

Beacon Lights

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*“But he knoweth the way that I take:
when he hath tried me,
I shall come forth as gold.”*

Job 23:10

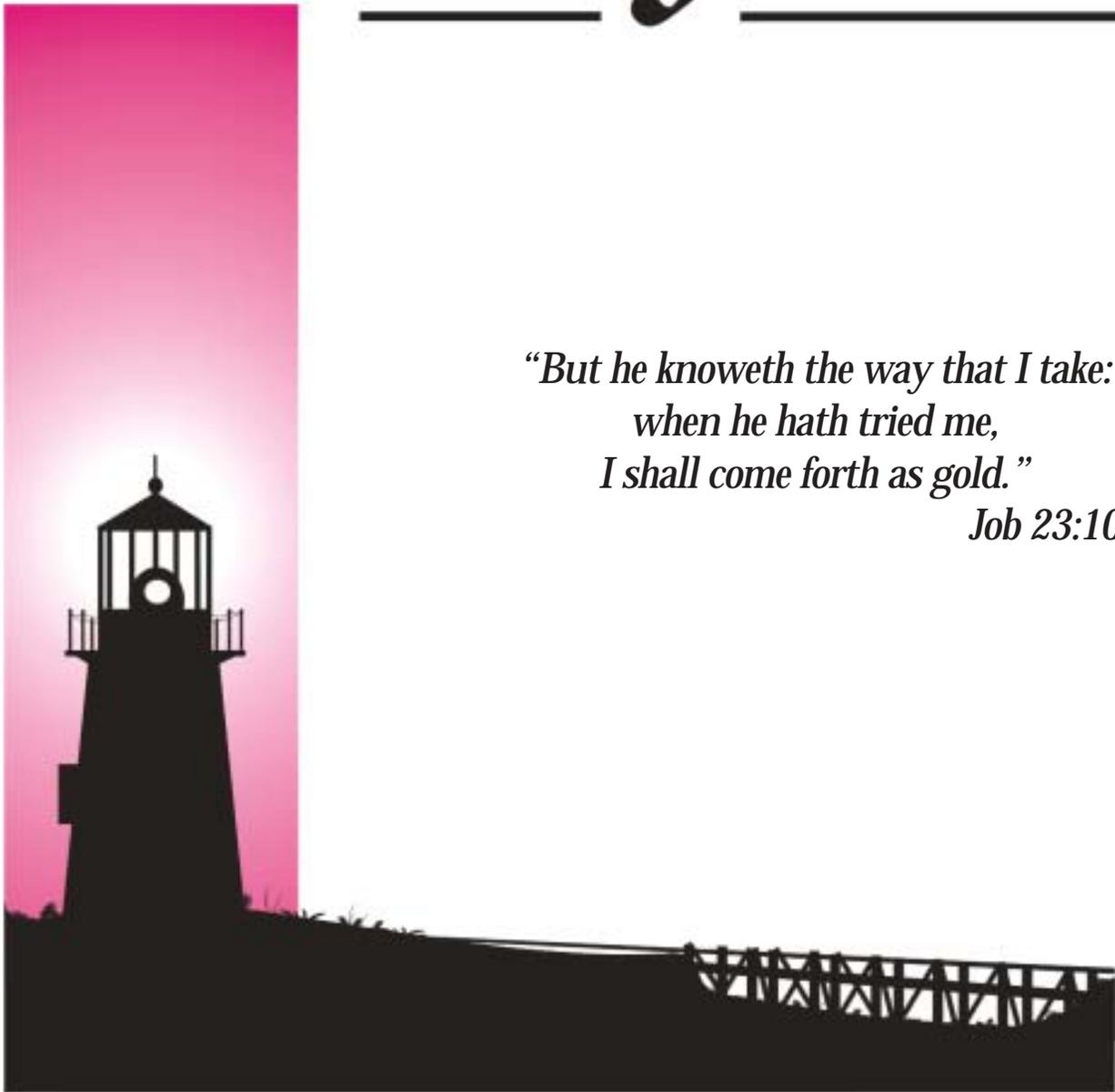


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Contentment in the New Year

by Kris Moelker

A new year is a time for reflection. The Year of our Lord 2006 has swiftly drawn to a close and the Year of our Lord 2007 has begun. Has the Lord's hand touched your life in a striking way in the past year? Have you shed tears because of the loss of a friend or relative in death? Are you or someone close to you dealing with a serious illness or injury? Are you content with your path of life?

The apostle Paul in Philippians 4:11 states: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He wrote this letter from Rome where he was imprisoned for his faith. In chapter 1, he speaks of a conflict within himself of remaining on earth or going to heaven to be with the Lord. By chapter 4 of this epistle, he confesses that he is content with God's will for his life.

Contentment is a hard lesson for all of us to learn. When things are going well for us, it is easy for us to say, "Yes, I am content. I am able to wake up each day and enjoy good health and strength. I am able to do the work the Lord has given me to do as a student or as an employee. I live in a happy home. My friends are always there for me." This may be true of the circumstances of our lives at this moment. If our lives were to suddenly change today, would we still be content?

For a moment, let us remember the history of Job. Job was a very rich man until he lost almost everything he had when the Lord used Satan to try him. He lost his oxen, sheep, asses, camels, most of his servants, his sons and daughters in one day. Then we read that in the midst of his sorrow over his losses, he confessed in Job 1:21, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." What an amazing confession of faith. Job had lost his sons and daughters and almost everything he owned and he worshipped God and made a beautiful confession concerning the sovereignty of God. Then we read: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." (Job 1:22) When God used Satan to take away Job's health and give him boils, Job's faith faltered and he cursed the day he was born. Then, even though the words of his friends were often mean and unjust, Job again was led to confess God's sovereignty and became content with His ways. At the end of Job's trial, God reproved Job's friends and blessed Job with seven more sons, three more daughters and more animals. We read in Job 42:12, "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."

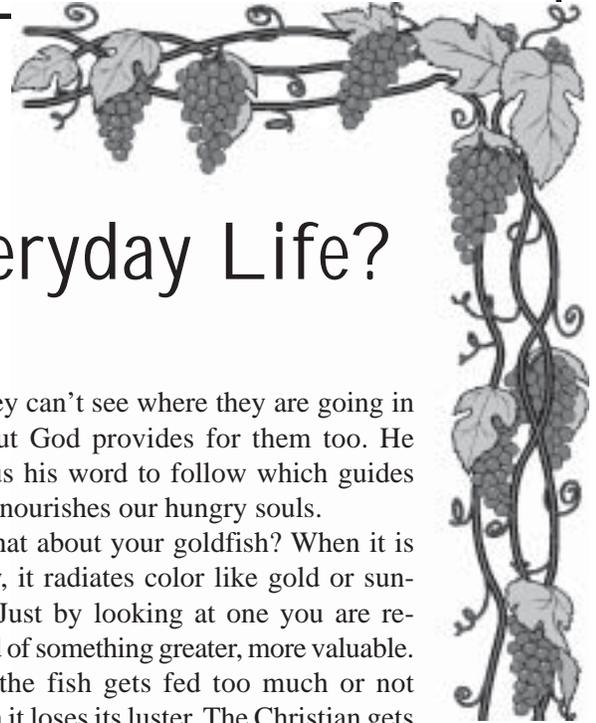
Are we quick to say, God won't send trials as great as Job's trial into our lives? Then we must remind ourselves that only God knows and controls the path of each person He has created. Job confesses this in Job 23:10, "But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." The prophet Isaiah in chapter 64 verse 8 confesses God's sovereign control of our lives when he writes, "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." Just as the potter can do anything he wants with the lump of clay and the pot he forms with it, so God fashions us and controls our lives. He does whatsoever He pleases with the life of each person He has created. He gives health and strength one moment and then He can suddenly send sickness or injury. He gives us family and friends and then He takes a loved one to Himself suddenly through death. He does this because He is our sovereign God and heavenly Father.

