

Beacon

Lights

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*“But he that sinneth against me
wrongeth his own soul: all they
that hate me love death.”*

Proverbs 8:36

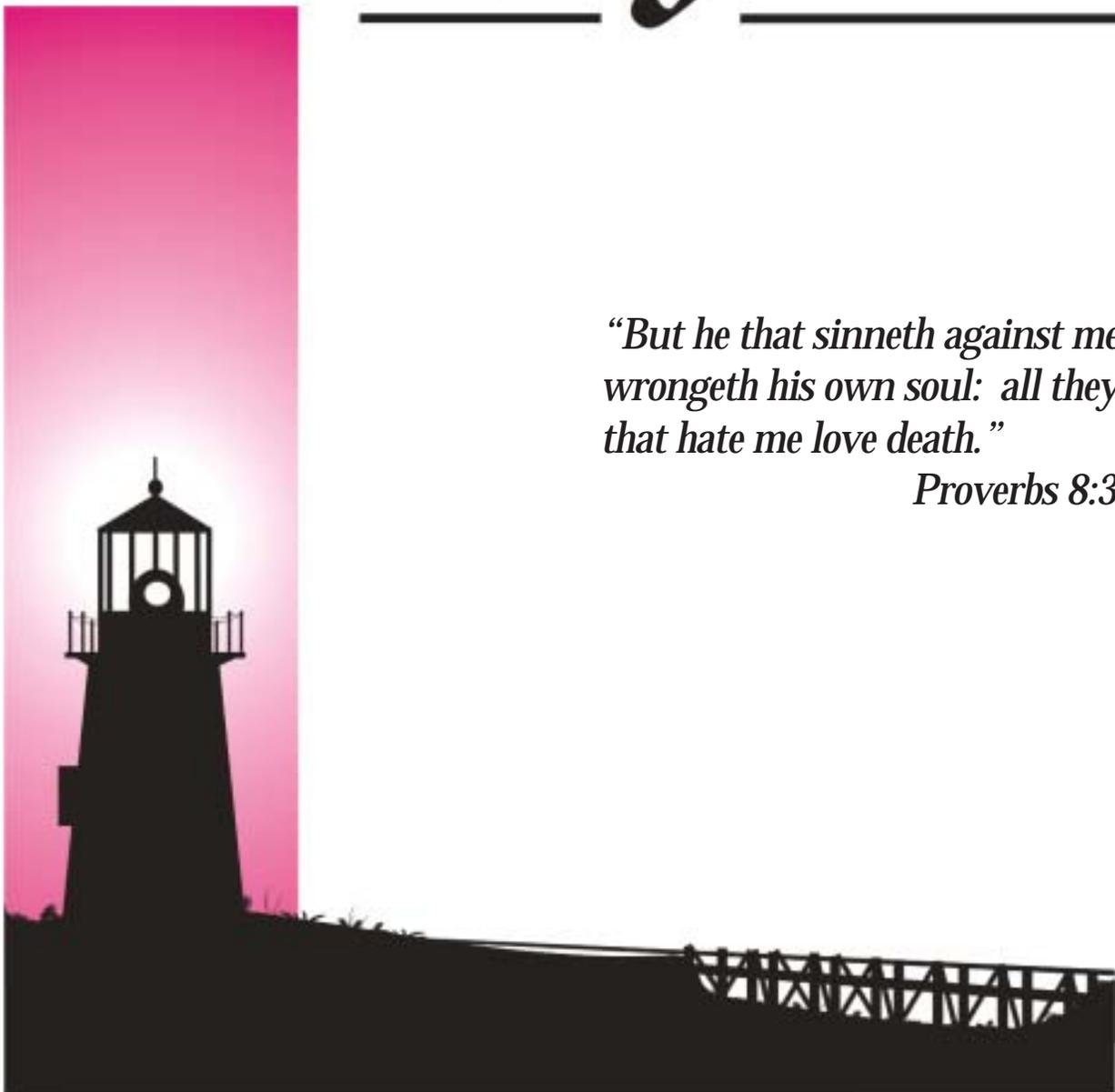


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Smoking — “Are You Cool?”



by Ray Ezinga

It was a beautiful day. The Colorado sky was bright blue, the sun was shining, and at 10,000 feet we could see for miles in the clear mountain air. Far below in the edge of the meadow the two white tents were clearly visible, as were my mules that were contentedly munching on the grass. Elk hunting season has always been my favorite time of the year and today everything seemed perfect—all except for the young man who lay on the ground near me. He was gasping for breath, his pupils were dilated, and he was showing every sign of approaching shock. His face was pasty white and he could hardly talk. Now this was a big strapping fellow, the picture of health, and that morning he had insisted on making the climb with my son, Steve, and I.

What was the matter with him? His lungs were shot. Ruined by a pack of cigarettes a day. Since that time, having run into this problem often enough, I will not take other hunters that smoke. There was a time when we knew very little about smoking. Although, I can remember way back when my uncle referred to them as cancer sticks, or coffin nails, as he showed me how tough he was by lighting one up and puffing away. I visited him a week before he died from lungs full of cancer. He didn't look too tough then.

Tobacco kills more Americans than auto accidents, homicide, AIDS, drugs, and fires combined.

...everything seemed perfect—all except for the young man who lay on the ground near me. He was gasping for breath, his pupils were dilated, and he was showing every sign of approaching shock.

Since that time we've learned a lot about this miserable habit. Science and medicine have proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that smoking is a deadly habit. Statistics show that in the U.S. 400,000 people die of smoking each year. Tobacco kills more Americans than auto accidents, homicide, AIDS, drugs, and fires combined. Also, 137,979 people die from smoking related cardiovascular diseases each year. One-third of all youth smokers will die from tobacco

related diseases. Every day, 339 people die from lung cancer.

Cigarette smoking is the number one cause of preventable death in the U.S. Today, in the U.S., tobacco products will kill 1,200 people.

Recently, my wife and I went to a special exhibit on the human body at the Denver Museum. The most striking thing we saw was the lungs and heart of a healthy human, and that of a smoker. The healthy lungs were pinkish-white, the other a dirty brown like old shoe leather. What was impressive was the size of the smoker's heart; about twice the size of the healthy heart, enlarged from being overworked.

With cigarettes at about \$5 a pack, a pack-a-day habit comes to approximately \$1,825 a year. As Christians, we are required to be good stewards of the money God gives us. How does smoking fit in with

the 6th commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”? Q&A 105 of the Catechism reads, “That I hurt not myself, nor willfully expose myself to any danger.”

When I was a small boy, I went with my dad to First Church at Fuller & Franklin where Classis or Synod was being held. All the men wore black, or dark suits, over white shirts. During break they all went outside, and I can still, in my mind’s eye, see them looking like so many penguins, all puffing on their cigars or pipes. I asked Dad, “How come they all smoke?” Dad said that they thought it added an air of dignity or profoundness. Thankfully, most of our ministers got over this idea.

I’m 73 years old now, and I look at our young people. They are the pride and future of the church. They will bring forth the covenant seed. God has given them healthy bodies, and it is with great sorrow that I see many of them smoking. On the average, it cuts 12 years from your life. Smoking is a filthy habit that destroys and kills these bodies.

Smoking is against the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” Do we even think about these things? Do we even care?

Hollywood with all its movies glorifies smoking. It didn’t take long before even the women of the church began to emulate the sleazy women who were promoted as being so very glamorous. Women pay a terrible price for smoking. Statistics show that 178,000 women die each year, and every year cigarettes leave 12,000 children motherless. Her smoking in the home is especially harmful to young children. Because of this, 150,000 infants and children under 18 months of age suffer from lower respiratory tract infection. This results in from 7,500–15,000 hospitalizations each year, and causes 1,900–2,700 sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) deaths in the U.S. annually. Second-hand smoke also aggravates symptoms of asthma in 400,000–1,000,000 children.

Lung cancer is deadly. 85% of patients die within five years of their diagnosis. 85% of people with lung cancer are former smokers. Today, women are smoking and dying because of it more than ever before. In the U.S. 30,000–60,000 people die each year as a result of second-hand smoke related heart diseases.

There is another aspect that seems to have been completely forgotten. We as churches put forth great effort and expense to fulfill our calling to spread the gospel. We send out tracts, we contact neighbors and friends inviting them to visit our churches. Some of these people come from backgrounds of churches that have had the intestinal fortitude and clear understanding of God’s law, and have been brought up to know that smoking is a sin. I have personally seen these people come to attend our churches only to turn away, never to come back, when they see our people smoking at church. Paul in I Corinthians 8 tells us that we may not offend that brother for whom Christ died. Many have given their lives for the gospel. It would seem that giving up smoking is not too much to ask.

I have personally seen these people come to attend our churches only to turn away, never to come back, when they see our people smoking at church.

Our lungs are wonderful things. They take the oxygen out of the air, making everything else work. We can only marvel at the wonder of the human body. Truly we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

It is encouraging to see that smoking has been banned from our Young People’s Conventions.

Let us as young people and churches give prayerful consideration to this serious problem. You want to DIE—smoke. You want to LIVE—quit, or don’t start. Yes, I know about the guy who smoked all his life and lived to be 90. Just think if he had not smoked, he could have lived to be a ripe old age! ❖

Ray is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

Standin' in the Need of Prayer

Dear Editor,

I appreciated the reminder in “Standin’ in the Need of Prayer” of the June 2006 *Beacon Lights* to pray for each other, with each other, and to bear one another’s burdens. Philippians 2:3b–4 says, “*In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*”

However, there were several comments in that article that I disagreed with. First of all, the writer wants practical instruction from our pastors. Mr. Marvin Kamps in the pamphlet *Heidelberg Catechism Preaching: Our Reformed Heritage* speaks to that: “The whole of Scripture, not just some parts of it, are explicitly or implicitly doctrinal in content. Besides, all the so-called practical passages of God’s Word, which bring us directives for Christian living, are based clearly upon the doctrines and truth of God’s Holiness, our regeneration, and calling to walk in gratitude for the salvation freely received through the shed blood of Christ Jesus. Without right doctrine every practical directive for our life is then perverted and corrupted. We must have doctrinal preaching therefore, if we are going to have preaching at all. If one is opposed to biblical doctrine because it is doctrine, then he stands opposed to the Bible itself.”

Let’s pray that our God-given ministers will continue to preach the *doctrinal* truths of the Bible, giving us the meat of the Word. (See Hebrews 5:12–13) II Timothy 4:2–4 warns “*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*”

Secondly, the article said a lot about unity. By the end, I wondered if the writer implied that we should unite with other churches within a local religious community. To me church unity has to do with a unity of the truth as it is in Christ and revealed in the Bible. We must join ourselves to the true church that we must discern from the Word of God. Read Articles 28 and 29 of the *Belgic Confession of Faith*. They speak of this and the marks of

the true church as opposed to others who call themselves ‘church’. Those others give more power and authority to themselves and rely more upon men than upon Christ.

Ephesians 4:1–16 beautifully describes why it is necessary to keep unity in the church. While facing temptations to disagree with each other, to make war with each other, and to separate from one another, the apostle Paul urges us to make every effort to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (verse 3). Verses 4–6 gives the basis of this unity; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. Verses 14 and 15 calls us to spiritual maturity, “*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*” We may not seek unity at the expense of the truth. Prov. 23:23a “*Buy the truth, and sell it not*”. Unity may not mean joining oneself with other churches that are hostile to our distinctively Reformed doctrines.

And finally, the writer mentioned making simple changes instead of “clinging obstinately and unbiblically to tradition”. We must make sure that we do not want to replace our *biblical* Reformed traditions with traditions of men as Jesus and Paul warned against in Matt. 15:2ff, Mark 7:3ff, Gal. 1:14; and Col. 2:8 which says, “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*” We must remember that Satan is out there to destroy the truth that our Protestant Reformed Churches in America teach, a truth that has been battled for since the time of the Reformation. Jude verse 3 warns, “*That ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” The writer of Hebrews warned in chapter 3:12–13, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*”

A recent sermon on our battle of faith by Rev. Doug Kuiper in Loveland, Colorado reminded me of this article and I asked his permission to quote a bit. “A tactic

of our enemy, Satan, is to deceive. He does not come saying 'I am Satan and I am out to destroy the church'. He does not come with his own banner and his own flag waving in front of him. But he comes deceptively. Through men and women in the church whom we have perhaps esteemed, he comes saying 'Here is an idea that is worthy of consideration. Here is an idea that the church of Jesus Christ can tolerate. Oh, maybe the church never saw it before. Maybe it's a little new, but you don't have to fight against this.' Such is Satan's tactic. So be alert, watch, know the difference between the truth and the lie; know the difference between an ally and a foe." And somewhat later Rev. Kuiper said, "When one comes to you and says 'Let us reexamine the truths that are contained in the confessions and taught in the Scriptures,' do not give up ground! I don't mean that we should not examine the teachings of Scripture. And I don't even mean we should blindly take everything that the church has taught in the past and not examine in our own souls whether it's what we believe. But I mean, that the warrior who knows what he fights for, who knows his faith, need not constantly reexamine it, not if he has first become persuaded that it is the truth. So when one says 'Well, let's question this, let's plant a doubt in your mind', then the warrior stands firm. Are you ready to do that with regard to all the doctrines for which this church stands?"

Young people and young adults, Acts 2:40b "Save yourselves from this untoward generation!" Pray! You are the future church. You need to fight to keep doctrine in our preaching. You need to fight to keep the true marks

of the church in place. You need to fight to keep the biblical Reformed traditions according to II Thessalonians 2:15, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught." Future children and grandchildren that God may give you *have their spiritual lives at stake!* Pray!

Along with prayer, we must be busy in spiritual exercises as Prof. Herman Hanko puts it on page 26 of his book *When You Pray*. "Regular attendance in the Lord's house, discussion of Scripture with other saints, the reading of spiritual books, teaching our children the ways of the Lord and praying with them, visiting the sick and suffering, regular reading and studying of Scripture—these and other exercises are used by God to keep us spiritually strong."

