening. Rev. Hoeksema preached a sermon on Philippians 2:1-4. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." He started out by saying that he had discovered that the members of this church were not afraid of anybody: not afraid of the devil, and they even imagined that they were not afraid of God, since they sinned so lightly against Him. But he assured them that if God were to step into their midst even for a moment, they would all be filled with terror.

I have heard many sermons, but never one more powerful, more sincerely spoken, or more effective than that one. The entire congregation was deeply moved, tears were shed, and every one was more than willing to banish all differences with a determination to start anew in the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

In spite of these difficulties, our Iowa churches, including our Hull congregation enjoyed steady growth.

After spending five years in Hull I received a call from Oak Lawn, Illinois. So in the winter of 1934-35, our way led to Oak Lawn.

The young people came over twice to spend the evening as a farewell. As one of the elders remarked when we were ready to leave Hull, "You came with just the two of you, and you broke out into two bands." ❖

Footnote

¹ Henry Kuiper was the father of Rev. H. Kuiper and the grandfather of Rev. Dale Kuiper.

Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

A Turn of Events: from Chaos to Comfort (Part 5)

He was a quiet and gentle boy. He loved books and he loved to study. He was well-suited to be taught in the best of schools, though his father, a tutor, could not afford this. The senate of Breslau, however, took note of this brilliant tutor's son. Zacharius Ursinus was sixteen years old when he was sent to the University of Wittenberg with the understanding that when he was finished with his studies, he would return to Breslau to teach in the university there. This was fine with Zacharius.

Breslau, Germany was deep in Lutheran territory, so Luther's Wittenberg was the natural choice for Breslau's gifted son. Although Luther had died some four years earlier, Melancthon, his successor, still taught there. Melancthon noticed this quiet, serious boy, too. They became close friends. Ursinus studied under Melancthon for seven years and then traveled throughout Europe for one final year of education. He visited some of the most important sites of the Reformation, including Zurich and Geneva. While in Geneva, John Calvin noticed this talented and godly young student as well. Zacharius was presented with a signed set of Calvin's books by the author himself. Finally Zacharius was ready to return to Breslau to teach.

At first this went well. A quiet, peaceful teaching position was all the mild-mannered Zacharius could desire. But whispering about him started, and then open opposition. Why? In all his studies abroad, Ursinus had not only come under Lutheran influence and the truths of the Reformation, he had also come to see the Lord's Supper from the Calvinistic point of view—not the Lutheran one. But Breslau was Lutheran. The views of Ursinus on this issue were not welcome here. In a few short years Ursinus' quiet teaching job was anything but peaceful. He keenly felt the unwelcome. He must leave his home and family.

He would have gone back to Melancthon, but his old friend had died. Zurich, Switzerland was his next choice. In Zurich lived Peter Martyr, a reformer who explained the Lord's Supper in the Calvinistic way, perhaps better than any other man at that time. Under Peter Martyr, Ursinus saw the matter even more clearly.

Ursinus saw something else quite clearly as well. Peter Martyr had received an important request to come to Heidelberg and teach in the university there, but Peter Martyr was too old to go. Martyr advised Heidelberg to ask Ursinus instead. Now what would Ursinus do? He knew that going to Heidelberg meant even more opposition and controversy. A professor and a preacher had already been thrown out of Heidelberg for undue fighting over the Lord's Supper. Oh, to be hid in a corner of some quiet village! Such were Ursinus' thoughts, but Ursinus was exactly the man God had prepared for the work in Heidelberg, Germany. Zacharius packed his bags. According to the plan of God, such would be the turn of events... ❖

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

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

P	I	L	W	C	D	G	Y	L	U
H	L	S	T	H	I	N	E	T	L
A	D	O	S	O	H	I	V	O	L
C	N	D	P	R	T	D	D	C	A
K	E	G	L	P	H	N	B	T	H
N	U	P	N	D	A	A	U	T	S
O	D	I	R	E	C	T	V	R	L
W	S	N	L	O	T	S	H	U	Y
L	L	A	H	E	V	R	I	S	E
E	Y	H	T	R	A	E	H	T	W
D	A	T	I	A	L	D	R	W	A
G	B	O	W	N	S	N	G	B	Y
E	N	I	H	T	R	U	N	E	S

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

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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Dylan Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Ondersma—
Georgetown, MI

Seth Martin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Kaiser—Grandville, MI

Alden William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Corson—
Grandville, MI

Jaydon Curtis, son of Mr. & Mrs. Curt Gritters—
Hudsonville, MI

Hannah Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Holstege—
Hudsonville, MI

Jillian Elise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Miedema—
Hudsonville, MI

Addison Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon
VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI

Jada Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Dykstra—
Lynden, WA

Samantha Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel
Terpstra—Peace, IL

David Steven, son of Mr. & Mrs. Clyde Brown—Peace, IL

Ethan, Nathan and Aaron, children of Mrs. Kelli
Gurevich—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI

Caleb Jonathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Drnek—Trinity, MI

Caleb Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Langerak—
Trinity, MI

Megan Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Engelsma—Trinity,
MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Proverbs 22:6

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

Caitlin Snyder—Bethel, IL

Karyn Regnerus—Doon, IA

Lacey VanBemmel—Doon, IA

Rachel Busscher—Georgetown, MI

Lindsey Huizinga—Grandville, MI

Bethany Lotterman—Grandville, MI

Jessica Meyerdirk—Grandville, MI

Charlyn Reitsma—Grandville, MI

David VanTil—Grandville, MI

David Veldman—Grandville, MI

Anna Gustafson—Holland, MI

Michelle Looyenga—Holland, MI

Ruth Rutgers—Hudsonville, MI

Sandee Rutgers—Hudsonville, MI

Matthew Kortus—Loveland, CO

Kelli Gurevich—Pittsburgh, PA/Southwest, MI

Laura denHartog—Southwest, MI

Matt Hanko—Southwest, MI

Kevin Rau—Southwest, MI

Tony VanDonselaar—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Jason Koll and Miss Julie VanLeeuwen—Byron Center,
MI

Mr. Jordan Eldersveld and Miss Rachel Elzinga—Byron
Center, MI

Mr. Chuck Cammenga and Miss Catherine Koole—Faith,
MI

Mr. Brandon Wassink and Miss Leah Petroelje—Faith, MI

Mr. Justin Visser and Miss Nicole Dykstra—Georgetown,
MI

Mr. Scott Oosterhouse and Miss Lynette Moelker—Hope,
MI

Mr. William Graham and Miss Alison Bann—Ballymena, N.
Ireland/Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Kenton Kalsbeek and Miss Lisa Bruinsma—Peace, IL