Knowing this, we as children of God find the grace and strength necessary to be content with our path of life, even when we are faced with great trials. We must be content because we know that God uses this life and the trials of this life to prepare us for our place in heaven. That is the goal of our life. We haven't

begun another year to acquire more of this world's goods. We haven't resolved to try to do better in our studies to receive more recognition. We haven't chosen a healthy life-style so we can live longer. By the grace of God, we have asked God to give us more contentment. Being content, we walk with God down the path of life He hath made for us, knowing that we are getting closer to the day when our path will reach the gate of heaven. ❖

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

Fruitful Branches



Do You See God in Everyday Life?

by Anonymous

Where can you see God? Everywhere! God reveals Himself to his people in his word and in creation. Can you guess how he reveals himself or teaches us lessons about himself in pelicans and mosquitoes? How about bats? What does God teach you through your goldfish? Lets take a look at these creatures and find out.

Most of us have never seen a pelican, yet it is a symbol of the church. The pelican will sit on her nest and shelter her young beneath her wing night and day to protect them from enemies who would attack the small babies and the harsh weather. And when for several days she can't find food for her young, to keep them from starving she will pierce her breast with her beak and feed her babies with her own blood. She doesn't kill herself; she buys more time to find food.

God shelters us under his protective wings and won't let Satan and his minions take us away and Christ feeds us with his own body and blood.

Eeew! Yuck! Mosquitoes! They're everywhere! They swarm all around trying to suck your blood. They hunger for blood. Christians hunger for Christ's blood. It is by his blood that we are saved. We have to go to him all the time and drink of that blood to be reminded of the payment that was paid for us.

Bats can't see where they go. That doesn't stop them from going out and finding food to live. God provides for them. He gave them echo-location so that they can fly and not crash. Also they can use the echo-location to find food. Christian sometimes get caught up on the fact

that they can't see where they are going in life. But God provides for them too. He gives us his word to follow which guides us and nourishes our hungry souls.

What about your goldfish? When it is healthy, it radiates color like gold or sunshine. Just by looking at one you are reminded of something greater, more valuable. When the fish gets fed too much or not enough it loses its luster. The Christian gets its light from Christ. He reflects God's glory which is far greater and more valuable than any thing found in this world, even gold and the sun. But a Christian can become too comfortable in this world and weak spiritually. Then the light he shows turns dull and people have a hard time seeing Christ in the man. But even if the goldfish isn't gold, even if it doesn't shine at all, it is still a goldfish. A Christian, a real Christian, can never stop being a Christian.

God reveals himself everywhere and in everything. Think about it and talk it over with your parents. How is God reflected in lightning bugs? Grasshoppers, flowers and mice? Can you think of a few things? Wonderful! Remember God is a great and wise God who holds the sparrow in His hand and clothes the lily of the valley. How much more will he care for you. ❖

Written by a young sister in the Lord from Byron Center, Michigan.

The Gift (4)

by Tom Cammenga

Without bothering to look through the peep-hole in the front door he grasped the handle and opened it feeling irritated at the interruption as well as anxious as to whom it could be. There on the front stoop stood the woman who lived next door with her husband and four children, her hair blowing in the cold wind. For a moment he simply stared at her wondering why she was at his door.

“Oh!” she said, somewhat taken aback by the somewhat crazed look on his face, “I hope I am not intruding.”

Reality took hold once again of his emotions and he quickly regained his composure. With a slight smile on his face he reached down, unlocked the screen door, and opened it, careful not to let the wind take it from his grasp.

“Janet, it’s good to see you. Please, come in out of the cold,” he suggested, gesturing with his left hand toward the interior of the house. “You will have to excuse me, I was a bit preoccupied. I am sorry it took so long for me to answer the door.”

Squeezing through the doorway she brushed her feet on the mat and ran the fingers of her left hand through her hair which had become a tangled mess in the wind and rain.

He waited for her to move out of the way before closing the door. Only then did he realize that she held a large package underneath her right arm along with the morning newspaper.

After setting the package and paper down and collecting herself just a bit she looked at him.

“How are you doing Mr. Michaelson,” she asked with concern evident in her voice as she reached out and rested her hand on his arm.

“Well, alright I suppose. Everything still feels rather numb and hard to believe but all in all, not too bad,” he replied as he put his hand on hers. Oh, if only that were really true.

“I brought you some goodies that I baked this morning,” she said as she gestured towards the package on the floor. “We would also like you to come over for dinner tomorrow evening if it works for you.”

“Why, that is so thoughtful Janet. I...I would really like that,” he said looking down at the package then back at Janet again, not really feeling as convinced as he hoped he sounded.

“It’s the least we can do,” she said, thankful that he had agreed. “We have told you before but if there is anything you need or anything we can do to help, please, please let us know,” she said almost pleading.

“I sure will,” he said with a warm smile on his face. “You and your family have been so good to us since you moved in. I appreciate it so much. Jenny thought so much of you and Jack and the kids,” he said with a slight tremble in his voice.

“Well, we have come to think of you as our extended family and we want you to know that we are here for you.”

There were a few moments then that neither of them spoke. Feeling the awkwardness of the moment she stepped towards him and hugged him. After a bit she stepped back and gave his arm a squeeze.

“I have to get going. Ruth has a doctor’s appointment,” she said as she walked towards the door he had just opened once again. “Take care and we’ll see you at 6:00 p.m. tomorrow night.”

“You bet, I’ll be there,” he said as he opened the storm door for her. “And Janet, thank you.”

“Anytime Mr. Michaelson, and don’t forget that,” she said, speaking louder because of the sound of the wind. With a slight wave she ran out to her car, climbed in, and was gone.

As he shut the door the old man was overcome with a feeling of guilt for not having asked this family to come to the cemetery with him. They had attended the short visitation at the funeral home, in fact they had stayed the whole time, and had been obviously disappointed when he informed them there would be no service to attend.

They had been so good to Jenney and him since they moved in a number of years before. Often Janet would bring over goodies or, in the summer, fresh vegetables and melons out of their garden. The last few weeks had been no exception. As his wife’s condition had steadily

grown worse Janet and the kids had come over every day, sometimes just to sit with Jenny and other times they would clean and tidy up as best they could, especially after Jenny was admitted back into the hospital again.

He chuckled softly as he picked up the package and made his way into the kitchen to get another cup of coffee. Those kids were something else. Smiling to himself he set the package on the kitchen table and refilled his coffee cup.