Parents! Grandparents! Let us fervently pray for our young people and young adults in their spiritual battles. Let us as parents never grow weary in teaching the wonderful, blessed truths of God's word to our covenant children. Let us pray that the Lord of the harvest send forth laborers and not send a famine of His word as we may well deserve. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11). Let us pray that we as churches stand fast in the truth of Scripture and our Reformed creeds. Let us not take these precious truths for granted. We must fight the battle of faith! Let us return to our first love (Rev. 2:4)!

Carmen Griess, Loveland, CO ❖

Story Time

The Gift (2)

by Tom Cammenga

Some time ago I wrote a story entitled The Gift, intending it to be a short story. As time has passed I have decided that I would like to develop that story a bit more. It is my intention to write small segments to the larger story and continue where the original left off, using it as sort of a prologue. At this point I really don't have any idea where or how it will go but I guess we will find out together.

With a slowness born of age and knowledge, especially tonight, he slowly inserted the key into the lock, turned it, and opened the door. On the one hand the simple fact of the matter was that he was getting on in years. In fact he and his wife had celebrated his 78th birthday only a couple of months before. But if he were to be honest it was really the knowledge of what lay on the other side of that door that gave

him pause. You see, he knew very well what awaited him. There was nothing. There was nothing but quiet, cold, dark, emptiness. For so many years he had been greeted with warmth and companionship when crossing the threshold of the small house and though the companionship had slowly deteriorated over these last weeks there had still remained a certain warmth that permeated the home. And that, really, when it came down to it, was the difference. No longer did it seem like a home. No longer was there laughter, or crying, or even simple conversation. No longer did the smell of freshly baked pumpkin pie or freshly brewed coffee waft through the air and envelope him. No longer could he smell the subtle scent of his wife's perfume or the distinctive scent of pine from the cleaner she used. No, the building that for so many years had been a home was now simply a house once again.

Wearily he shuffled over to the counter, laid his keys next to the canister of flour, and continued into the living room, collapsing into his favorite chair. The exhaustion brought on from the experiences of the last few weeks swiftly overtook all conscious thought and within mere seconds he was asleep. Mercifully and graciously asleep.

The chime of the grandfather clock that sat on the opposite side of the living room jolted him awake. Though he knew where he was he was somewhat confused because it was light out. He was certain it had been dark when he had arrived home. Yes, he was sure. Mostly because though he really wasn't supposed to drive in the dark, he had done so. Fumbling for his glasses, which he discovered must have fallen off at some point while he slept, he put them on and peered intently at the clock as the echo of the chimes slowly faded. It was 9:00 a.m. He had slept for nearly thirteen and a half hours and the stiffness he felt in his legs and back were a testimony to it.

Unlike the day before however which had been sunny and warm, somewhat unusual for mid October, this morning the sky was filled with clouds which it seemed at any moment could unleash torrential rains or snowflakes the size of goose feathers. With much effort he gradually stood up and made his way into the kitchen to make some coffee. It was not until he noticed his wife's apron hanging on the hook by the back door that he was fully taken with the realization that he was alone. With shaking hands he made a cup of coffee and walked over to the sliding glass door in the dining room. Gazing outside the reality of the past few weeks seemed to slowly

surround him and finally overtook him but try as he might, he couldn't cry. It seemed that there were simply no more tears left. In a way he almost felt guilty. One would think that after sharing life with another for 53 years the tears would never end.

Three weeks ago to the day his wife had commented to him while clearing the breakfast dishes from the table that she had been having a lot of headaches recently and in fact could feel another coming on but was decidedly nonchalant about it, as had always been her way. Not giving it much thought he had gone about his day putting around the yard. It wasn't until he went into the house for lunch that the seriousness of the situation began to dawn on him. The breakfast dishes remained in the sink, something she never allowed to happen, and his wife lay on the couch in the living room in obvious pain. Throughout the afternoon the pain had become more intense until finally they had decided to see their doctor.

They had traveled the eight miles to the hospital in silence; she because of the pain and he because of the concern that he now felt for her. She had been admitted to the hospital almost immediately and the following afternoon his worst fears were realized.

Her doctor had entered the small room and greeted both of them in his usual friendly manner but his eyes betrayed that there was something wrong.

"Well," he said quietly, "we have results from some of the tests we performed last night and I would like to share them with you."

Noting the serious look on the doctor's face he had taken his wife's hand in his own and patiently waited for him to continue.

"I am afraid that the results we have aren't very good. It appears that the pain you have been experiencing, for some time I expect," he ventured, looking at the man's wife as she slowly nodded assent, "is the result of a tumor. Because of where it is located there just isn't any way we can get at it without causing irreversible damage. I am afraid there is nothing we can do."

For a minute or two the man and his wife could only sit in stunned silence. Slowly he turned and looked at his wife and was surprised to see that she was actually quite composed. Could it be that she hadn't heard the doctor correctly?

"I suppose the first question is how long do I have?" she asked.

"Well, that's difficult to say. It appears to have progressed quite far and is likely quite aggressive. I guess it could be weeks or it could be months." He slowly stood

up and walked over to the bed where she and her husband sat. “I am so sorry, Jenny and Bill, to have to give you this news,” he said as he put his hand on the old man’s shoulder. “I’ll leave the two of you alone for a while. Please let me know if there is anything I can do,” he said as tears welled in his eyes. Slowly he turned and

walked through the door leaving behind two people he had known for a long time to sort through this terrible thing. ❖

Tom is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan.

Creation Through the Spectacles of Scripture

God the Author of Disaster?

by Dan Holstege

In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in the intensity and frequency of catastrophic events in the world. These events include the aerial attack of September 11, 2001 and the monstrous tsunami in December of 2004. Many attempts have been made to explain these terrifying events including the hostile agenda of the devil and the instability of nature’s cycles. However, they have all denied the contribution that God has made in these calamities. They claim that God is a God of love who would never inflict such evil. However, the people of the Protestant Reformed Churches have held a different view.

They have insisted that these events are controlled providentially by God and are in fact his judgments on a wicked world. This view is condemned as novel and inconsistent with the loving God of Scripture. However, this view is far from novel since it has been the actual view of the Church throughout the ages. I would like to demonstrate this by identifying the roots of this view in the early church, specifically in the writing of St. Augustine. In Augustine’s *City of God* he asserts without a doubt that catastrophes are the judgments of God.

The original intention of the *City of God* was to interpret the catastrophic destruction of Rome in 410 A.D. by the Visigothic raiders. During Augustine’s life (354–430), the Roman Empire was the world. The infamous Sack of Rome, therefore, was an earth-shaking event that evoked much scholastic interpretation. The intellectuals of the day interpreted the disaster as the punishment of the gods who were angry at Rome for adopting Christianity as the state religion. It was against this view that Augustine wrote the *City of God* in which he claimed

that the God of the Christians was actually behind the calamity. This true God exercised judgment on Rome for its long history of wickedness.

The city of Rome in antiquity was a center of pagan worship, and as such it was a quagmire of iniquity. From the very beginning, Rome was a hotbed of drunken partying, sexual immorality, bloodlust, and every sin possible. Augustine calls this wickedness of Rome a “spiritual disease, degeneration, decline into immorality and indecency.”¹ This figure of Rome as a society with a “spiritual disease” and “declining into immorality” represents the sinful condition of all humanity for Augustine. The Rome of his day and earlier was not just one isolated society of sin, but rather, its repugnant immorality was a picture of the sinful society of all mankind. According to Augustine, then, everyone head for head was guilty of wickedness.

Augustine turns the attention of his readers to the concept of sin and guilt resting upon all human beings. Augustine attributes sin and evil to all humans head for head. His pagan contemporaries had a very different notion of evil which they attributed only to the very worst of criminals. But Augustine accuses all humans of being sinful. In this regard he says,

The fact is that everyone, however exemplary, yields to some promptings of concupiscence: if not to monstrous crimes, abysmal villainy, and abominable impiety, at least to some sins, however rarely or—if frequently—however venially (Bk. 1.9).

Augustine is here explaining why Christians had to suffer side by side with the pagans in the devastation of

Rome, and he does so by pointing out that all humans are guilty of sin. It is a condition in which human beings live. No one can completely avoid the “promptings of concupiscence.” In the case of seemingly pious people, Augustine points out how even they are corrupt with sin.

He contends that everyone, including the most virtuous Christian, is guilty of the sin of omission. He says that even good men are guilty of sin when they refuse to admonish and condemn the sins of the wicked men around them. This sin of omission is enough to incur the temporal judgments of God. Augustine says that

For the most part, we hesitate to instruct, to admonish, and, as occasion demands, to correct, and even to reprehend them [wicked men]... Thus, good men shun the wicked and hence will not share in their damnation beyond the grave. Nevertheless, because they wink at their worse sins and fear to frown even on their minor transgressions, the good must in justice suffer temporal afflictions in common with the rest—even though they will escape the eternal (Bk. 1.9).

Consequently, he sees all mankind as worthy of the temporal judgments of God because of their sins, even though good men (believers) will escape the eternal. It was on the basis of those sins, says Augustine, that “God in His anger filled the world with calamities” (Bk. 1.9).

In the case of Rome, thousands of Visigoths invaded the city and reduced much of it to rubble. They destroyed and pillaged both public and private buildings. In Augustine’s view, God sent these barbarians to destroy Rome, making them the agents of His judgment. They were unknowingly executing the will of God by their devastation. Augustine refers to them as the executors of God’s will. He says that “the hardships and cruelties they [Romans] suffered from the enemy came from that Divine Providence who makes use of war to reform the corrupt lives of men” (Bk. 1.1). The barbarians, then, were merely the instruments through which God providentially executed “hardships” and “cruelties” on the Roman people. Augustine attributes those afflictions to God saying that the barbarians were merely His agents.

Furthermore, Augustine recognizes certain virtues in the barbarian invaders which he also attributes to God. He points out that the barbarians showed great mercy toward the refugees who gathered inside Christian churches and basilicas. He uses words such as ‘mercy,’ ‘compassion,’ and ‘clemency’ to describe the way in which the barbarians treated those who sought refuge in

the houses of God. He says that “It was something entirely new that fierce barbarians, by an unprecedented turn of events, showed such clemency...” (Bk. 1.7). This new thing was “to the credit of Christian civilization” (Bk. 1.7) and was the result of their being used as the agents of God. This clemency, according to Augustine, further demonstrates the fact that God was governing the actions of the Visigoths. In this respect, he enjoins his reader,

Let no man with sense ascribe this [clemency] to the savage ways of the barbarians. It was God who struck awe into ruthless and bloodthirsty hearts, who curbed and wondrously tamed them. God who long ago spoke these words by the mouth of the Prophet; ‘I will visit their iniquities with a rod: and their sins with stripes. But My mercy I will not take away from them’ (Ps.88: 33, 34) (Bk. 1.7).

Augustine recognizes that this virtue found in the barbarians is a profound indication of God’s work. God “tamed” them from their “bloodthirsty” ways and compelled them to do His will. This is the providential work of God through which He still today sends catastrophes and wars as a temporal punishment for sin.

...these judgments which God sends on people in this life are meant to be a temporal manifestation and foretaste of that eternal judgment which awaits only the wicked.

Whenever He sees fit, God sends judgments in the form of calamities on a society because of its immediate sin and deep guilt. This may come in the form of a natural disaster killing hundreds of people or a horrible war leaving cities and countryside desolate. According to Augustine, though, these judgments do not strike at all times because then the wicked might think “that no score remained to be settled at the Last Judgment” (Bk. 1.8). He thinks that if God sent horrible calamities at every waking moment, then people might think that His wrath was exhausted in this world. But on the other hand, Augustine says, “if God did not plainly enough punish sin on earth, people might conclude that there is no such thing as Divine Providence” (Bk. 1.8). So these judgments which God sends on people in this life are meant

to be a temporal manifestation and foretaste of that eternal judgment which awaits only the wicked.

Moreover, these judgments which surface throughout history are part of a recurring cycle in which sin and guilt give rise to these calamities issued by the hand of God. With these “temporal afflictions,” then, humanity is scourged “as often as it pleases God” (Bk. 1.9). The calamities which have descended upon humanity throughout history demonstrate the continuity of sin through the ages and the consequent temporal judgments of God upon it. According to Augustine, this cycle of sin and consequent judgment is part of the fallen world we live in. It will persist to the end. The barbarian attack of his day was merely one instance of that dreadful cycle. He would look at the wars and catastrophes of today as further examples.

It should now be obvious that the Protestant Reformed view of catastrophes is not something brand new and un-Christian. This view was taught already by early church fathers such as Augustine who taught that God

used catastrophes as temporal judgments upon a deserving, sinful human race. Also in today’s world, then, the attack of September 11, the giant South Asian tsunami, and hurricane Katrina were all the temporal judgments of God. Like the destruction of Rome in 410, these events were sent and controlled by God. For the Christian who loves God, this truth is a great comfort. We know that God controls all the events of time and is directing all things according to His will. Since He is our Father, He is always concerned with our well-being. Thus, we know that even in the dreadfulness of catastrophe, all things are working together for our good. ❖

Endnote

¹ Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. I.33, trans. Walsh, Zema, Monahan, and Honan ed. Vernon J. Bourke (Doubleday, New York, 1958).

Dan is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Church Profile

History of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

by Gerrit Boverhof

On May 30, 1926, nineteen families with their 54 baptized children and 5 individuals requested the consistory of Eastern Avenue Protestant Christian Reformed Church to organize them formally as Roosevelt Park Protestant Christian Reformed Church, later changed to Roosevelt Park Protestant Reformed Church. The first place of worship was a large room above what was later known as Jurgens and Holtvluwer Department Store on Grandville Avenue.

Within one year of our organization, nine of the original families left our fellowship when we became involved in the “Danhof controversy.” Notwithstanding this disappointment, the congregation continued to persevere with God’s help. In 1929, Rev. Bernard Kok became our first minister. Our congregation had grown by this time to 27 families and four individuals. We then were able

to move to a building on Roosevelt Avenue Hill for our worship services. By 1939, our congregation had grown to 67 families and 11 individuals.