He would often watch them play either from the shadows of his own yard or through a window in the house. Not that he was spying. In fact, he didn't think of it that way at all. He just so enjoyed the show they never failed to put on. At times he would even catch himself imagining that they were his children or even his grandchildren. The truth, if he thought about it, was that he really did think of them as his grandchildren.

Children, yet another thing his wife's God had withheld from them. Once again the bitterness that had burned within his heart over the past few weeks raised its ugly head. And yet as swiftly as it had come it was gone, replaced by the emptiness of the last few days.

He remembered what his wife had said the many times they had discussed this. She would always say that for some reason it just wasn't the Lord's will that they be given children and that they had to be content with that. He would always grunt his disagreement with her and then the conversation would end. How many times they had talked about it.

Suddenly he was struck with the thought that were they to have had children, he probably would not have been alone that Sunday afternoon at the cemetery, and quite possibly would not have met the young man he had met there. For some reason he couldn't help but think that it would have been too bad had that been the case. He had felt so comfortable talking to him and in fact had opened up his heart to him, a complete stranger.

With a large sigh he sat down at the table with the morning paper. At least some things had not changed. This had been his custom for many years and at least for a short time he felt as though everything was at least somewhat normal. ❖

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

Consider the Creation

When I In Awesome Wonder...

Michigan's Golden Coast

Karner Blue

by Deanne Wassink

Blue sparkles in the sun are what the clustering Karner Blue butterflies (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) appear to be from a distance. They are the extremely rare and endangered inhabitant of the meadows that I help to preserve. In the last fifteen years the population has fallen to 1% of what it once was. In the beautiful Karner Blue God has created an insect that is uniquely suited to its environment. Sadly, that uniqueness may prove its demise.

You see, the Karner Blue is completely dependent on one flower, the wild blue lupine. This beautiful perennial flower, almost iridescent blue in color, lives in a specific habitat—dry shady soils in full sun to light shade. These plant are also in decline because of two primary

reasons. First, their habitat has been destroyed by urban sprawl. Second, they have been choked out by forest growth resulting from fire suppression.

The eggs from the year before hatch in mid April when the lupine begin to sprout. The larvae (caterpillars) feed on the new leaves turning them into a lacy appearance. After the larvae form a chrysalis they emerge as adult butterflies in late May. The males have beautiful violet blue wings fringed with white. the underside of the wings are silver with black spots and orange markings. The females are similar in color except they are a more soft brownish blue. One more bit of information, their wingspan is only about one inch.

The adult butterflies lay eggs on the maturing lupine plants which hatch into a second generation in mid July to early August. This second hatch lays eggs near the roots of the plant to emerge again the next spring. Although the adults can feed on other kinds of wildflowers the larvae, or caterpillars, can feed only on the leaves of the wild lupine.

Michigan's west coast is one of the areas that contain a pocket of Karner Blue butterflies. There are small pockets of surviving populations from Minnesota to New Hampshire. Many different ecology groups are trying to help bring back the Karner Blue population through the improvement of their habitat. I have been involved in establishing and maintaining blue lupine plants for a Michigan electric power company where the butterflies are found in the open areas under power lines near the Croton and Hardy dams. I have only seen a few of these magnificent miniature butterflies. They appeared as flitting blue sparkles in the sun.

This beautiful butterfly is a wonderful example of the handiwork of God creating a dependent relationship between the butterfly and the flower. Without the flower there would be no butterfly. It reminds me of the relationship God has created between the child of God and the church. The child of God must be joined to a church that is faithful to the Word of God. There he is fed by the preaching, guided by the elders, and nurtured by fellow saints. This implies that he participates in and fellowships with his fellow saints in worship and congregational life. Like the Karner Blue without the lupine will die so also the christian without the church will die. He

may be fed in other places, but, his children will die in their generations.

Lord, make us faithful.

His Face I See

His face I see in the clouds of the sky.

His caress in the gentle breeze.

His power in the shaking earth.

His voice in the booming surf.

His beauty is in the flowers of the field.

His footsteps I hear in the hurricane.

His wrath in the raging fire.

His majesty in the ice covered mountains.

His patience a spring that never runs dry.

His infinity like the height of the heavens.

His understanding deep as the sea.

His gentleness as the newborn calf and cow.

His sovereignty like a storm untamed.

His kindness like feeding orphan lambs.

His faithfulness like the sunrise each morning.

His sweetness in the honeycomb.

His face I see in the creatures of His hand.

Reflecting the face of His Son, my Lord. ❖

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

Church Family

Looking Forward

by Laurel Lotterman

On the outside, New Year's Day is just like any other day. Why then do we celebrate it? For many, it is just an excuse for a day off work, and for the majority of the world around us, New Year's is an excuse to party and drink excessively, but for others like us, it has spiritual meaning. As Christians, we are able to look forward to the new year without dread, and even look forward to the new year with longing for the day that we know shall soon come.

BEACON LIGHTS

We realize that the new year is especially symbolic because it brings us one year closer to the day that Christ will return. Every year that passes by is celebrated for this reason. The time of Christ's return is close at hand, and with each passing year, we rejoice that our suffering is almost over.

What I find utterly captivating about the holiday is that the world around us celebrates the coming of a new year. Why? Because in essence, they are celebrating the

nearing of their own destruction. They live their lives in complete denial that God will someday return to judge. They deny the fact that God created and sustains the world and that everything that happens was predetermined by him. They even deny that God even exists. We often think to ourselves, "how can they deny that when it is so blatantly obvious?" The answer is that they have not been given the gift of faith, and they are blind to the things that we see very clearly. They belong to the devil, and as such, the Lord God is their worst enemy. They will do anything to bring him down.

But while they drink and party their lives away, our Lord is watching and waiting. When his cup of wrath is

full, He will return. Oh, the terror that will result! The wicked will weep in despair and flee from their greatest enemy. But we, as Christians, have no reason to fear.

We have so much to be thankful for, that we have been chosen as God's people. Because we have been chosen and our sins have been forgiven, we can only look forward to the coming days and years. When we keep this in mind, we will have real joy in celebrating the new year. Rejoice ye saints, for the coming of the Lord is near! ❖

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

Gem of the Month

Mothers

*Formed from a rib of Adam,
God created Eve,
Mother of the human race:
Children to conceive.
Children of the mortal flesh,
Those whom Satan claimed.
Children of the covenant
Who of God were named!*

*Aged Sarah bore a son,
Isaac, blessed of God;
Through his line the covenant
Would extend abroad.
Jacob's sons would then comprise
Chosen Israel;
Those elected by the Lord
In His love to dwell.*

*Mother of a Special Child—
Mary, blessed of God,
Bore our Savior in the flesh,
Angels give Him laud.
Yet her soul was pierced as He
Bore His Father's wrath;
Dying for His people's sins
In God's chosen path.*

*Christian mothers still today
Teach Jehovah's fear
By example and by word
In the cov'nant sphere.
Thus their children grow in grace
By God's mercy led,
As members of Christ's body;
Jesus Christ, the Head.*

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
by John Huizenga (Reprinted from January 1998)

January 16 Read Psalm 42:2; Psalter 114:1; 115:1; 116:2; 117:1; 118:1; Amos 8:11-14

The land may burst with an abundance of crops, your garage may house two new cars, your house may be large and luxurious, but a spiritual famine may be ravaging you life. Nothing is more terrifying to the child of God than a famine of God's Word. Five Psalter numbers are devoted to the expression of this fear and the comfort of God's promises. We easily take it for granted that we have an abundance of spiritual food and drink each week. Pray that God never take away His Word to chastise us for our indifference. Pray that our elders may be strengthened in their work of maintaining the preaching and discipline in our churches. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 17 Read Psalm 42:3; Psalter 114:2; 2 Peter 3:1-7

As the world round about us continues to become more intolerant of the true church of God they become more bold in their scoffing "Where is thy God." Give thanks unto God for the church where we can hear the reassuring Word of God. But do you ever wonder why we are such a minority? Does it make your faith waver? Even the so-called "church world" is quickly calling God's Word a myth and that it is foolish to expect a literal return of Christ. How much more difficult it would be if our churches were forced into hiding and we were scattered and alone. Turn then to 2 Peter where God calls us to remember the faithful promises of God. Sing the Psalter.

January 18 Read Psalm 42:4; Psalter 114:3; 118:2; Acts 2:43-47

David is filled with grief when he thinks of the former days when he led the people to worship God. He was content and satisfied then. Do we look forward to and cherish the Lord's Day? The early Church desired to gather with God's people every day and show forth their thankfulness. May we also be filled with a desire to be with the people of God to hear God's Word. May every day be a day in which we do our work in thankfulness to God for

our salvation. May we never look back with regret because we did not use the Lord's Day to serve Him but rather to satisfy our own desires. Sing the Psalter.

January 19 Read Psalm 42:5; Psalter 114:4; 116:3; 118:3; 2 Peter 1:1-16

David became very lonely and depressed when he was forced to flee from the gathering of God's people. The disciples and early church would also easily slip into sadness after Jesus ascended into heaven. But God has given unto us the gift of memory and spiritual knowledge of God by which we cling to His promises. He will never forsake us. We will see His face. He reveals His love in the way of delivering us from trouble. Pray for faith which gives hope. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 20 Read Psalm 42:6; Psalter 114:5; 118:3; Jonah 2:1-7

God is everywhere present. No matter where we are God is there and He hears our every word and knows our every thought. This truth is a great comfort to every believer because when we are far from home, lost, or unable to be with God's people in church, then we always have an opportunity to find comfort in the knowledge of this truth. Remember this truth. We do not know when it may be the only thing we have. Cherish each day you have in the comfort of your home and the house of God. Pray for the faith that will uphold you in the day of great need. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 21 Read Psalm 42:7; Psalter 114:6; 115:2; 117:2; Acts 27:16-25

David compares his feelings to those of a sailor out in the sea in the middle of a storm. The storm-tossed sea is often used in Scripture to describe turmoil. Unceasing waves of grief loosen every fiber of strength. The only comfort when we are completely undone is to trust in God. God revealed to Paul that all the troubles he endured were for his salvation. We are made weak so that God's strength is magnified in us. We must remember also that God does not leave His people in despair. God will always send his

Word of comfort and will gather us into his presence of everlasting joy and peace. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 22 Read Psalm 42:8; Psalter 114:7; 115:3; 117:3; Acts 16:22-32

The song of Zion is a very precious gift. We do well to spend much time learning Psalter numbers and teaching them to our children. The saints who lie day and night on their bed in the rest home cling to those songs and sing them in the night for comfort. The Psalms are a great gift of God. He speaks to us through them and uses them to bring joy into our hearts. May we be diligent to learn them and teach them to the children. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 23 Read Psalm 42:9; Psalter 114:8; Matthew 26:38-44

God is our Rock. We know it, yet we often see how weak our flesh is. We know God does not forget us, yet we are filled with fear and sorrow when the enemy comes against us. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. It is important for us to know how weak we are in ourselves. The disciples also needed to be taught that the salvation of Christ is by grace alone. May God fill you with a spirit that is indeed willing so that you cry diligently to God in your time of need. He will show his power and grace in our weak flesh. Sing the Psalter.

January 24 Read Psalm 42:10; Psalter 114:9; 1 Timothy 4

The scoffing of the wicked is a most piercing arrow of the devil. The wicked know they will be punished and they can't stand the presence of those redeemed. They especially delight when our sins bring us to sorrow. They take advantage of the weakness of our flesh and ask, "where is the God that is supposed to save you?" They want to take you into their own way toward destruction. We can expect more taunting by the world as the end of the world draws nearer. Do you know where God is? Let us make our calling and election sure by diligent study of God's word and attentive ears in the House of God. Then, though we cry out to God, we cling more tightly to our God and abhor sin. Sing the Psalter.

January 25 Read Psalm 42:11; Psalter 114:10; 115:4; 116:4; 117:4; 1 John 3:16-24

Hope in God is essential as we live in this world of sin. Hope is a central theme in this Psalm and therefore is included in many of the Psalter numbers we sing. Our hope is rooted in the love of God manifest in the cross. Do you desire a firm hope? We must know the truth of God's salvation and we must love one another; then hope will also dwell within your heart. Crucify your sinful pride, reach out to the brother and sister in the Lord in love.

Hope in God and He will lift up your soul from despair. Sing the Psalter.

January 26 Read Psalm 43:1; Psalter 119:1; 120:1; 1 Peter 2:20-25

The Christian will be unjustly accused. We will suffer the unjust blows of wicked men when we do the right. Our calling is not to fight back and take justice into our own hands. Christ is our example. We must do well and if we suffer at the hands of wicked men for doing well, we are to take it patiently. Christ committed Himself to God Who judges righteously. Come to God with your cries of injustice. It is not sign of weakness, but our humble submission is our glory. We glory in our God for He will be glorified in all things. Sing the Psalter numbers.

January 27 Read Psalm 43:2; Psalter 119:2; 120:2; Ephesians 6:10-18

Do not expect an easy life once you put on the whole armor of God. The armor is not to make life easy, it is for fighting and protecting our life with God. Knowing God will keep and protect us, we may wonder why it would appear at times that God abandons us. Be assured, it is not because God has indeed abandoned us, but rather because our eyes do not always see the ways of God. We must live by faith in obedience to God. We must not let our fears and feelings guide our actions. Take the armor of God and fight. Pray always for perseverance. God will send relief. Sing the Psalter.

January 28 Read Psalm 43:3; Psalter 119:3; Psalter 120:3; John 1:1-14

When we experience the heat of our spiritual battles and God seems to have abandoned us, rest assured that it is not as we think, but it is our own blindness. Pray for the light of God which will guide us to peace and fellowship with God. Those who cry to God in their distress are those who were born "not of the will of man, but of God." God will never forsake His elect children. He has given us the Light of the Gospel: our salvation by grace alone in Christ. Give thanks to God today for the sound doctrines of grace which we hear from our pulpits. May God continue to bless us with the pure preaching of His Word. Sing the Psalter.