In 1936, Rev. Kok accepted a call to be Home Missionary, and Rev. Richard Veldman became our next pastor. At this time it was necessary to find a less expensive building to meet in and a member of our congregation donated a parcel of ground on Ellen Street and Rathbone Avenue and he offered to construct a building for us which was later purchased along with a house right next to the church. At this time the congregation changed our name to Second Protestant Reformed Church.

Rev. Veldman accepted a call to be associate pastor with Rev. H. Hoeksema and our next minister was Rev. Marinus Schipper. After laboring in our midst for about

5 years, Rev. Schipper accepted a call to South Holland PRC. In 1945, Rev. Sebastian Cammenga of Iowa became our next pastor. In 1948, Rev. Cammenga left us to serve in Rock Valley, Iowa and Rev. John Blankespoor was our next pastor.

In the fall of 1953, a serious doctrinal controversy split the Protestant Reformed Churches and Rev. Blankespoor left us along with several members and was given the church property. Having lost our property, we had to start looking for a meeting place. The Seventh Day Adventist Church rented us their facilities and we continued to hold services in this building until December 1957. We rented a store building on Belden and Lee Street for our society meetings.

Rev. Marinus Schipper again accepted our call for the second time in 1954. In 1957, it was decided to change our name to Southwest Protestant Reformed Church and we also made a decision to buy the present property of Beverly Christian Reformed Church located on the southeast corner of Porter and Meyers Avenue.

In 1962, Rev. Schipper accepted a call to Southeast PRC and two years later Rev. George Lubbers became our pastor. In 1964, a parsonage was purchased on Central Avenue in Wyoming Park. In 1970; Rev. Lubbers left us to labor on the mission field in Jamaica. In 1971, Rev. Herman Veldman became our next pastor. In 1977, we were vacant once again after Rev. Veldman requested emeritation on November 23, 1977.

Major repairs were needed on our church building and looking to the future growth of our congregation, relocating our place of worship was needed. Property on Ivanrest Avenue was purchased and a three phase building project was approved. The first phase would be a fellowship room, the second would be the parsonage, and the third phase would be the construction of a new sanctuary. Until we could occupy our new building, our worship services were held in the Wyoming Park Christian School building and later in the Hope School all-purpose room, and catechism classes were held in the new seminary building. Consistory meetings were held in the basement of Elder Fred Ondersma's home and the society meetings were cancelled for the remainder of the season. Occupancy of the new building took place July 2, 1978.



Candidate Michael DeVries became our next pastor and he was installed on October 31, 1978. Because repairs were needed to our parsonage and the need for our young pastor for additional space to raise a family, we sold the parsonage on Central Avenue and construction of a new parsonage began in April of 1981.

In May of 1985, Rev. DeVries accepted a call to Edgerton, Minnesota and again we began calling another minister. Rev. Marvin Kamps came to us in February of 1986. Only a few months later, a committee was appointed to study the possibility and feasibility of constructing the sanctuary to complete our long-range building plans. The first worship service in our new sanctuary was held on September 18, 1988.

We went through another painful period when it became necessary to remove our much-loved pastor, Rev. Marvin Kamps, with the approval of Classis East on January 14, 1993. Rev. Ronald Cammenga became our next pastor and he was installed on September 23, 1993. In 1998, the synod of our churches appointed Southwest PRC to be the calling church for a second home missionary. Rev. Jai Mahtani accepted this call and was installed as missionary to the Eastern United States on August 9, 1998. He has served in this position until 2005 when he accepted a call to Bethel PRC. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma is currently the home missionary to the Eastern United States.

In early 2003, we completed our balcony, remodeled our fellowship room and bathrooms, and redecorated our sanctuary. During this renovation, which took a few months, we held our worship services in the gym of Covenant Christian High School and held our cat-

echism classes and society meetings at Adams Christian School.

After many years as our pastor, Rev. Cammenga accepted a call to Faith Protestant Reformed Church in October of 2004. We extended a call to Rev. Arie

denHartog who was then laboring in Singapore. He accepted our call and is now our present pastor. ❖

Gerrit is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Where We Stand

A Practical Teaching From John Calvin's Works

by Mr. J. H. Kortering — Holland, Mich.

Reprinted from the Dec, 1947 issue of Beacon Lights.

When the occasion presents itself to study the many works of John Calvin, the great Reformer, you discover many outstanding teachings seldom thought of. The great struggle of the Reformation in which the defendants of the true doctrines of Scripture were constantly accused falsely, blasphemed and harassed, became the occasion on which they carefully studied the Word of God. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit of God, the Reformers became the means in God's hand to establish the truth. Thus also in *Calvin's Institutes*, Book 4, Chap. 2, Par. 5, you find a very interesting definition of heresy and schism, as these two factors are the contributing cause of destroying the unity of the church militant in the midst of the world. Calvin quotes from some of the oldest works of the church fathers on record; quoting Augustine, Calvin says that:

Heresy: Corrupts the purity of faith by false doctrine.

Schism: Breaks the bond of affection.

Therefore Calvin says, the *union of affection* is based upon the *unity of faith*. Thus when the Scriptures as quoted below, enjoin upon us the unity of the Church, it is required that we *with our minds* hold the same doctrines in Christ, and *with our wills* be united in mutual love.

Calvin and Augustine thus taught that the Communion or Fellowship of the church of Christ is preserved by *two living Scriptural* bonds:

1st: Agreement in sound doctrine.

2nd: Having brotherly love for one another.

Heresy destroys the first bond, agreement in sound doctrine.

Schism destroys the second bond, brotherly love.

Calvin comes to the conclusion, that because unity of affection or love is based upon the *unity of confession*, it follows that where heresy and false doctrine creep into the church, schism follows because the basis of love was destroyed.

Calvin quotes the following Scriptures in support of his argument. Eph. 4:3-6, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4:11-16: "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine and by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ:

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth accord-

ing to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in hive.” Phil. 2:1-2: “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

The history of the church through its various reformations has shown that this practical teaching of Calvin and Augustine, namely *union of affection* is based upon the *unity of faith*, is very real. Where unity of confession is broken up, the unity of love is destroyed. It is therefore important that the Protestant Reformed Young People receive training in the fear of the Lord, learning the fundamental doctrines of Scripture as God has revealed them to us, that they may grow up in the environment of true Reformed Confessions and understand them, and appreciate paramount, it is here that the youth are seasoned with the ideas and confessions of their parents. It is in the home that the world and life view of the parents is engraved upon the minds of their children. It is therefore very essential that Father and Mother in the home have unity of confession that they serve God on the same basis of confession. For, says Calvin, unity of confession is the root of unity of affection. And true affection is only rooted in God. Therefore the believer and unbeliever should not enter the marriage bond for they have no common unity of confession, no common unity of love for God, only discord which is a natural basis for disunity. The same applies to mixed marriages where Father and Mother have no common ground of confession, where there is no unity of confession you again have the basis for lack of true spiritual affection, no matter how appealing the personalities may be, nor what the flesh may desire. Therefore, young people, it makes a lot of difference whom you choose for your friends and companions. By nature we are dead in sins and trespasses and love the things of the world. The world appeals to our flesh, and the sons and daughters of the world appeal to us as we are by nature. Therefore we are called to put on the whole armor of God to fight against the wiles of Satan who would see us destroyed.

Unity of confession affects the whole realm of church life. It binds the entire church into the bond of love. They are one together in Christ Jesus their Lord and redeemer. They understand one another. They reason together and edify one another with one common confession. They are brethren and sisters in the Lord. And reveal their oneness by loving one another. Under the one unity of confession they are built into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to

God by Jesus Christ. Every elect stone in that spiritual house contributes an important part to the finished body. For we read in Eph. 4:16: “The whole body framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth unto the building up of *itself in love*.” For therein consists the majestic richness of God as Creator, that He did not create millions of people who are exactly alike, but that He created no two who are the same, in every child of God something else, something new, the embodiment of a proper sovereign divine thought. Therein glorifies itself the infinite richness of His manifold wisdom, that every child of God, every elect is something by itself, something which no other one is, and something that therefore cannot be missing in the temple of God, because not one child of God can take the place of another, and it takes every last one to complete God’s house.

God will show us our own being was recreated and born anew in Christ Jesus our Lord. And the name of this being will be engraved in the white stone which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. Thus your own name speaks of your own being, and your own being of a sovereign eternal thought of God and that particular thought of God regarding you of a particular calling, a proper place, all your own which you are to occupy in the kingdom of God, unto all eternity.

God’s children therefore confess the same fundamental confession which seals their salvation and redemption in Christ Jesus their Lord. However this does not mean that all God’s children come to the perfect unity of the faith in this lifetime. But does not the Scripture exhort us to this perfect unity in verse 13 of Eph. 4? It does! And this unity also reigns among the sons of God, but not so perfectly as to make them come together into one perfect church on earth. Such is the weakness of our nature and our being under the curse of sin. However in the proclamation of the Gospel every day brings some children of God nearer to others, and all nearer to Christ. Therefore the term, coming together, denotes the closest union to which we must still aspire, and which we shall never reach until this body of our flesh which is always accompanied by some remains of ignorance and weakness, shall forever have been laid aside in the grave, and we enter into the perfect rest where perfect unity of faith shall come to its own unto all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord. ❖

When You Pray

reviewed by Aaron J. Cleveland

When You Pray: Scripture's Teaching on Prayer, by Herman Hanko. Jenison, MI, Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2006. Pp. 177.

The contents of this book are just as the title states, an application of the Word of God to the study of prayer. Scripture's teaching on God's sovereignty, the Trinity, sin, the conscience, chastisement, affliction, and many other topics are examined in connection with the prayers of believers. The book is profitable instruction on prayer exactly because its arguments are taken from God's Word and are not what someone happens to think prayer is or should be.

It was encouraging to read in the preface (p. xii) that this book, in part, is the fruit of a Monday night Bible class that the author taught to young people on the topic of prayer. Writes the author,

I owe the Bible class a debt of gratitude. Without these many classes, the book now presented to the reader would not be what it is. The young people contributed enormously to its contents, and through their intense discussion, they shed much light on the entire subject. It is hoped that the profit we gained from the classes will also help others of God's people in the difficult art of prayer (p. xii).

Certainly the young people who read the *Beacon Lights* should be encouraged to know that the study of prayer and spiritual growth in prayer is not something exclusively for the older generations in the church.

As I read the book I took note of sections which I found particularly interesting and edifying. While I cannot mention all of them, I will highlight a few of them. On pages 3 and 4 the author states the truth that "the

wicked cannot pray." A strong argument is used to prove the point. It goes as follows.

God's covenant is like a family. God is himself a family God because he is, within the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

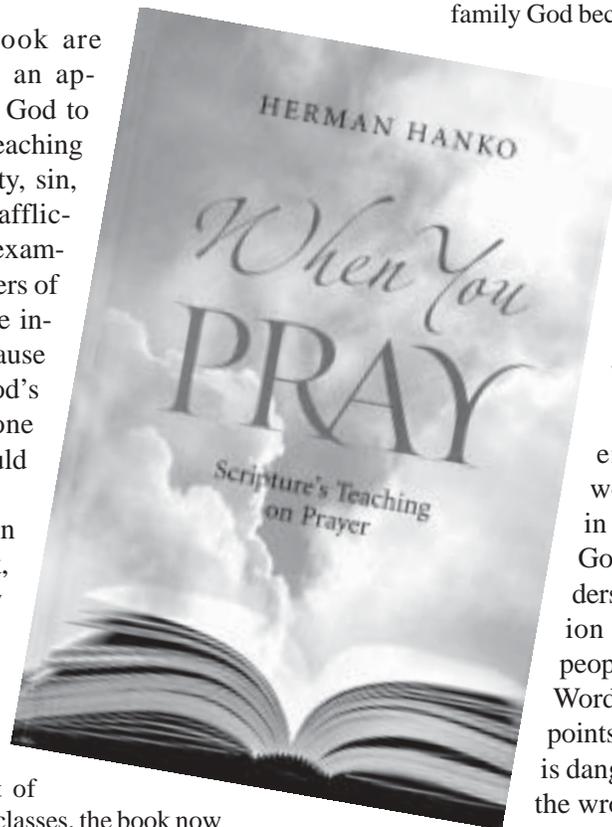
God's covenant with his people means that God takes his people into his own covenant family. He does not and will not take any into his family who hate him. He has no family conversation with the wicked. They prefer to blaspheme him rather than to hear his words.

On pages 11 and 12 the author emphasizes that "our prayers, worked by the Holy Spirit, are made in Christ's name and are directed to God." This truth is important to understand because many are of the opinion that God speaks directly to His people by the Holy Spirit apart from the Word. This is not the case as the author points out and a failure to understand this is dangerous and will quickly lead one in the wrong direction.

Perhaps the most important biblical truth to understand in connection with prayer is God's sovereignty. The author writes,

Prayer presupposes the truth of God's complete and absolute sovereignty, but it also determines the character of our prayer. God is God alone; he does all his good pleasure. He holds the heart of kings in his hands and turns them whithersoever he will (Prov. 21:1). If even the hearts of kings are in his hand, everything else is as well. We pray because God is sovereign. If he were not, there would be no point in praying (p.17).

On pages 44 and 45 the author addresses the difficulty of our calling, as found in Ephesians 5:20, to be thankful for *all* things. How is it possible to be thankful



to God for the fact that one's house has burned to the ground or that one has just been diagnosed with terminal cancer? The author uses Romans 8:28 and Isaiah 55:8 to answer this difficulty. Towards the end of his discussion of this challenging question he writes,

To be thankful *for* the sufferings of this present time is really possible only after the troubles are past. Only after the hurt has gone away and the pain is eased are God's people able to say, in retrospect, "Yes, it was good for me. I was blessed in and through what God sent. I am thankful for the dark and difficult way through which the Lord led me. It was a blessedness which, if it had not happened, would have left my life impoverished." As one old saint said to me after being on the edge of the grave, "I would not have missed it for anything" (p. 45).

Those of you who are familiar with the author's preaching know his ability to make difficult truths clear by means of illustrations from everyday life. This book is full of helpful illustrations which aid the reader in understanding scriptural truths. One illustration that the author uses is found on page 53 in answer to the question, "Why must we seek all things from God when He knows what we need before we even ask Him? The answer:

...because our heavenly Father loves us, it is pleasing to him that we, as little children, seek all things from him. Parents, concerned for the welfare and care of their children, also know what their children need and what is best for them. Nevertheless, these parents want their children to ask them for what they need. Our heavenly Father does the same. Just as parents would be hurt if their children went to the neighbors to get food to eat, so our Father is hurt when we seek our daily needs from the world rather than from his hand. To do so is a slight, an insult, a lack of trust. It is a kind of denial of the father-child relationship. If our children do this consistently, then we ask them, "Are we not your parents? Do you think, perhaps, that we do not take good care of you? Why do you go elsewhere?" We deny that God is our Father when we fail to seek all things from him. Petitionary prayer is a confession of our spiritual Father-child relationship.

The chapter on praying with a good conscience is interesting. The dreadfulness of a conscience that has been "seared with a hot iron" is explained. The author gives many examples of Old Testament saints praying with a good conscience. It seems as if these men, in their prayers, were bringing their own righteousness before

God. Hezekiah, for example, prayed to God, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight" (Isaiah 38:3). The Psalms are full of expressions similar to this. The difficulty of this kind of language is removed when one understands that these men were coming to God in prayer with a good conscience, as the author explains.

The author spends a good deal of time throughout the book explaining the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to our prayers. Emphasized is the fact that the Holy Spirit never works apart from the Scriptures. One memorable paragraph explaining this relationship is found on page 124 where we read,

To put it a little differently, God has given us our minds sanctified by the Spirit and a good measure of common sense so that we know in the light of Scripture what is right and good. God tells us, "Now use your sanctified common sense. Do not ask me to tell you whether you should move to another state. You have my word; now apply it to your life."

Comforting are Chapter 15 on "Perseverance in Prayer" and Chapter 16 on "Praying to a Hidden God." One of the questions addressed is "Why does God not immediately answer our prayers when they are according to his own will?" (p. 134). Another issue the author addresses is the fact that from our point of view God seems to be hidden from us when we pray to Him in times of great trouble or affliction.

One final section that I took note of was towards the end of Chapter 17, dealing with the problem of repetition in prayer. The author makes the point that, "One who truly meditates on the Scriptures, makes them a source of his contemplation, takes them into his heart, and sees in them God's great glory will quite naturally have much to pray about. The very reading of Scripture inspires prayers within the praying saint" (pp.158,159).

Every saint, whether young or old, will benefit from reading this book. But since this review appears in the *Beacon Lights*, I would like to recommend this book to the younger generation. What a privilege it is that we have older saints willing to put their lifetime of trials, study, and experiences on paper for our spiritual edification and growth. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

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

by John Huizenga

October 16 Read Psalm 35:9,10; Psalter 92:3; Exodus 15:1-21

Verses 9 and 10 complete the first of three sections within this Psalm. Each section has the same pattern of “complaint, prayer, and a promise of praise.” David will praise God with every bone of his body, bones which were sore under the oppression of the enemy. This is a praise for the triumph of righteousness over unrighteousness. It is the praise which welled up in the saints throughout the Old Testament as they waited for the seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent and witnessed the pictures and types of the fulfillment in Christ. God will be glorified in the way of saving dead sinners and bringing them into joyous fellowship with Himself. Pray for a clear knowledge of your personal salvation and a heart filled with joy and praise for God. Sing the Psalter.

October 17 Read Psalm 35:11-16; Psalter 92:4; Matt. 26:48-56

The way of salvation and true knowledge of God is a way of deep and painful wounds to the heart and soul. Nothing is worse than to be viscously attacked for no reason by those whom you once regarded as good friends. We are easily hurt even by an unintentional comment by a friend which strikes a raw nerve within us. Have you ever experienced a vicious attack upon your person by one in whom you at one time held dear? David experienced it from Saul and others. Christ experienced it from Judas. We in Adam committed the most heinous act of rewarding evil for good when we rebelled against God in Eden. There is no sorrow on this earth unexperienced by Christ. Turn to Him in your every distress. Sing the Psalter.

October 18 Read Psalm 35:17-20; Psalter 92:5; Romans 15:1-13

“I will give thee thanks in the great congregation.” David promised to praise God among much people when God delivered him from his enemies. The deliverance which David experienced was a picture of the deliverance from sin and death promised in Christ. We read in Romans 15 that Christ came to confirm that promise so that the mercy of God might

be proclaimed among the Gentiles. Christ confronted the great enemy Satan and death on the cross and conquered him delivering all the children of God from death. The gospel quickly spread to the Gentiles and continues to go out in the pure preaching of the Word. Do you know the mercy of God? Do you display your thankfulness for salvation to those around you? Sing the Psalter in faith and pray for the strength to do what you sing.

October 19 Read Psalm 35:21-23; Psalter 92:6; Luke 11:45-54

The devil and those who hate God love to see the saints fall into sin. Do we not see the horror of our own sinful nature when we are so eager to gossip when one falls into gross sin? “He who rejoices in another’s fall rejoices in the devil’s victory” (Ambrose). When Jesus walked this earth, the enemies of God faced something they had never had to face before: a sinless man. They were never given the opportunity to rejoice in sin committed by Jesus. Even so, they tried to make Him fall and rejoiced when He “transgressed” their own laws which they pretended were the laws of God. We must come to the cross when others take pleasure in our falls, for in Christ we are righteous. Pray that the power of God’s grace may give you the assurance of forgiveness and righteousness before God in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 20 Read Psalm 35:24-27a; Psalter 92:7; 1 Cor 12:18-31

“But those who in the good delight. Let them be glad and shout for joy.” Unlike the wicked who hate the righteous cause of God’s people and rejoice in their falls, the people of God as the one body of Christ rejoice when one member rejoices and suffer when one member suffers. By ourselves we are easily crushed by the cruel attacks of sinful men. Our faith seems all but to disappear. We need to be an active member of the church of Christ in order to remain strong spiritually. When we stand in Christ our enemies are brought to shame. Pray that God will make you an active member in the body of Christ: ready to give to the needy brother or sister, and humble to receive the mercies of Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 21 Read Psalm 35:27b; Psalter 92:8; Mark 1

The servants of Jehovah are the instruments of God to accomplish the will of God in the earth. They know the will of God, and they willingly obey. God's will is perfect and holy, and therefore Jehovah has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. David was a type of Christ who is the Servant of Jehovah. Christ obeyed God perfectly and made us to be the servants of God also. Do you live each day knowing you are a servant of God? Our duty as servants is to magnify the LORD and speak of His righteousness and praise all the day long. Pray for the grace of God to be faithful servants today. Sing the Psalter.

October 22 Read Psalm 36; Psalter 93:1; Matt. 7:15-29

A sharp contrast divides Psalm 36 into a vivid description of the wicked and a vivid description of the goodness of God. The first verse may seem somewhat confusing at first. How does the transgression of the wicked speak within David's heart? Jesus makes this plain in Matthew 7. David sees around him the abundance of wicked fruits and these testify within his heart, made new by God's grace and able to judge rightly, that these fruits come from corrupt trees. Corrupt trees are men in whose heart there is no fear of God. Let us each look at his own fruits, are they good? Those who fear God know their works are corrupt also except they be done in Christ. Pray that your new man in Christ may bear fruits pleasing to God. Sing the Psalter.

October 23 Read Psalm 36:2; Psalter 93:2; 1 Sam. 15:10-23

Do you have the discernment of one who fears the Lord to recognize wickedness? David points out some chief characteristics of the wicked. One characteristic is that they persistently deny that what they are doing is wrong. This sin is prevalent among those who call themselves Christians and yet refuse to obey God's Word. Do not be fooled by those who cheerfully clamor about the greatness of God but do not worship God in church faithfully, insist that God leaves salvation up to man, or live in unrepentant sin. Samuel tells Saul that stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. By nature we hate God's Word and instruction. Pray for grace to submit humbly to the Word of God. Sing the Psalter.

October 24 Read Psalm 36:3; Psalter 93:3; Matt. 22:15-33

We daily fall into sin, but by the grace of God, we are willing to hear instruction. The wicked develop in sin until they devote their lives to evil and will have nothing to do with wisdom. David knew such, and we know in detail how the Pharisees made such wickedness manifest in the days Jesus walked on this earth. Often the most subtle lies come from leaders in the Church who would lead the flock astray. Despite their plots, yes even using them, God executes His counsel. He provides faithful ministers and elders who dis-

cern the truth. Let us thank God for the faithful ministers which He gives unto us and the gift of His Spirit which gives us spiritual wisdom to search the Scriptures. Sing the Psalter.

October 25 Read Psalm 36:4; Psalter 93:4; Matt. 27:1-18

Christ commands us to enter into our chamber and shut the door to pray. What a contrast that is to the wicked who deviseth mischief upon his bed! All night Judas not only meditated upon his wicked plan to kill Jesus, he carried it out under the cover of darkness as well. He set himself in a way that was not good. He did not hesitate to murder the Righteous One. His end was a horrible death and eternal hell. By nature we also are wicked and worthy of hell. Tomorrow we see the sharp contrast of man with God. The righteous can but render Him praise for so great a salvation. May your meditations each night be the mercies of God, and not mischief. Sing the Psalter.

October 26 Read Psalm 36:5-6a; Psalter 94:1; Ephesians 3:8-21

Though we see among men terrible sin and confusion, the world is full of God's goodness and righteousness. God's mercy is seen in the sky: the vast ocean of the blue firmament tells us that God will never forget us; His faithfulness in the clouds: the rainbow reminds us of His covenant faithfulness; His righteousness is like a mountain: stable, unmoveable, and towering for all to see; His judgments are like the ocean: a great deep which no man can fathom. The wonders of the earth speak of the wonder of salvation in the way of the cross. May we look into the blue expanse of the sky and all the wonders of creation when overwhelmed by men of the world, to be reminded of God's mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, and judgments. May we go to His Word to know the great love of Christ. Sing the Psalter.

October 27 Read Psalm 36:6b-7; Psalter 94:2; 1 John 4

Yes, when the child of God contemplates the mercy, faithfulness, righteousness and judgments of God he can only exclaim, "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" There is no greater love for man or comfort greater than the love of God revealed in Christ. God graciously opens the eyes of His elect so that they see the love of God and seek the shadow of His wings: the protection of His love which shelters us from the confusion and wickedness of this world. And how must we live in this world knowing the love of God? We are admonished "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Do you have ill feelings toward a brother or sister in the Lord? Seek in prayer the grace of God to live in love with one another. Sing the Psalter.

October 28 Read Psalm 36:8; Psalter 94:8; Revelation 22

The ungodly blindly search the world for pleasure and satisfaction of corrupt desires without ever finding satisfac-

tion. Man was originally created to be satisfied only with covenant fellowship with His creator and therefore he can never be satisfied with earthly pleasures. He can only be satisfied when he enters into covenant friendship with God. God in sovereign grace and mercy takes us into that friendship through the blood of Christ. When we get to heaven we will enter into the very house of God and dine as His children round about a table filled with that food which gives everlasting joy and happiness. Already we taste and our thirst is quenched by the pure preaching of God's Word. Thank God for the riches of His mercy and grace. Sing the Psalter. October 29 Read Psalm 36:9; Psalter 94:4; Revelation 21

God Himself is the source of the ever-flowing fountain of life. Sometimes we are deluded into thinking that certain pleasures of this world are "the life," but life is in God alone. He breathed life into every living creature at the time of creation. He breathed into man life which brought him into life with God. He puts a new and living heart into the sinner cleansed in Christ. Apart from God there is no life. Fallen man lives in continual death and darkness. God Himself is the source of the light which enables the elect to see and desire the fountain of God's life. In heaven we will be forever bathed in the light, the glory of God. David hoped to see that light revealed in Christ. We hope for His second coming. Pray for faith to endure and live in the light of God. Sing the Psalter.

October 30 Read Psalm 36:10; Psalter 94:5; 1 Peter 1:1-16

Knowing God is essential for the Christian life. The means whereby God comforts His people and reveals His lovingkindness is in the way of knowing Him. We are preserved in this life "by the power of God through faith." Faith is a certain knowledge and a confidence worked by God through His Word. Do not imagine that you can know God without ever sitting down to study God's Word or listening carefully to the preaching of His Word. David's prayer that God continue His lovingkindness and righteousness is a prayer for the strengthening of his faith by which He clings to the promises of God. He knows his sinful nature and acknowledges his complete dependence upon God. Make David's prayer yours. Sing the Psalter.

October 31 Read Psalm 36:11,12; Psalter 94:6; Romans 8:35-39

David was persuaded that the work of salvation would be accomplished. With the eye of faith he sees the enemies of God defeated. He knows that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The destruction of death was accomplished in history when Christ died and arose in victory. Paul also repeats the confidence of David with a new zeal knowing the love of God in Christ. May you also live in the confidence that this life of sin and misery has in principle come to an end in Christ. Continue in your prayers that God preserve His people and their children to the end. Sing the Psalter.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

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

November 1 Read Psalm 37:1-11

Psalm 37:1-2 In this Psalm David gives instruction to the child of God in the area of relation with the wicked. David's experience as told in this Psalm was that the wicked seem to prosper. David tells us in these first two verses to not be concerned about the wicked's apparent success in this life. Their end is sure; they will be cut down by the sickle of God's wrath and fade away. This should have a twofold effect on us. First of all we should not wish the wicked's riches

or position in this world. It profiteth him nothing. Secondly we can have comfort that a far better life awaits us in heaven at the throne of our eternal king. For this be thankful and pray that the kingdom come quickly. Sing Psalter 95:1.