January 29 Read Psalm 43:4; Psalter 119:4; 120:4; Romans 5:1-11

Deliverance from our sorrows and troubles will bring us to offer up our sacrifice of thankful obedience to God. Deliverance works in us joy and peace that can not be comprehended. Indeed the ways of God are marvelous. Seek the joy that we have alone in God. Seek for this joy in the knowledge of God gained through your tribulations.

Seek for this joy in the knowledge of God gained through a study of His salvation in Christ. Sing the Psalter.

January 30 Read Psalm 43:5; Psalter 119:5; 1 Kings 19:13-18

Is your soul cast down and disquieted? Depression often strikes after a time of great joy and spiritual strength. Elijah could not even ask himself the question, "Why is my soul cast down?" It is a question that we must face because the child of God has no reason to be depressed. Depression may be a chemical imbalance within our body, but at bottom it is a problem with sin. Our corrupt mind is responsible even for the chemical imbalances within our bodies. Pray that God may seek you out in our times of depression and show us our sins. Sing the Psalter.

January 31 Read Psalm 43:5; Psalter 119:6; Psalter 120

Psalter 120 included this verse in the chorus as a constant reminder to hope in God. Hope is not merely a wish as the word is commonly used today. We may say that we hope for sunshine without being certain that sunshine will come. Spiritual hope is certain. We hope in God in the sense of longing for a quick return to His fellowship. Our hope is rooted in the promises of God. We live by faith. All of our life is a life of hope in God. Hope is a very important subject for the believer. Hope was the constant source of joy for the Psalmist as we saw in Psalm 42:5 and 11. May God give you hope for this new year. Sing the Psalter.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
(Reprinted from February 1998)

February 1-12 by Mike Feenstra

February 1 Read Psalm 44:1-8; Psalm 44:1-2

"Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." This is the evaluation of Israel by the Psalmist in Psalm 44. How could this be since God had promised Israel that He would give them Canaan for an everlasting inheritance? Had God forgotten His covenant? Had he delivered Israel from Egypt and planted them in Canaan only to let them be overrun and mocked by the surrounding nations? How could God let this happen to His chosen people? Was not His own Name at stake? These and many other related questions often rise in our hearts when we read in Scripture of the church amid persecution. And from Psalm 44, we know that the Psalmist had the same questions. What are the answers to these questions? In our devotionals on Psalm 44, we will seek the answers to these critical questions which have troubled the Church of Christ for ages. Try to find the answers from Scripture for yourself as we go along. Sing Psalter 121:1.

February 2 Read Psalm 80; Psalm 44:3

The inspired Psalmist begins our Psalm with a wonderful confession of God's covenant faithfulness toward Israel. He knows the covenant which God established with his fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knows that God promised to Israel the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. How does he know all this? The answer is that he was taught by his fathers of Israel's victories through God's outstretched arm. We sing of those victories in Psalter 121:1 with these words, "The nations were crushed and expelled by Thy hand, Cast out that Thy people might dwell in their land." How is this possible? Only in Jehovah God: "But Thy right hand saved and the light of Thy face, Because of Thy favor and wonderful grace" (St. 2). Indeed, only through God's sovereign grace do we defeat our foes including those that persecute us. Sing Psalter 121:2.

February 3 Read 1 Samuel 17:38-50; Psalm 44:4-5

By recounting before God his past favor toward Israel, the Psalmist in verse 4 cries to God to deliver Israel again for His Name's sake. His cry to God is one that the Church has always made, and one that we will also make in the

last days. It is this: "God, Thou hast established Thy covenant with our fathers and Thou hast delivered them. Now we are persecuted because we confess Thy Name as our fathers did. Why dost Thou allow the wicked to persecute us and drag Thy Name in the mud?" (See vs. 13,14; Cp. Psalm 74). We find the answer in David's defeat of Goliath. There God showed to all the world that He will not tolerate the mocking of His Name. He will assuredly glorify His Name by delivering us from the derision of our persecutors. Let this be our comfort in the dark days to come. Sing Psalter 121:3.

February 4 Read Joshua 6; Psalm 44:6-8

Jericho, Gideon and the Midianites, and Hezekiah and Sennacherib (Josh. 6, Jud. 7, & 2 Kings 19 resp.). All monumental victories given to Israel directly by Jehovah. Truly, Israel could sing, "No trust will I place in my strength to defend, Nor yet on my sword as a safeguard depend; In Thee, Who hast saved us and put them to shame, We boast all the day, ever praising Thy Name." We can be sure that the Psalmist knew the history of these victories well. And even though he was under sore persecution, he boasted in God's grace and praised Him for His goodness. Is this our attitude when we are afflicted by God? Let us learn from this Psalm patience and trust in God. Sing Psalter 121:4.

February 5 Read Psalm 44:9-19; Psalm 9:9-10

In vs. 9 and following, we read of the persecution that Israel endured for God's sake. Israel was mocked and reproached by the surrounding nations. They were the byword of their neighbors as Job was. They were as sheep ready to be killed. What a difference from the Israel spoken of in verses 1-8! Why? Why were they afflicted even though they were following His way? This was the same question the Psalmist asked when he stated, "But Thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies" (vs. 9). Had God really cast off His people? Did He forget their affliction and oppression? Surely He did not for God never ceases to watch over His people (Cp. Psalm 94:14). Nevertheless, at that time God did not help them in their affliction and persecution for this reason, so that they would look to Him alone for help. Israel needed to learn to wait on the Lord, and so do we. Sing Psalter 122:1.

February 6 Read Psalm 39; Psalm 44:11-12

In verses 11-12 the Psalmist continues to lay before God the persecution of Israel. The Psalmist illustrates this when he states: "Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat" (Cp. vs. 22). But, note that he recognizes God as the One Who did it, that is, he confesses that God is sovereign over persecution and evil. Many in the church world

today will not make this confession. "God does not will affliction and persecution, Satan does!" they say. By this statement they deny the sovereignty of God over evil, the very doctrine that has given the saints of all ages peace in their suffering. Do we love this doctrine as they did? Then, let us defend it even though the vast majority of the churches resist us. Sing Psalter 122:2.

February 7 Read Job 30; Psalm 44:13-14

We read in Psalm 44:13 that Israel was the laughing-stock of the heathen round about because those nations knew that Israel was chosen of God. While Israel writhed in pain, the mockers around derided them and blasphemed God's Name. It is easy for us here to condemn the heathen for their wickedness, but what about us? Are we copying the wicked by persecuting our fellow believers? We do this whenever we mock a brother in Christ who stands up for God. Young people, you do this when you snicker at the good confession of a peer in the society room. This type of persecution stings the heart of the child of God. Therefore, let us be on our guard lest we partake in the evil deeds of the wicked. Sing Psalter 122:3.

February 8 Read John 15:18-27; Psalm 44:15-16

"The voice of blasphemers and scoffers I hear, The foe and avenger against me appear." The question is: Why? Why are we persecuted? John 15:18-27 provides the answer. It is because we have been chosen out of this world by God and ingrafted into Christ. The world hates us because the world hates Christ. Israel's wicked neighbors hated them because they were the chosen nation who had Christ in them. If the world hates and persecutes us it only means that we belong to Christ! That is the testimony of John 15:19! Have you ever thought about that! Let this be our assurance when doubt arises in our hearts in the midst of persecution. Sing Psalter 122:4.