November 2 Read Job 27:1-10

Psalm 37:3-4 If we are not to concern ourselves with the wicked what are we to do? The text is explicit. We are to trust in God and do good. By doing this we will receive blessings in this life and the life to come. Young people, are

you seeking to do good? Are you seeking to delight yourself in Jehovah? These are activities which take work on our part. We would much rather do evil. We would much rather delight in self and the things which please us. There is no reward for that, however. The only reward will be in doing the good of the Lord and delighting in Him and His ways. We must do this in our work and we must do this in our play. To do anything else will starve us spiritually. Let us seek daily the grace to love God and walk in His ways. Sing Psalter 95:2 and 100:1-2.

November 3 Read Genesis 12:1-9

Psalm 37:5-6 Young people, have you committed your way unto God? In your choices of vocation, life's mate, and church affiliation, have you determined to trust in Him, to serve Him, and to obey Him? In today's reading we see the consequences for Abraham and Sarah when they committed their way unto God. They left family, friends, and home in obedience to the call of God. Are you willing to obey him at the expense of a certain job, a certain boy, or a certain girl? Are you willing to seek the truth which is the way you must walk in your choices? Think on this matter! It is serious and like Abraham it will cause serious consequences. Seek for the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. Sing Psalter 95:3 and 100:3

November 4 Read Ephesians 4:24-32

Psalm 37:7-8 People of God, do you become angry with circumstances in your lives? Do you do evil because of that anger? That anger is sin against our holy God for it is He that brings us into the situations of this life. David had experienced evil done to him by wicked men. Think of his experiences with Saul, with the men of Keilah, with his sons. He knew what it was like to be persecuted. When he had a chance to kill Saul, he would not because it was not the will of God. We, too, may be in similar circumstances. While we may not be tempted to literally kill our neighbor, might we kill him by some other action or words. Do we seek our neighbor's good when it is in our power to do him harm. Christ loved us when we did not deserve it. We must reflect that love in our daily walk. Sing Psalter 96:1 and 100:4.

November 5 Read Acts 5:1-13

Psalm 37:9-10 The account of Ananias and Sapphira is not placed in Scripture so that the church may gloat on the downfall of the wicked. This account is placed in the Bible for our instruction in how to walk in the ways of Jehovah. How many times have we wished the praise of men and profit for ourselves? Are we any better than Ananias and Sapphira? Our continuing to walk in the sins of greed and pride will cause us to be chastised by our holy God. When we wait on Jehovah for His time in earthly things, we will be rewarded with temporal and spiritual blessings. We may not understand these at the time, but He will show us the way and give to us grace to endure all things. Sing Psalter 96:2.

November 6 Read Matthew 5:1-12

Psalm 37:11 Meek inherit the earth? I can hear the world laughing at this phrase. If you want to have a place in this world, you have to be aggressive. You have to put down your opponent by whatever means is at hand. David, the man after God's own heart, who was known for his military prowess pens these words. He realizes that his might would not give him anything. He understands that he must wait upon God and await what God will give him. Jesus says those very words as well during His sermon on the kingdom of heaven. Meekness is one of the characteristics of the citizens of that kingdom. Young people, do you have this quality? Do you cultivate this characteristic of a citizen of God's kingdom? This is God's will for us. We must be meek, and with meekness await His will. Sing Psalter 96:3.

November 7 Read Psalm 37:12-22

Psalm 37:12-15 David continues to give guidance to the child of God over the apparent success of the wicked. In the first part of this Psalm he shows us that we must wait upon the Lord to do His will. Now he draws from his experience about the end of the wicked. Verse 13 is the important one for us. If we are going to bring about the wicked's demise, we will be sorely disappointed. It is God who is in control. David uses God's covenant name Jehovah. What a comfort for us to know that because of the covenant love that God has for us, He will protect us and sustain us through all the onslaughts of the wicked. Their day is coming and it is a day of judgment and calamity. Our day is coming and it is a day of rejoicing around the Lamb's throne in heaven. Sing Psalter 96:4.

November 8 Read Proverbs 15:11-17

Psalm 37:16-17 One of the horses running toward the end of time is the black horse. This horse signifies the economic troubles of the ages. It is the age old struggle of the "haves" and the "have-nots". To the child of God it quite often appears that they are relegated to the lot of the "have-nots" and have nothing but economic troubles in this world. Solomon in Proverbs gives us good counsel about this situation. He tells us that it is better to be in want and have the fear of the Lord than to perish in hell while having riches on this earth. His father had taught him well as we can see by this Psalm. David understood that to have little but to be righteous was a blessed thing. Are you content, people of God, with what God chooses to give you? Are you willing to be upheld by God waiting for your reward in heaven. Pray for the grace needed in this difficulty. Sing Psalter 97:1.

November 9 Read Isaiah 60:15-22

Psalm 37:18-19 The passage which we read for today as well as these two verses from Psalm 37 have the same thought. It is the continuation of the previous verses. God cares for His people. In whatever circumstances of life that we are lead, He cares for us. We may lie at death's door in

the hospital our body wracked by disease and pain, but we have a comfort that the wicked never have. God cares for us. The child of God may suffer extreme hunger, and it has happened in history and will happen again to those who refuse the mark of the beast, but he has this comforting word to him. God cares for him. Our business may be failing because we refuse to give in to those who urge ungodly practices upon us, but yet we can know that our heavenly Father who cares for even the sparrow, cares for us. What more do we need? What will we lack? Nothing, for God cares for us. Sing Psalter 97:2.

November 10 Read Revelation 19:7-21

Psalm 37:20 Once again in Scripture we see that little word “but”. We quite often see this little word; do we stop to examine its importance? In this context it is used to show that the apparent success of the wicked is not success at all. Why? Because our God has all things marked in His sovereign will. He knows His sheep, and He knows the wicked. Their end is sure. It will be destruction in the lake of fire. Do you believe in hell? You should, because if you do not you will most likely end up there. Hell is a very real place reserved for those who oppose God and His people. The day is coming when the smoke of the reprobate’s demise will arise to heaven to be viewed by those who have a place prepared for them in heaven. Sing Psalter 97:3.

November 11 Read Acts 4:31-37

Psalm 37:21-22 People of God, do you show mercy to those in need and give to them in their distress? Or do you think that this is the work of the deacons and has nothing to do with you? The office of deacon is that of priest. Those ordained to show mercy. But because we believe in the office of all-believers, the office of mercy is our responsibility as well. Christians of all ages will have opportunity to show mercy to those who need it. Children and young people, while in school it is not hard to see a classmate who needs a comforting word or some small token of your help. Adults, do you look for fellow church members who need comfort and lend it to them by way of visit, comforting words of Scripture, or even some monetary help? It is our calling to show mercy because Christ was merciful to us. We must pray for grace to do this. Sing Psalter 97:4.

November 12 Read Psalm 37:23-33

Psalm 37:23-24 Young people, are your steps ordered by God? You probably will say, “of course, they are!” Do those around you know that they are? Can they tell it by the places you go, by the activities you do, and by the company you keep? Do you delight in walking in the way of God—that narrow way that leads to heaven? David delighted to walk in God’s ways. He knew that he sinned and strayed from the path. But it was also his experience that his shepherd would lead him back unto the right way. He had tasted grace and delighted in it. Young people, this may seem difficult now,

but you will reap rich rewards by walking in God’s paths now and in eternity. Sing Psalter 98:1 and 101:1.

November 13 Read I Peter 5:1-11

Psalm 37:25-26 Earlier in this Psalm we looked at the believer’s duty to be merciful and help those in need. David’s experience is that because God is merciful, the people of God are not in need. By nature we do not want to help those who have needs. We want to be greedy and selfish. That same person is also merciful. He, too, lends to those who have needs. What is his reward? His children are blessed by God. While our good works are not the tools which take us to heaven, they are the fruit of our salvation in Christ and are blessed by God in this life. Humbleness is not popular in this world. Being humble and helping others for no recognition is unheard of. But this is the way the God leads His people. Be humble and merciful. Sing Psalter 98:2 and 101:2 & 3.

November 14 Read Nehemiah 13:10-22

Psalm 37:27-28 People of God, are you obeying the command, “depart from evil”? Are you fleeing the old man of sin and cleaving unto the man of righteousness. Evil is all around us. We find it at work, at school, and at play. Fleeing from it may mean a change of plans. It may mean telling friends or coworkers that you can not do what they wish. It may mean facing scoffing and affliction. Does this mean we have nothing to do? Of course not. The next phrase says to do good. There is plenty of good that we can do in this world for God’s sake. There are many elderly who needs someone to visit them and to keep them company. There are people who could use a hand around the house. There are fellow students who could use a helping hand. Nehemiah was busy doing good. Did everyone like him? Probably not! But he had the praise of God saying, “Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Sing Psalter 98:3 and 103:1.

November 15 Read James 3:5-12

Psalm 37:29-31 These three verses speak of the blessings of walking in the way of the righteous. People of God, are we happy with such blessings? They do not speak of fame, fortune, or high position on this earth. But they speak of the works pleasing to God. Are we happy enough to have heaven as our reward? Are we willing to live there forever in communion with God? Are we willing to speak of judgment and wisdom? Is God’s law in our hearts so that our steps do not slide? These things should be a joy to us. Are they? Are we seeking to put God’s law in our hearts? It just doesn’t go there by osmosis, you know. There is a lot for us to consider in these verses. Let us do that with our whole being. Sing Psalter 98:4.

Life Centered Around God's Word

by Kris Moelker

We live in a fast-paced society. Every day the media bombards us with stories of corruption and violence. The devil uses the radio, television, newspaper, magazine, billboard, computer, video and DVD to openly display the philosophies of this evil age. The child of God feels the effects of these attacks of Satan as he is called to live in this wicked world.

As the world continues to increase in wickedness, Satan's weapons are constantly changing, but the weapon of the Word of God never changes. Hebrew 4:12 states, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The child of God must use the Word of God to confront the attacks of Satan. Without the Word of God, he can not stand against the attacks of Satan. This weapon will overcome all the attacks of Satan against the children of God.

Not only is the Word of God the child of God's weapon against Satan, but it is also the food he needs for his soul. Just as he needs physical food and drink to sustain his body, he also needs spiritual food to sustain his soul. Going to church twice on Sunday to hear a faithful minister preach the Word of God is not normally sufficient spiritual nourishment for the child of God. He needs to be busy studying the Word as much as possible during the week privately and with his fellow saints.

Paul's instruction to his spiritual son, Timothy, concerning his work as minister of the church at Ephesus is: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15) Yes, Paul was encouraging Timothy in the work of the ministry, but all of God's children who have been blessed with the gift of the ability to study the Word of God need to be reminded of this text at the beginning of this Catechism and Society season.

The ability to study the Word of God is a gift that should never be taken for granted. Young people, thank

God for the abilities He has given you to be able to read and study the Bible. The ability to attend Catechism and Society is also a wonderful gift God has given you. When Satan tempts you to be unprepared for Catechism and Society, remember some of your fellow saints have not been blessed with the opportunities or abilities to study the Word. A few of these fellow saints you may know personally and many others you won't know until you reach heaven. Some of these fellow saints have been given by God various physical and mental afflictions perhaps for most of or their entire life. Other fellow saints live in places where there is war and persecution and are unable to enjoy the freedom to read and study the Word of God. Think about these fellow saints when you are tempted to take preparing for Catechism and Society for granted.

It is so easy for young people and all of God's children to devote little time to the study of God's Word because of the busyness of life with so many other activities. Some of these activities are profitable and others are unprofitable. We have to remember to examine ourselves continually and strive to keep our minds focused on the reality that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world and we are on the path to our eternal home in heaven. Yes, there are necessary activities and material goods in this world which we must engage in and use while it continues to be God's will to bless us with these things. Soon we will be persecuted, and will no longer be able to enjoy this world's goods. Then Christ will come to destroy the wicked and this creation. He will then create a new heaven and earth where He will dwell with His people forever.

With this in mind, let us make every effort to center our lives around the study of God's Word. Young people, as you mature spiritually, you will grow more in your love for the Lord and you will desire to participate in profitable spiritual activities more and more. You will see that you need to take the time each day to have personal devotions so you can read and meditate on God's Word and then go to God in prayer to ask Him to apply

His Word to your heart. If you have not already confessed your faith, you will become more aware of your calling to use your catechism instruction to help you grow more to know and love the truth so that you can take this important step in becoming a spiritually mature member of your congregation. You will become more eager to attend the church worship services each Lord's Day. You will actively participate in society or Bible study class. You will try to schedule your daily activities so that you can participate in devotions with your family. If you are living away from your family, take the time on a regular basis to read and study the Word of God with your friends.

Consciously living a life centered around the Word of God, you will be able to live in this wicked world with your eye fixed on God. As you live among the materialism and corruption of this evil age, the Word of God will constantly remind you that Satan and his weapons will one day soon be forever defeated and cast into hell. You will also grow in your love for the Lord, and will rejoice knowing that soon you will be in heaven and will be serving your Lord perfectly forever. ❖

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Our Young People's Federation

Study Guide on the Book of Judges (3)

by Rev. Douglas Kuiper

Week 10

Judges 9:1-57: Abimelech's Sinful Kingship

By defending Israel and governing her, the judges were like kings. But whereas the office of king in Israel/Judah would later be perpetual, passed from father to son, the position of judge was not perpetual.

While God accomplished great deliverances through Israel's judges, it was more and more evident that Israel needed a king. Gideon's sins, for one thing, illustrated this need. So did Israel's readiness to return to idolatry as soon as a judge was dead.

But what kind of king did Israel need? I Samuel 13:14 gives an answer: a man after God's own heart. And, he must be from the tribe of Judah. Any attempt to be ruled by a king who did not meet these criteria would end in disaster. So it was for Saul's kingship. And so for Abimelech's.

What kind of king do you desire?

1. The one main lesson that God teaching Israel during the time of the Judges is her need for a king (Judges

21:25). How does this chapter indicate that Israel was learning that lesson? And how does this chapter indicate that Israel was applying the lesson in a wrong way?

2. What do we know about the city Shechem (especially see Joshua 24:24-27)? Why was this the city that crowned Abimelech king? What was the significance of this act on Shechem's part?
3. What kind of king was Abimelech? Give examples from the chapter. Why would God permit Israel, or any part of Israel, to have such a king?
4. Is it possible that the church today have rulers and kings - pastors and elders - like Abimelech? How so? And why would God give His church such to rule her?
5. Some chapters of Scripture seem to say nothing about Christ, and the salvation that is ours in Him. Yet, in one way or another, they do. What does this chapter teach us about Christ?

Week 11

Judges 10:1-18: Judges Tola, Jair, and Jephthah

Psalm 106:34-45 refers to Israel's repeated sin and misery during the time of the judges, and God's faithful deliverance of His people. Verse 44 says: "Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies."

Did He always? We read of God telling the Israelites in Judges 10:14, when they cried to Him: "Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen: let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation." These words remind me of those of Joshua to Israel, Joshua 24:19: "Ye cannot serve the LORD; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."

Is this true? Are there times when God will not forgive the sins of His people? Why would God, and God's servant, speak thus? And does He ever say the same to us, in effect?

Clearly God is not pleased with Israel's repeated sins. Nor is He pleased with ours. So let us not turn aside to sin so quickly, but persevere in holiness and obedience!

But He will forgive. He must. He is Jehovah. He will forgive the sins of His people, for whom Christ died. And this chapter demonstrates that.

Verses 1-5: Judges Tola and Jair

1. We read very little about these two men. For this reason, some think their judgeships were not very important or significant. But what is the one great work which both of them did? And how did God bless this work?
2. These men each judged in a different part of Israel. In which part did they judge? That is, where is Ephraim? And where is Gilead?

Verses 6-18: Israel's renewed apostasy

1. How is it clear that Israel's apostasy was greater now than it had been before?
2. From a map, figure out where each of the countries listed in verse 6 were, in relationship to Israel. Also find in which geographical portion of Israel the tribes mentioned in verses 8 and 9 were found. What is the significance?

3. God's answer to the Israelites in verses 11-14 is significant. He says, in sum, that He will deliver Israel no more. How could He say this, in light of His love for Israel in Christ, and His desire to send Christ? What point was He trying to make?
4. Compare Israel's repentance, as described in verses 15 and 16, to her previous repentances.
5. God says that He cannot change (Malachi 3:6), and yet He seemed to do that very thing (Judges 10:16). How do we reconcile these two points?
6. What does it mean that God's soul was grieved for the misery of Israel? Why was God grieved? What does this teach us about God's view toward us who are in bondage and misery to sin by nature? What does it lead Him to do?

Week 12

Judges 11:1-40: Jephthah's Victory Over the Ammonites

Two striking events in Jephthah's life are his conversation with the king of Ammon, and his vow. In both respects, and particularly the latter, he has been faulted. Was he rash in making this vow? Was he wrong to offer his daughter a burnt offering to Jehovah?

What must prejudice us in our answer to these questions is the fact that Jehovah used Jephthah to accomplish a great work of salvation in Israel.

Humanly speaking, Jephthah was an unlikely person to deliver Israel from Ammon. He was the son of a harlot, and was rejected by his own brethren. But spiritually, Jephthah was exactly the person God raised up to deliver Israel from Ammon. He was a man of faith (Hebrews 11:32), and possessed other spiritual gifts from God to prepare him for the work.

The Lord uses men to accomplish His work. He gifts the men He chooses, to do His work. And often He uses men who, at first glance, appear to us to be the wrong man. Think of it. Was not Christ also rejected? By men, He was. But He was God's man for the work of atonement and redemption!

Are there men God has placed in our lives to do a great work, whom we despise, and whom we think cannot accomplish any good? Let us think honorably of others; God works through all His people for good.

Verses 1-11: Jephthah exiled and brought back

1. Using a Bible dictionary, find out what the name “Jephthah” means.
2. What spiritual characteristics does this chapter ascribe to Jephthah?
3. How had Jephthah been ill treated? How did he respond to this ill treatment?
4. Why was Jephthah called back again?
5. What about the points discussed so far indicates that Jephthah was Christ-like?

Verses 12-28: Jephthah’s conversation with the king of Ammon

1. Why does Ammon claim the right to the land in which Israel dwelt?
2. What is the basic point of Jephthah’s answer to the king of Ammon?
3. Why did Jephthah try to reason with the king, instead of simply fighting against him?
4. What lessons can we learn from this section, regarding our spiritual warfare?

Verses 29, 32-33: Jephthah’s destruction of the Ammonites

1. What explains the victory of Jephthah?
2. How can we be confident of obtaining the victory in our spiritual battles?

Verses 32-33, 34-40: Jephthah’s vow

1. What, really, was his vow? Did he really mean that he would kill and sacrifice the first thing that came out of his door? Or does the idea of a “burnt offering” have some other significance, than that the sacrificial victim was really killed and burnt?
2. Was his vow rash, or done in faith?
3. What happened to his daughter, in fulfillment of his vow?
4. Why was Jephthah troubled at the fact that his daughter was the first one out of his house?
5. What lesson do we learn about making and keeping vows?
6. What lesson do we learn about women deliberately choosing the single life (I Corinthians 7:32-38)?

Week 13

Judges 12:1-15: Judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

In his book *Unfolding Covenant History, vol. 5: Judges and Ruth*, Prof. Engelsma notes that Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon “keep Israel in the rest won by Jephthah,” so that “the benefit of Jephthah’s deliverance for the eastern and northern part of Israel is, in effect, some thirty years of peace.” The point is this, that some judges were raised up, not so much to deliver Israel from an enemy, but to prolong Israel’s obedience to God. Only in the way of obedience would Israel enjoy peace and rest.

The chapter is short; but it speaks not only of deliverance from enemies, but also of conflicts within the Old Testament church itself. Sad, this conflict was. And instructive for us. Let us work to avoid unnecessary conflict within the church. But when others stir up trouble, let us be ready to defend the honor and glory of God.

Verses 1-7: The incident with the men of Ephraim

1. Why were the men of Ephraim angry? Did they speak the truth to Jephthah, or did they lie? What was their threat?
2. Had the Ephraimites ever done such a thing before? What did this indicate about them?
3. Was Jephthah right to kill the Ephraimites? Would not it have been better to give them a soft answer, which would turn away wrath?
4. What is God’s purpose in this destruction of 42,000 of Ephraim?
5. How should we deal with conflict between various members of the church of God? Should we ignore it, or face it head on? If facing it head on, do we fight with fists...swords...guns...namecalling...or what?

Verses 8-15: Judges Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

1. Using a good concordance or Bible dictionary, look up the word “Bethlehem.” How many Bethlehems were there in Israel? From which one did Ibzan come?
2. Knowing where each of these three judges were from, which part of Israel did they all rule in succession?



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Running the Race: The Discipline

by Rev. Allen Brummel

2006 Young People's Convention Speech, Hebrews 12:1, 2.

I would like to thank the host societies for the work they have put into this convention and for the privilege they gave me to address you this evening. Our prayer is that God may use these few days as a means to strengthen and encourage our young people to run the race that is set before them. Last night we looked at the course that is required for us. Tonight we look at the discipline required as we set on that course.

The saints have been running this race through all the ages. In many regards it is the same race. The same discipline is required today as was necessary years ago. In other regards this race is becoming more and more difficult. I know from talking with many of you the struggles that you face. The further the world progresses in sin toward the return of Christ, the more difficult it is to remain faithful to Christ.

This evening we face the question: Are you really interested in this race? How are you showing that interest in your life?

The discipline required is that we must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

You are all familiar with athletes and the extensive training that is demanded. When watching the Olympics I recall them doing special features on various athletes explaining how they attained the prominence they were enjoying. Often their parents started them at a very early age with intense training. Already at the age of 4 or 5 they were in the pool training for the swimming competitions, or they had skates on training for hockey or figure skating. From that time forward the athletes spent hours each day honing their skills and getting their bodies into shape. You don't just decide to run in a marathon one day, and do so the next. A week or month is not even enough to prepare. Intense preparation is required. That intense preparation involves tremendous sacrifice. Rather than pursuing the things you would prefer, you give yourself to the stringent workout schedule required.

Rather than eating the foods you would prefer, you have to maintain a special diet. The whole of your life is focused toward the goal that you have in mind. A website that informs individuals how to prepare for the Olympics includes: "You will have to teach yourself to ignore all distractions: flashbulbs, the roar of the crowd, the footsteps gaining on you as you approach the finish line. This is where your level of discipline in training will determine your success as an athlete."

The level of your discipline in training determines the success of your athletic achievements.

The level of your spiritual discipline will determine the joy and the blessedness of your life as a Christian.

By God's grace you have been disciplined spiritually already. You have been raised as a spiritual athlete. From early on your parents had as their goal that you would be godly children who would walk in holiness and godliness. With that in view they have been training you from a very early age. They have put you through a rigorous course. They insisted that you pray and that you learn to listen to the Bible reading. They made you go to church and taught you to listen to the sermon. They required of you intense training from early on, training in the home, in Christian schools, and in the church. That training required discipline for them as well as for you. They have made tremendous sacrifices to direct your focus toward spiritual things. They have been preparing you for the spiritual race. They have spent countless years praying for you. They have spent hours wrestling with how to discipline and correct your bad behavior. They have shed many tears over you. Your parents have been carrying and pushing you through this race.

Now, you have reached the years of discretion. You are teens whom God has given brilliant intellects and strong bodies. God calls you to not merely rely on your parents but to be disciplined yourself. You can't be carried along in the race, but you need to run yourselves. You need to be preparing yourselves for a lifetime of service to God on behalf of His kingdom and covenant.

What kind of discipline does that require? How are you disciplining yourselves? Tragically, by our lack of discipline we often reveal that we are not interested in running God's race. We reveal that we are on the devil's course instead. Listening to rock music is not preparation for the spiritual race. Drinking alcohol and doing drugs and partying will not help you on that spiritual course. The materialism of our day which includes all the toys-your motorcycles and skidoos and 4 wheelers, grand wardrobes, etc. are not going to help you on that course. How are you running? How are you preparing yourself to run?

The text talks about laying aside every weight. This was an important principle in the Greek games. Every bit of extra weight had to be laid aside. The runner did not want heavy bulky shoes. He did not wear a heavy coat. He had to strip down to the least clothes possible. You did not see 300 pound men running the races. They had to lose every last extra pound. They did not have an extra ounce of fat to carry with them.

This points us to the necessity of giving up everything in our life that would burden us. You need to put aside everything that would keep you from running the race with diligence. Is there anything slowing you down? You need to be concerned about that. Is it a friend who is pulling you away from your parents and church and God's word? Is there a young man or young woman whom you are dating who does not share your conviction to run faithfully the race of God? Is it the one who is not committed to holiness and is constantly tempting you to disobey? Is it the music you are listening to? Lay aside those weights! Throw the CDs away! Get rid of the computer programs. If you can't control your internet surfing, get rid of the internet or get a filter. Each of us has weights that are holding us back. Sacrifices must be made. Discipline is required.

Don't lay aside these weights in order to get saved! You know your theology better than that. You lay aside these weights because you are saved. That is the point of Colossians 3 which was read this evening. You who have been raised in Christ are to live your lives to His praise and glory by putting off the old man and being renewed according to the new man.

Sometimes that weight is mental. We have a low esteem of our accomplishments and abilities. Or, we are filled with fear, a fear that paralyzes us and keeps us from being faithful. There are doubts. There is depression. These are mental burdens that keep us from run-

ning the race as we ought. You can't run with all those weights! All that hinders must be cast off.

You know what Jesus said in Matthew 5:29, 30 in the Sermon on the Mount. If your eye or hand causes you to sin, you are better off without it. It is better to go through life with one eye and one hand and go to heaven than to go through life with two eyes and two arms, but then end up in hell.

But, there is more. The sin that so easily besets us is noted. There are specific sins that you and I fight every day as were listed in Colossians 3. I want you to think about your sin for a moment. I know this is not a popular thing to do. I don't want you to think in generalities. I want you to think about specific sins that face you that are keeping you from running the race as you ought. What specific sin is there that is slowing you down? What specific sin is keeping you from running? You know what it is! You know what sin is keeping you from living a godly life as you ought. Is it pride or fornication or a sin of the tongue? Is it covetousness or greed? You know what sins are creating in your mind and in your life great shame and guilt. God says- resist the devil! Condemn the world and your lust. Put off your old man and be renewed according to the new man. Follow God and His Word. Don't make excuses to keep the weights and to keep the sins. Those sins are hindering you. Put them off! Lay them aside without hesitation.

That requires discipline and sacrifice. I want to stress what you need in order to be disciplined runners in this spiritual race. You need the faithful church of Jesus Christ and you need to be reading God's Word and spending time in prayer. Again, here is an area where your attitude is exposed. Are you interested in the race or not? Are you running on God's behalf or not? Do you really think you can run this race without the church? I am shocked at the attitude of many young people of our day. They think they can run without the church. What foolishness! Do you think you can run without reading God's word and without spending time in prayer? I have great concern about our families today. We are not reading the Word as much as our parents and their parents. Many of them were able to gather around the table three times a day and enjoy family devotions more than once. Today it seems more and more the Word is not read at meal times and the result is that family devotions are held only a couple of times a week, chiefly on Sundays. This is tragic! How do you expect to run the race without being in the Word? That is like a marathon runner saying that he is not going to practice before the marathon.

We all know about personal devotions. We all know we should be doing them. How many of you are doing personal devotions?

An antithetical walk and life is required. The discipline involves walking according to the antithesis. We live in the world and we use the good things that God has given us in the world. But, in this world we fight against everything that opposes God and we promote everything that glorifies God. We say no to everything that is evil and we say yes to everything that is good and upright. The discipline and sacrifice required to run this race mean you say no to the dancing and the movies and the gambling and drunkenness of this world. You say no to doing your own pleasure on the Lord's Day. You say no to all that which would take you off the course. You say yes to all those things that glorify God and praise Him.

This is humbling dear young people is it not? We stand before the Almighty God and hear His commands and we cry out: "How will I ever be able to be faithful?"