February 9 Read 2 Cor. 4:8-18; Psalm 44:17-19

Fellow believers, do you have a heavy burden to bear? Does it sometimes seem as if you are "crushed amid ruins and under death shade"? Do you sometimes wonder why God sends affliction even though you are following His statutes? The Psalmist had these same questions and his afflictions were far worse than ours, because he was severely persecuted. The Apostle Paul answers these questions in II Corinthians 4:18 where he says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Light! Our afflictions are light? How can that be? It can only be because of the work of Christ on the cross, for through that He gave unto us eternal life. The weight of that eternal life is so infinitely heavy that the afflictions and persecu-

tion of this life are as nothing! Hallelujah! Sing Psalter 122:5.

February 10 Read Psalm 44:20-26; Psalm 44:20, 21, 26

The final section of Psalm 44 records for us the Psalmist's cry to God for deliverance. He begins in verses 20-21 with this declaration: "If we have forgotten the Name of our God...Shall not God search this out?" By these words the Psalmist states by implication that Israel was not afflicted for their sin, but because they were confessing God's Name. We can see this also by what he says in verse 22: "Yea for Thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Amid these troubles the Psalmist cries, "Arise for our help, and redeem us for Thy mercies' sake." The Psalmist does this with the confidence that God will surely save them. Even when it seems as if God is hiding His face from us, let us also have confidence that He will save us. Sing Psalter 123:1.

February 11 Read Romans 8:28-36; Psalm 44:22, 23, 26

"Arise, cast us not off for ever." Such was the cry of the Psalmist in verse 23. How often have you felt this way when afflictions rose up against you? During those afflictions did it feel as if God forgot you? In that difficult time, what was one of the Scripture passages that comforted your soul? Was it Romans 8:28-39? I venture to say that it was, for in Romans 8 Paul writes that no affliction or persecution can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. What a comfort! God, Who elected us before the foundations of the world, has promised to us that He will preserve us to the end. That preservation He has accomplished through the death of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Absolutely nothing! And this because Christ has ingrafted us into Himself forever to remain! Sing Psalter 123:2.

February 12 Read Romans 8:37-39; Psalm 44:24-26

In our text for today we find the Psalmist lying with his face down in the dirt, unable to rise because of the oppression of the enemy. In this adversity he asks God, "Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? (vs. 24)" This is a cry that many saints have made during the fires of persecution when the cause of Christ seemed to have been lost. This is a cry that we will make to God at the end of time when the persecution will be worse than at any time in history. Are we getting ready for those days? Are we seeking to find the answers to the problems of persecution and affliction? Then let us pray to God for His Spirit to lead us

in the truth of His Scriptures. And let us call on God to save and preserve us in those last days. Let us do that because we know that in Him we are more than conquerors! Sing Psalter 123:3.

February 13-15 by John Huizenga

February 13 Read Psalm 45; Psalter 124:1

Our Psalter clearly lays out the meaning of this beautiful Psalm in the numbers 124 and 125. The first part of the Psalm is about Christ as King and the second part of the Psalm is about the Church as the bride of Christ. The inspired writer of this Psalm was glad to write down the wonderful revelation of God's covenant fellowship with His people, the Church, which, as we noticed in Psalm 44, is persecuted and troubled in this world. The word of God revealed to us is so wonderful, it is a shame that everyone in church each Sunday does not sit at the edge of their pew with overflowing hearts and tongues eager to sing God's praises. We must fight against sin because sin makes us dull and blind. Pray that God opens your eyes today that you might know the majesty and glory of our King. Sing the Psalter.

February 14 Read Psalm 45:2; Psalter 124:2; John 1:1-14

This verse directs our attention to the beauty of Christ our King, especially that beauty which is found in the words which He speaks. Christ is the Word of God. By the Word of God were all things created. By His Word, God made known to his people His eternal good pleasure to bring His people into covenant fellowship with Himself by grace in Christ. Do you see the beauty of Christ? The beauty of Christ comes out in the pure preaching of salvation by grace alone. Be diligent in your study of God's Word. Pray for the working of His Spirit to enlighten your heart and mind. May Christ be beautiful in your eyes today. Sing the Psalter.

February 15 Read Ps. 45:3; Psaltr. 124:3; Rev. 1:12-18

Christ our majestic King is wonderful in His words of grace. He is also equipped with a sword to defend His people from the enemy. He is the One promised to Adam and Eve who would crush the head of the serpent. He has killed death and arose from the grave in victory. He has ascended to the right hand of God in glory. The sun shines with brilliance and fierce heat beyond our comprehension, but it is as nothing compared to the glory of Christ. Today He guards His people from every attempt of Satan to take them from the fold. He preserves His church in the midst of a world swarming with devils. When we see Him come again in judgment, we will stand in awe of His majesty and filled with joy at His coming. Sing the Psalter.

From the President of the Fed Board

Greeting young people and other readers. On behalf of the current Federation Board, I would like to introduce myself and the rest of the Board. The Fed Board—that is, the Federation Board of the Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies—is comprised of members elected by delegates at the annual Young People's Convention. We plan the singspirations and mass meetings, oversee the *Beacon Lights* and Scholarship Committee, manage financial matters, and guide churches hosting the convention. Through all this, our purpose is to serve the young people in these matters (all the members were young people themselves), guide these societies in development of faith and doctrine, and profess a united expression of our specific Protestant Reformed character. Our currently elected members are:

President:	Kyle Thompson
Vice-President:	Karl Dykstra
Secretary:	Emily Hoekstra
Assistant Secretary:	Leah Koole
Treasurer:	Eric Pols
Assistant Treasurer:	Eric Pastoor
Librarian:	Denise Kooienga
Spiritual Advisors:	Professor Engelsma Reverend Eriks
Youth Coordinator:	Justin Koole

Each member has his or her specific duties—the president and vice-president lead the meeting and often speak at various young people's functions; the secretary and her assistant record the meetings, make contacts, and provide general guidance; the treasurer and his assistant keep track of all financial matters and reports them to the board; the librarian is placed in charge of the literature we handle and plans the singspirations and mass meetings. In the meetings, we all discuss the varied matters and are given equal weight to vote on the issues. With the guidance of our spiritual advisors and the advice of our youth coordinator, we seek to uphold our purpose as stated in the Constitution of the Federation.

Through all our work, we appeal to God to serve Him and His purpose in our lives. Our meetings open and close with prayer, as we strive to stay focused on our greater goal to serve and glorify Him. What we do as the Federation Board is only one aspect of this greater goal, and it is one that we take seriously. May our work be guided by His hand.

In Christ,
Kyle Thompson, President ❖

*Back Row (left to right): Justin Koole, Eric Pastoor, Prof. Engelsma, Rev. Eriks, Eric Pols, Karl Dykstra
Front Row (left to right): Denise Kooienga, Leah Koole, Emily Hoekstra, Kyle Thompson*



Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 19

Manhattan, Montana

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's note: The Hankos spent three years in Manhattan, Montana, from January of 1945 to May of 1948. Rev. Hanko often spoke of these years as the happiest of his ministry. Looking back on these years, Rev. Hanko could see how the Lord used this time of peace and plenty to prepare him and his family for the troublesome time of the Split of 1953.