There is only one way, according to this text. We are to be: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." You can never run the disciplined life that is required of you by yourself. You don't have the strength. You don't have the stamina. You don't even have the desire to do it. The race is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord willing we will look at that more in depth tomorrow as Rev. Overway leads us to consider the strength that is ours for the victory.

Even the great cloud of witnesses spoken of in verse 1, which are a wonderful inspiration, can not give you the grace and strength you need. Contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine they cannot earn or merit any grace or favor for you.

You need to take your eye off yourself and keep it focused on Jesus Christ. Take your eye off that which would hinder you. Put your eyes on Jesus Christ alone! Consider Him.

In the races they would have the course clearly laid out with a huge pillar that was raised up at the end so that it would be in sight during the race. The runner would focus on that huge pillar as he ran. This is very practical. If you are running a race and you concentrate on your breathing or your pain in your side or anything about yourself, you will soon have to give up the race. Why is it that you get discouraged in your spiritual race? Why do you get to the point of giving up? Because you are focusing your attention on yourself instead of on Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the one upon whom you are to focus your attention. He is Jehovah salvation. In all His suffering He made the sacrifice that took away your sins. The suffering of Jesus Christ was the atoning sacrifice by which you were once for all cleansed. He is your high priest. He gives you grace to continue the race. Faith looks to Jesus and lays hold on Him.

How will you do that? Again, especially two things are required of you. First, you need to be members of a faithful church of Jesus Christ where you will hear Christ preached in all His power and authority. You need Christ set before you weekly through the preaching. Second, in order to be disciplined you need to be in the Word. The Bible is the Word of God.

Being a member of a faithful church of Jesus Christ and spending time in the Word will involve you in shame.

Notice Hebrews 12:2 when it says that "He despised the shame." He bore shame instead.

He made a decision. He saw the difficulty of the race. He saw the shame that would come upon Him. He despised that shame. He disregarded it. He had a holy contempt for it. He did not allow that shame to determine His course of action. Notice that! He would not allow the shame that was heaped upon Him to change His course of action.

There is shame for you. I know a bit of it from talking with some of you. The pressure and shame are greater today than they were for me when I was your age. It is shameful to be a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. But, what is even worse, even within our churches it is viewed as shameful to listen to godly music. The young person who seeks to keep himself pure by avoiding movies and drama is heaped with shame from his own peers. In the broader church world it is shameful to say that homosexuality is sin. It is shameful to insist on membership in one church because that church is most faithful to the truth. It is shameful to teach that marriage after divorce is unbiblical. We are to be tolerant of everyone and everything. This age of tolerance results in great shame being placed on those who seek to maintain the truth. Can you overcome that shame? Do you allow that shame to overcome you? You must make a decision. In the strength of Jesus Christ and by the power of His Spirit you decide to expect that shame, to face it squarely and to despise it. You won't allow it to affect you adversely. Don't allow that shame to determine your course of action. Face that shame and despise it for the sake of Jesus Christ. He did it for you, even to the cross. He took the horror of the cross upon Him in

the face of the devil's attempt to shame Him. He did it for your salvation. Out of thankfulness to Him you now face that continued shame and you despise it so that Christ be glorified.

As is true of all analogies in Scripture, this analogy of the race breaks down in the face of the truth that it represents. First of all, as Rev. Key set forth last night, you are not competing against your fellow Christians. We are not running against each other. We are running with each other. We encourage one another to faithfulness. You need godly friends to encourage you. You need your parents. You need elders. Membership in a faithful church of Jesus Christ is necessary for that spiritual encouragement. Second, we are not running to attain the victory. We are running because we have the victory

through Jesus Christ. You have the victory by the grace of God. God chose you in Jesus Christ and sent Jesus to die on the cross in your place. You are blood bought children of His. You have the victory. You run not as though the victory is in question. You run as those who know your victory is certain and sure. Now, you look forward to the full experience of the victory. That joy will come in the way of running the race with our eye on Jesus Christ.

May God give you the grace to be disciplined spiritual runners in this spiritual race! ❖

Rev. Brummel is pastor of Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois.

Memoir of Rev. C. Hanko

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 16

Oak Lawn, Illinois

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's notes: The years in Oak Lawn were financially difficult for the Hankos. The whole congregation was feeling the effects of the Depression. Rev. Hanko compares the Oak Lawn congregation to the church in Smyrna, one of the seven churches addressed in the book of Revelation. As the church in Smyrna was spiritually rich in her poverty, so was the church in Oak Lawn. Because of this spiritual prosperity, Rev. Hanko enjoyed his labors among them. Yet, there was one man (his name is omitted) who caused Rev. Hanko and the congregation great grief. His presence in the church cast a long shadow over all the work done by the pastor. He left the churches shortly before Rev. Hanko left Oak Lawn.

I had been in Hull for five years and wondered whether that was long enough. Yet, I actually had no desire to leave. The congregation had grown from twelve families to twenty-five families, and peace and harmony prevailed. On the other hand, Oak Lawn had never had a minister even from the time they were organized. They

must have been vacant for some eight years. The whole matter of the call weighed quite heavily on me.

On the last Sunday before I had to make my decision Mr. _____ and his wife from Oak Lawn were at the afternoon service. Where they were that morning, I did not know. After the service, this man, who was an elder in Oak Lawn, stayed at the church and talked to the people. Then he and his wife came to the parsonage and had tea with us. I had supposed that they had come to ask us to come to join them in Oak Lawn. But the opposite was true. He said that the people in Hull appreciated my labor there so much, that he felt I should stay. When they left, his wife said, "When ever you come through Oak Lawn be sure to stop." Evidently they expected me to decline the call.

After I closed the door, I said to Mom, "We're going to Oak Lawn." She looked at me in amazement and said, "Have you lost your mind? They told us not to come." I assured her that this was the reason I decided to go. It seemed to me that there was something radically wrong

in a congregation if they would call a minister and then ask him not to accept.

I had opportunity to hire movers from Orange City, who had offered me a very good price. But the consistory of Oak Lawn thought they could do better. So we were all packed to go, but the mover they hired did not come. Our coal supply was gone, our house was in total disarray, and we hesitated to buy more food because we would leave as soon as the movers came. On top of this, Fred showed signs of becoming ill. So we spent the last night in Sioux Center with the Veldmans. The temperature had dropped so low that the car over-heated when we approached Sioux Center. The next day, we left word with the neighbor to take charge when the movers came, and we boarded the train to head for Chicago. One of the men from Hull assured us that he would deliver our car to Oak Lawn.

So the five of us, with eight pieces of luggage, took up the back part of a coach on the Chicago Milwaukee train to travel to our new home.

After a whole night we arrived in Union Station in Chicago and were met by Dick Kort. He took us to his small house, which already had seven occupants, but somehow took a few more. There we waited for the arrival of our furniture. In the meantime, we and others of the congregation worked on cleaning the house they had rented for us. In the process of cleaning, Mr. ____ came in one day and said, "Dominee, will you wash those upstairs windows? I'm afraid I'll break my neck." I could not help but wonder what value he placed on my neck, but having painted houses, climbing a ladder was no problem.

Finally, our furniture arrived. My wife could pretty well take things in stride. She never complained about the transfer from Hull to Oak Lawn. But when she saw the cattle truck and our furniture heaped helter-skelter on it, she wept. Our first question was, "Did you take along the canned goods that were stored by the neighbor?" We had a lot, and we treasured them dearly in those depression years. We had refused to sign the moving agreement until a clause was added concerning the meat and the other canned goods. Now the mover had deliberately left the canned goods behind because they were by the neighbors. The neighbors had been kind enough to inform us. So we sat with the mover on the front steps until the necessary calls were made, and ten dollars was taken from the cost of the moving, which amounted to \$75.00.

But that was not the worst. This fellow was no mover. The baby bed came off the cattle truck with a broken leg. The dining room furniture arrived with scratches and cuts ground in by the furniture above it. When all was unloaded and he was driving off, Mom shouted, "He's taking our blankets!" But there was nothing we could do about it. The sad part was that this was all because the consistory in Oak Lawn wanted to save a few dollars instead of hiring a qualified mover.

Oak Lawn was a typical commuter's town. Many of the men and women worked in Chicago by day and spent their nights and weekends at home. Saturday night was the time to get drunk, so that at 5:00 on Sunday morning, the drunken folk noisily sought their way home. Those who were able, worked on their lawns or property on Sunday. We lived as strangers in a little section of the world.

We hear about pea soup fog in London. I have wondered whether that could be worse than the spring and autumn fog in Oak Lawn. One night I went by car to have a catechism class in the church. On the way home the fog was so thick I could hardly see the road. I followed the red light of the car ahead of me, until it suddenly disappeared into the ditch. I felt my way home the rest of the way.

On another occasion, I decided that if I would walk in a straight line across the field in the fog, I would come out at 95th near Cicero Avenue. But I actually came out on Cicero Avenue, quite a distance from where I should have been. That was not so serious, but coming home was worse. I had all I could do to find Kostner Avenue, the street on which we lived, and then our house.

But the worst was the night we came from the Rutgers who lived outside of town.¹ At about 10:30, three miles from Oak Lawn, we ran into fog. We moved slowly, trying to feel our way. Mom remarked that she was sure that she saw lights passing us on our right. This meant that I was in the wrong lane, but also the other driver had to be in the wrong lane. After getting out to investigate, and finding this was the case, we proceeded slowly in the proper lane until I had a feeling that we were approaching a crossroads. I parked the car and walked ahead. There I heard voices of men and women asking, "Where am I?" After some delay these cars cleared away and we proceeded to the overpass of the railroad. There a policeman with a torch led the cars one by one over the overpass. When we finally reached Oak Lawn, I had to get close to the street sign to find out where we were. At 1:30 a.m. we arrived home with a sigh of relief.

Not long after we had settled in our new home, all three of the children came down with the whooping cough. They came down with it while we were visiting my folks in Grand Rapids. We took all three of them to the doctor for a shot. The two boys did not object when the doctor gave them their shots. But for their little sister, it was different. They complained bitterly that she, too, had to be subjected to that ordeal.

Nights seemed to be the worst. If one was not whooping it up, the other was. We walked around with large cloths to catch the vomiting. Fred continued to whoop the whole winter, much to the chagrin of our neighbor. Whenever Fred was in the back yard her kids were hauled into the house. She could not understand that we were so inconsiderate that we allowed him to be around, a threat to the community.

In January of 1935 we moved to Oak Lawn; in March of 1936 my father died. We received notice on a Saturday morning that he had pneumonia and was not expected to live. We immediately made arrangements to go to Michigan. On the way, wet snow was falling and our windshield wipers failed to operate. So we tied two strings to them, Mom pulling from one side and I from the other. That same night, toward morning, my father passed away.

In 1941 my mother died. Shortly after my father passed away she suffered from severe pains in her face, commonly referred to as "the tic." These attacks could come any time, especially when she ate. These were so severe that she ran through the house in agony. There was no known cure or relief, but the osteopath who came once a week did relax her. This lasted for about six years. Since I was on the mission committee and had classical appointments in Michigan, I took as many opportunities as possible to visit her. In fact, she always had my former room ready for me, hoping that I would surprise her.

About a half year before she died, I received a call to

come to her because the pains were incessant. When I talked to the doctor he said that he could give her morphine to put her out, but he would have to give her so much that she might not wake up again. I talked to her about it and she begged me to go ahead. So we did. She slept for forty-eight hours. Six months later, when I received the call that she had passed away in her sleep, I was so thankful that the Lord took her out of her misery that I felt a bit guilty. I felt I should be feeling sad. And I suppose I was. Yet what a relief to think that she was now rejoicing before the throne! It was Prof. Clarence Bouma's wife who requested that our children stay with them during the funeral.²

Oak Lawn was a devoted congregation, cherishing love for the truth and for their pastor and his family. One could well say of them, "Though you are poor, you are rich." For in material things they were poor, but spiritually very rich. It was a pleasure to labor among them.

The fact remained they were materially poor. In other parts of the nation, the Depression gradually faded out, and working conditions improved, but Oak Lawn remained poor. The reason for this was that almost all the members of the congregation were garden farmers, who brought their crops to the city market. But during World



Some men of Oaklawn PRC. From left to right: Mr. Willem Wierenga, Mr. Peter Ipema, Mr. Emko. Rutgers, Mr. Ryne Regnerus, Mr. Kort Sr., Rev. Hanko, Mr. Dick Kort.

War II, the airplane became the common means of transportation, so that food stuffs from California could arrive on the Chicago market overnight, long before the local gardeners could bring their goods to market. The result was that when the farmers delivered their crops to market, the markets were flooded with produce and the price had dropped tremendously. The Depression simply never left Oak Lawn. But they were willing to give the shirt off their backs for the minister's family; which they virtually did, as will become evident later.

Eventually, the truck farmers had to find another source of income, or, as they ultimately did, move to other areas. Many later sought refuge in our churches in South Holland and Randolph.

The following story illustrates the strong faith of the members in the face of financially difficult times. It was a year of drought and sprinkling systems were unknown. In fact, in July, when the fields should have been covered with bright green foliage and a rich yield of ripening crops, there was hardly a sprout to be seen. Even the weeds had difficulty surviving. In that situation, one of our members also had the sad experience that his wife was ill and hospitalized for some time. When I visited there, the oldest daughter, a girl maybe nine years old, and her little sister were washing the dishes. The other three children were playing in the yard. I walked with the father to the field from which his annual income was expected. What should I say? Before I could utter a word he remarked, "You know, Reverend, God is good. No matter what, God is good." What more need be said?

In fact, all the members were on relief, with the exception of Dick Kort. Yet they struggled to pay the salary they had promised, so that each week the treasurer came to bring as much money as he had collected. The money was spread on the dining room table, necessary bills for the week were taken out, and then what was left was for my salary. Often the remark was made, "We'll try to do better next week."

As far as we were concerned, we first took out the school tuition, because if we failed to pay that on time we would never catch up. Then the bills were paid. With the rest, we had to manage for groceries, clothing, fuel, etc. We tried to budget, putting money in separate envelopes, but we borrowed so often one from the other, that this venture was soon given up.

One year I did not have enough money to buy a license for the car. South Holland consistory asked me to preach for them, so I told them that I could do that if they would get me and bring me back. Frank Van Baren

came to get me, and on the way asked whether I was not using the car because of lack of license.³ When I answered in the affirmative, he gave me money to buy a license.

When Christmas came around, I made gifts for the children, which they seemed to appreciate as much as a purchased present. Mother bought me a shirt for Christmas, and I bought her a pair of gloves. But the day after Christmas we needed money for groceries. So we decided to return the shirt and the gloves to buy the necessities for meals. But the mutual presents had made everybody happy.

Usually on Saturday we bought a pot roast for a quarter. This was sparingly dealt out on Sunday, and the rest was enjoyed on Monday. The rest of the week we made do without meat.

Dick Kort repeatedly helped us to buy fuel for the furnace. On one occasion we went to the car shops to get cast off lumber, long boards that stuck out from the back of the truck. When we went over the railroad track, the whole front end of the truck came off the ground, so I had to stand on the bumper to hold it down.

On another occasion we went to Joliet to fetch some dirty surface coal. In order to do so I had to rob the children's banks of the few dimes and nickels that they had. But on the way, Dick dented the fender of another car, so that we had to dole out \$2 in nickels to quiet the man. What hurt the most was that he asked whether we had been playing the slot machines.

Keeping a family clothed was a big job for many people. Therefore, when a piece of clothing could no longer be used by a member of the family, it was donated to someone who could use it. There was a time when the entire family wore almost nothing but hand-me-downs. Although my father was much shorter than I, I did wear his overcoat and shoes after he died.

My Sunday suit was getting very thin, especially in the seat. We felt the need for a new one, but could not afford it. Yet at Christmas time, we received an envelope from Grand Rapids containing \$20. Later we found out that Gerrit Pipe and his girl friend decided to give the money to us that they would spend in buying gifts for each other.⁴ We actually wept when suddenly we had that much money. After careful consideration we decided to buy a Sunday suit. So we went to a Jew on 59th Street, who sold suits that he picked up at various stores in the city. There we purchased a suit for \$16. The next Sunday Mrs. Veldman in her own way made the remark, "That was not a waste of money."⁵ She too must have

feared that on some Sunday I would come through the seat of my trousers.

The Depression was a difficult time. Yet everybody was confronted with the same problem to a greater or lesser degree. We were all in the same boat, so to speak, and made the best of it. There were few complaints. One lesson we learned, and that was to pray for our daily bread. We were much like Israel in the wilderness, enough for today and waiting upon the Lord for tomorrow.

On top of these financial difficulties was the trouble caused by the same elder who had driven five hundred miles to Hull to tell me not to take the call to Oak Lawn. I barely had time to make sermons the first half year of my ministry in Oak Lawn. I was too busy trying to straighten out the mess resulting from eight years without a minister. And Mr. _____ was the center of it. In all my ministry there were two people that I considered to be hypocrites and he was one of them. He could act so pious. He did not want a minister there because then he could read and teach catechism and he liked that. When I came, things changed.

Before I took the call, there had been a minister who had said he was coming to Oak Lawn and then declined the call. In his prayer Mr. _____ said, "And forgive the minister who has so treacherously deceived us." A lady came to the consistory and said that if there was a minister who had treacherously deceived them, they ought to do something. That was one of the issues that the consistory was dealing with when I arrived. I went to see Mr. _____, and he started confessing far more than he should have. Then we had still more of a mess on our hands.

He came to realize that I was fed up with it. He came to the consistory and said, "The minister needs a raise." The consistory said, "We realize that, but we can't do it." He told them that he would do it alone. So they called a congregational meeting and it went through easily. They were more than willing to give me a raise if it could be done. I had said to them before the meeting, "Don't do this." But they said, "You need the raise and Mr. _____ said he could do it." I did not think Mr. _____ would be with us much longer, so I tried to warn the elders. I knew that his big talk of giving me a raise was the precursor to his leaving.

A short time later he came to visit me, after his wife had seen to it that my wife was out of the house. He informed me that he was leaving. I was not surprised and told him so. He accused me of not trusting him, and I agreed. I said to him, "Last Sunday there was a visitor

in church and you told him that you didn't like the sermon, didn't you?" He replied, "How did you know?" I said, "You just told me. And the same was true a couple of weeks ago when there was another visitor in church." Then I admitted that I had been guessing, but told him what I did know for fact. That was that he had taught catechism once when I was gone, and his instruction bordered on heresy. The CRC neighbor lady who had been sending her son to our catechism was irate. In my seminary years, Rev. Danhof had warned us that in every congregation we would find at least one goat that made our lives miserable. That proved to be true in Oak Lawn as well. Every time I got a call, he "accepted it" for me. If he had said the opposite I might have gone.

Editor's Note: Because Oak Lawn church was so poor, they did not have a parsonage of their own. They were forced to rent a home for their pastor and his family. These temporary arrangements proved to be just that, temporary. And so, the Hankos were required to move many times during their stay in Oak Lawn. The church finally purchased a home the year before Rev. Hanko moved to Manhattan. In the following chapter, Rev. Hanko describes these various homes and the moves in between. ❖

Endnotes

¹ The Rutgers mentioned here were the parents of Joan Buiters, Wilmina Lanting, Connie Vroom, and Rena Regnerus.

² Prof. Bouma was a relative of the Hankos and a professor at Calvin Seminary.

³ Frank Van Baren was the father of Mike Van Baren of South Holland PRC.

⁴ Gerrit Pipe was a long time elder in Southeast Church and father of the Pipes there.

⁵ Mrs. Veldman was a sister of Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

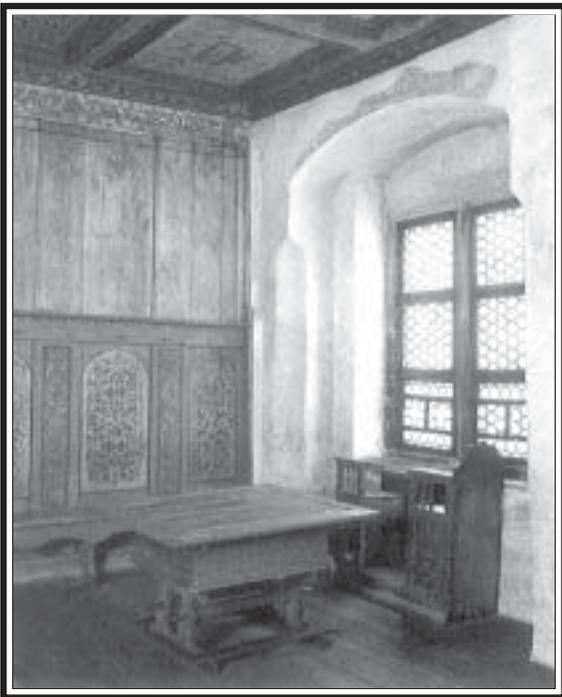
Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.

There was a mistake in the June 2006 memoirs, p. 21, third paragraph. Ben Gritters' son who moved to California is Edwin, not Egbert. It is Edwin's daughter, Shirley, who Rev. Hanko pastored in Hudsonville PRC.

The Work Corner

Like In The Days Of Luther

by J. P. de Klerk



In his big house, Dr. Martin Luther had his own work corner with a desk and a place next to the window where he could read and select the material he needed from various sources. In the former monastery everything was sober and a bit primitive, but the reformer did not ask for more. The whole place was a gift from King Frederick III, (the Wise) and nowadays is known as the “Lutherhalle” and includes a Reformation museum. Thousands of visitors have visited here but the authorities of the city of Wittenberg had expected millions since Germany was reunited. This building remained undamaged during the war. ❖

To please the tourists, the City Council of Wittenberg organizes a parade of the Night Watch once a week. They wear the traditional costumes as of the days of Dr. Martin Luther. These halberds get their arms from a museum. They wear shoulder belts in the city colors of yellow and green.

Behind them the City Church with two towers. In 1929 that building was restored. The pulpit from which Luther held his sermons remained undamaged to this day. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is a writer and journalist in Ashhurst, New Zealand.

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:

Samantha Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott DeYoung—Byron Center, MI

Wyatt J., son of Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Altena—Doon, IA

Chad Timothy, Jr., son of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Rus—Faith, MI

Cody Nicholas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Tolsma—First, Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Jenny Lee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James Molenkamp—First, Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Lincoln Ward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan van den Berg—First, Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Tanner Gerrit, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pete VanPutten—First, MI

Matthew Gabriel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Moelker—Georgetown, MI

Grayden Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dean Boven—Georgetown, MI

Payton Reese, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Bruckbauer—Georgetown, MI

Luke Ethan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian Dykema—Georgetown, MI

Morgan Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Bekkering—Georgetown, MI

Drew William, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Baas—Grandville, MI

Miya Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Westra—Holland, MI

Isaac John, son of Mr. & Mrs. John Cleveland—Hope, MI

Sydney Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Schimmel—Hope, MI

Myron Everett, son of Mr. & Mrs. Everett Langerak—Hope, MI

Lindsay Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Minderhoud—Hope, MI

Owen Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy Langerak—Hope, MI

Emmalie Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Dykstra—Hudsonville, MI

Mason Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad VanDerZwaag—Hull, IA

Cole Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kent Hoksbergen—Hull, IA

Carter John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steve Westra—Hull, IA

Grace Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Poppema—Hull, IA

Jacob Roger, son of Mr. & Mrs. David King—Hull, IA

Levi Daniel, son of Lora Kroese—Hull, IA

Lydia Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Steve DeBoef—Hull, IA

Taryn Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff VanMeeteren—Hull, IA

Ashley Kae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Pipe—Loveland, CO

Luke Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt Medema—Peace, IL

Joseph Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ross VanBaren—Randolph, WI

Dominic Gino, son of Mr. & Mrs. Larry Leoni—South Holland, IL

Lauryn Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan VanOverloop—South Holland, IL

Aaron Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Regnerus—South Holland, IL

Emily Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Huisken—Southwest, MI

Tessa Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Travis VanBemmel—Trinity, MI

Adult baptism administered to Stephen Schlau—Bethel, IL

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:

Kevin Deemter—Byron Center, MI

Nathan Reyenga—Bethel, IL

Jenny Meurer—Bethel, IL

Andrew Brummel—Faith, MI

Tyler Doezema—Faith, MI

Laura Kaptein—Faith, MI

Thomas Pastoor—Faith, MI

Pamela Klaassens—First, Edmonton, Alberta, CAN

Alyssa Klamer—Hope, MI

Seth Griess—Loveland, CO

Enrique Pappalardo—Loveland, CO

Julius Bosold—Loveland, CO/Spokane, WA

Aimero Desta—Loveland, CO/Spokane, WA

Steve Oldenberg—Randolph, WI

Kindra Baker—Redlands, CA

Rebecca Feenstra—Redlands, CA

Brittany Gaastra—Redlands, CA

Philip Hopkins—Redlands, CA

Jeanette Huisken—Redlands, CA

Marcie Kooienga—Southeast, MI

Kristin Ophoff—Southeast, MI

Jared Langerak—Southeast, MI

Patricia Geertsma—Wingham, Ontario, CAN

Willeke VanGent—Wingham, Ontario, CAN

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. Joshua Meurer and Miss Christine Lehan—Bethel, IL

Mr. Lance DeVries and Miss Chris Heyboer—Byron Center, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Peter Braaksma—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Cory Griess and Miss Lael Galardi—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Jason Kuiper and Miss Katy Miersma—Grace, MI

Mr. Brad VanderVeen and Miss Cheri Meulenberg—Grace, MI

Mr. Bill Beckman and Miss Melanie Looyenga—Holland, MI

Mr. Jacob Peterson and Miss Cassie Dams—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Kelly VanVoorst and Miss Erin Hoksbergen—Hull, IA

Mr. Kelsey VanBemmel and Miss Ashley Griess—Loveland, CO

Mr. Gise VanBaren and Miss Jennifer Kooy—Peace, IL

Mr. Brent Boverhof and Miss Brooke Wassink—Southwest, MI

Mr. Joel Hassevoort and Miss Katie VanderVeen—Southwest, MI

Mr. Matt Boonstra and Miss Kim Portvliet—Trinity, MI

Martin Luther:

One Eve of All Saints Day (1)

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, the action sparked a reformation of the Church that has continued as a great triumph of truth over the lie even to this day. It's an event we mark with much thanksgiving to God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised His disciples so long ago, that He would lead them, and us, into all truth.

Not that all was lost before the Reformation. For centuries God had led His people deeper into the truth. Out of much controversy over the correct understanding of the Trinity and the exact nature of the Son of God had come the early Christian creeds. Then God led men like Augustine (born in A.D. 354) and Goteschalk (born in A.D. 806) to see the truths of Scripture more clearly. They understood how election and reprobation meant salvation was all of God's sovereign, particular grace and no work of man's at all. But there was always controversy. The Catholic Church did not like the teachings of such men. Goteschalk was cruelly whipped and left to rot in prison. Except for God's continued work of preserving His truth, the pure doctrines of grace would have rotted in prison with him.

The Middle Ages are also known as the Dark Ages. Men call them so because of the general lack of education and knowledge that characterized this time, along with many false and superstitious beliefs. The days were



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

very dark spiritually. The Church developed in the lie that man can and must do work for his own salvation. The Church of Rome hid the truth from the people. No one was allowed to own their own copy of Scripture. Bibles were only on church pulpits, and these were only in Latin—not the language of common men. Even if Scripture had been in the everyday tongue, most people couldn't read. The days were dark indeed.

Yet a light began to break through on the day before All Saints in 1517 when Luther nailed his theses to a church door in Wittenberg. Did Luther know the effects this simple act would have on the Church, and even the world? Did he know this event would be remembered almost 500 years later? What brought Martin Luther to write down all the 95 items to discuss concerning the problems he saw with doctrines and practices in the Church of his day?

Let us look at some of the stories behind this celebrated eve of All Saints Day... ❖

Find the underlined words from John 16:12, 13a in the puzzle below:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..."

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

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

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Romans 12: 1-2

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