It was quite a venture, starting out into the unknown. We had heard about Montana, but we had never been anywhere near there. When I accepted the call to Manhattan, Montana the people in the Oak Lawn congregation felt I should not go on the road with the infamous Ford V8, which for years had given us nothing but grief. But this was still during World War II. Cars were scarce and beyond my financial means. Mrs. Boonsma of South Holland, the mother of Menno Smits, offered her son's car at whatever amount I could pay. So we obtained from her a Mercury for \$600, having sold the Ford for \$315. We had to obtain gas stamps from the government for the trip.¹

In January of 1945 all our household goods were crated and packed in a boxcar to be shipped to Manhattan. We ventured out on a bitterly cold day, so cold that all the windows were frosted with only a small opening in the windshield to see ahead. In fact, when we reached the bridge at the Mississippi, we passed it and had to turn back.

We stayed in Hull with the Andrew Cammengas over Sunday. Monday morning dawned with a raging blizzard. It looked as if we could not get away. But by noon the wind subsided, the sky cleared, and we decided to go on our way. That evening we arrived in Chamberlain, South Dakota. There was some snow blowing over the road, but none that interfered with traveling. The motel manager was surprised to see us and warned us that the

road west was so completely closed that we would not get away for days, and possibly weeks.

But the next morning the sun was shining, and we decided to continue on our way. All along the way water poured along the road. The sudden thaw had opened the roads in a short time. We were beyond Rapid City, South Dakota toward sunset and, since the weather was favorable, we decided to go on to Miles City, Montana. That stretch of road was more lonely than we realized. All the way we saw nothing but the white of newly fallen snow, and a lone white owl sweeping in front of the car lights. We were glad to reach Miles City, where we spent the night.

Here I will recount one incident in order to show how an anthill can become a mountain by gross exaggeration. As we were coming out of the restaurant in some western town, Herm, as kids will do, pushed Fred off the sidewalk. Fred got his foot wet and Herm got a scolding. As this incident was told and retold, it grew and grew, until finally Herm had pushed Fred into the river. Let us heed the warning not to exaggerate!

The next day we started up over a pass, which proved to be slippery because of the snow that had fallen during the night. In fact, as we approached a curve in the road, a car came toward us on our side of the road. Obviously the driver could not get his car on the right side. So we had no choice but to drive off the road into a snow bank, with all four wheels off the ground, not far from the edge of the cliff. As I debated what to do, a truck came around the curve. The driver saw our problem, stopped, hooked us to the back end of his truck and pulled us back onto the road. Since no damage was done, we could thankfully proceed on our way.

That evening we followed the map drawn for us by the consistory showing the route from Belgrade to Churchill and arrived at Henry Van Dyken's home at

supper time. There we had our first taste of venison. For a few days we stayed with Sam Van Dyken and his wife, but since it would take a few weeks before our furniture arrived, enough furniture was brought into the parsonage that we could stay there. Rev. Martin Gritters was there to install me. When our furniture finally arrived by train, we had to keep the doors of the parsonage open to unload the furniture. Our canary, which had survived the trip west, died from exposure to a draft.

Churchill was the loneliest, loveliest spot in America. Here were no paved streets, no sidewalks, no streetlights or shops but only a few houses, two churches, a Christian school and a cemetery. It was the center of a Dutch community consisting to a great extent of members of the two churches. Although it was often referred to as Manhattan, the town of Manhattan was ten miles away. It was so quiet at night that we sometimes awoke with a start. Imagine coming from the outskirts of Chicago, where the trains whistled past at 70 mph, where traffic could be heard all night long, and where planes cruised toward the airport. Now we found ourselves in a quiet valley where the mooing of a cow attracted attention.

For anyone coming from the hustle and bustle of a big city, it was quite an adjustment to live in a community where everyone moved at a leisurely pace. Of course, we soon learned that this was necessary, since we were living at an altitude almost a mile above sea level, about the same as Denver, Colorado.

Quickly running to the grocery store in Amsterdam, a nearby town, meant a discussion with the clerk about the weather or some recent happening in the valley. I came to Harry Leep one day when he was harvesting.² I asked him, "Busy, Harry?" He replied, "Busy, man, I can't keep two feet on the ground. Let's have a cup of coffee." When we left Montana we hoped to continue in that slow, steady stride, but failed.

Gallatin Valley, in which Churchill is located, is one of the most scenic places of America. The Bridger mountain range is to the east, the Spanish Peaks to the south, and another large mountain range, the Tobacco Root Mountains, to the west. Even the north had its mountains. This valley was known as "the Dutch settlement." Wednesday was shopping day in Bozeman for the Dutch settlement. Other communities also had their day. If you wanted to meet someone from the valley in Bozeman, you stood at the "Five and Dime Store" and

soon you would be drinking a cup of coffee with him in the store.

As long as we were in Montana, we never wearied of the beautiful mountains and the dazzling sunsets. Even the sunrises were interesting because we had to look to the western peaks to see that the sun had risen. All day long the mountains changed in appearance, since the sun cast various shadows on the mountainside. The view from the study window and the kitchen window was most inspiring.

In the winter, when the entire area was covered with white snow, it appeared as if a trip to the highest peak was but a half hour's walk. But one had better not try it. At night the big sky was arrayed with millions of stars, like Abraham's seed, the church. The largest stars seemed just beyond our reach.

But the setting sun was the most spectacular of all. Often the whole sky would be a brilliant display of pink and lavender as the shadows gradually climbed the Bridger and night began to fall. We were often amazed at the dazzling splendor of the setting sun and could but cry out, "My God, how great and glorious Thou art!" Is that the experience of the believer as his life's day here on earth has drawn to a close?

The winters were long in this high altitude. About the middle of September we received our first snow fall. The snow was wet and hung heavily on the trees, telling us that summer was past. Gradually the cold air from the north crept in on us. We experienced many clear, cold days. There were times in January and February that the temperature went down to 30 or 40 degrees below zero. In this cold weather there was no wind. It was worse when the temperature was around zero and there was a



Manhattan PRC, Churchill, Montana.

strong wind. That could be dangerous, because the wind could cause the cold to penetrate to one's lungs and cause lethargy or put one to sleep.

One night I had gone to teach a young people's catechism class in Bozeman. In the meantime the temperature dropped to slightly below zero. When I stepped out of my car, the wind almost took my breath away. After the class the people warned me not to venture out to Churchill in this weather. But the family was at home and would soon wonder why I did not return. So I made the trip, but, as it were, on the wings of prayer.

There were actually two seasons in Montana, a long winter and a short summer. We shoveled snow yet in May. About the second week of June the air was different. Summer had come. The days were warm, but the nights were chilly. In fact, a cloudy day was a chilly day. When the clouds hid the sun, it was immediately chilly. What compensated for the cold weather were the many bright, clear days with plenty of sunshine.

Those years in Manhattan were possibly the best years for Mom. The house was not too large, the family not too demanding. Peace and quiet reigned in the congregation, and we were treated royally. Financially, it seemed as if we had fallen into the lap of luxury, as all the members were doing well. It seems that Mom never felt better than during those years, even though she had to be careful for her heart in the high altitude. She enjoyed having folks stop in for a chat about news in the valley, or some happening in the outside world. She also enjoyed the trips that we made, taking in all the scenery and all the attractions of the far west. She made her weekly shopping trips to Bozeman, even stocking up on staple foods, in case the winter storms would prevent us from getting out for a week or more.

For me, it was a period of relaxation before the task that still awaited me.

I was called to Manhattan on a salary of \$2,500 and a cow. When I read the call letter, I thought the mention of a cow to be a bit of humor, but it did not take long before we all realized the value of having our own cow. True, we had to learn to milk her, and that twice a day, as much as possible at the same time each day. Fred, Elaine and I learned and took our turns milking. Fred did it the most. Elsie, as our cow was called, liked Elaine the best, because the cow had been accustomed to having a small girl milk her. Fred and I would occasionally get a sweep of her wet tail in our faces, but Elaine was spared that experience. The advantage of having our own cow was that we had plenty of milk, all the butter we needed,



Elsie the cow.

plenty of buttermilk, and last but not least, a yearling calf for meat, which was stored in a locker in Amsterdam. As long as we stayed in Manhattan, we were always furnished with a cow.

We came to the valley at a very opportune time, a time when the people in the valley were experiencing a transition from the horse to machinery, from binding the wheat in sheaves to the self-propelled combine. These were prosperous years; the price of wheat was high, and the farmers were taking advantage of it. Here, for the first time in our married life, we could afford to buy a refrigerator. We bought it on credit, but some members of the congregation made the final payments.

I should mention the irrigation system. There were dams in the mountains holding back the snow water in the spring and summer. There were also numerous irrigation ditches throughout the valley, bringing the farmer the water they so sorely needed. Our garden and lawn, our pasture and the church lawn were also on this irrigation system. At certain times the superintendent would come and ask whether we wanted water. Thereupon he would inform us that the water would be at our place at 6:30 a.m. That did not mean a minute before or a minute after, so we had to be prepared. If the proper gullies were not made, the water would flood and drown the entire garden and yard. So this little chore took some time, steering the water first in one direction and then in another, trying to give everything plenty of water without flooding.

I should also tell about the chinook. This is a westerly wind that comes in the winter, at any time of the day or night. We could go to bed with the temperature quite low and awaken in the morning to find that a great thaw was taking place. Often we would see the ditches flooded and water running over the road. We would drive the car through the water, carefully watching for mailboxes on each side of the road, and trying to stay on the gravel.

As a family we enjoyed reading a book about some scenic or interesting place in the mountains and then visiting the area. We visited Virginia City, a ghost town with all its relics, where the miners tried to make their fortune, and where the vigilantes finally had to bring law and order. Some rather hair-raising tales are told about those places.

Allie started school here in Manhattan. The school was just across the street, virtually next door. She soon learned that by raising her hand and wiggling in her seat she could escape a few minutes from the classroom. She did this so often that Fred wondered how it was possible that Allie could be looking into his room time and time again. And the teacher called to ask whether she had a problem. From the first day of school, she disliked it.

Elaine enjoyed the school because she found many friends there. She also had a lamb that had to be fed with a bottle at recess time, at noon and at night. The boys like to tease this lamb by holding out their hand to it, but when it came for them, they would spread their legs apart so that the lamb dashed through in disgust. The lamb liked to chase Allie. Allie soon learned that if she ran up the front porch the lamb would follow, but dared not come down again. The creature stood there bleating until someone came to help it down.

The lamb also liked to go for Mother, catching her behind the knees to make them buckle. One Saturday evening I was taking a bath, when it dawned on me that I failed to loosen Elsie so that she could go out to the pasture when she had her fill of hay. I asked Mother to go and do that little thing for me. When I had finished my bath, I went to sit in the living room. It was a while before I realized that Mother had not returned from the cow barn. I looked for my jacket, but she had put that on. Then my boots. She had them on. Finally I got to the cow barn to find her inside, patiently or impatiently waiting for someone to come. The lamb was outside the door, ready to buck the door shut every time she tried to open it. She was not exactly happy with the creature.

Before long the lamb knew how to break down the fence and run loose. One night it ran over to the CR

church where some meeting was to be held. As the people opened the doors of their cars, the lamb made a dive for them. The minister's son came over to ask if Elaine would please fetch her lamb away from the church. We decided that the time had come to bring the animal to Bozeman.

Young calves also liked to break loose. One day Fred had to chase a calf all over Churchill, from one yard to the next, from one pasture to the other. And these pastures had just been irrigated, which made running after a calf a sloppy task. Mind you, that calf even jumped over a cattle guard.

Each Saturday, Elaine went to Bozeman with two other girls for music lessons. One Saturday she complained of pain in her side. The result was that instead of taking her music lesson, she ended up in the hospital for an appendix operation.

Fred found his friends in Manhattan. The Van Dyken boys across the road liked adventure. They, along with Fred, made high stilts with which they liked to cross the nearby creek. In the winter he enjoyed snow skiing, which was such a common sport that some boys came to school on their skis behind a car. But his closest friend was the son of the CRC minister. They were always experimenting with something or other.

The Christian school was not all that might be desired. I could never quite figure out how the young people did so well with the education they received in the school. It seems that parents sent their children only as long as they could not be useful at home. Therefore, there were only two grades in the high school, the 9th and the 10th. The consistory had assured me before I accepted the call that there would soon be an 11th and 12th grade in the high school. It was with that in mind that I accepted the call to Manhattan, since Herm was already in high school. I soon discovered that this would not happen in the immediate future.

Herm spent a year with us there, and then we faced the question, What next? We asked him what his plans were for the future. If he intended to become a doctor or lawyer, we would keep him home. If he intended to become a minister or teacher, we would send him to Michigan for Christian instruction. He said, "Didn't you know that I intend to become a minister?" Although we had never talked about it, Fred piped up, "You thought I would be a minister, but that's not for me. I plan to be a school teacher."

So Herm went off to Michigan in the fall to stay with Uncle Bern and Aunt Luce Woudenberg and attend Grand Rapids Christian High. At the end of that year,

they preferred to be relieved of that responsibility, so Herm went in the fall to Uncle Pete and Aunt Nell Reitsma. Bernie and he traveled by bike together to school and to work.³ Having to break up the family in this manner was one of the deciding factors in my future decision to leave Manhattan. ❖

Endnotes

- ¹ The government was strictly rationing the use of gas due to WWII.
- ² Harry Leep was the father of Bill Leep of Holland PRC.
- ³ Bernie refers to Rev. Bernard Woudenberg, Herm's first cousin.

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

First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, MI Winter Conference 2007

“The Antithesis: Godly Living in Ungodly Times”

Jan. 12: “Antithetical in a Technological Age”

Speaker: Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Jan. 19: “Antithetical in an Age of Covetousness”

Speaker: Rev. Garrett Eriks

Jan. 26: “Antithetical in an Age of Great Immorality”

Speaker: Professor Herman Hanko

All three dates are Fridays. Speeches will begin at 7:30 p.m. and refreshments and fellowship will follow each speech, D.V. Tapes of the lectures will be available upon request.

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State Reformed Church of Sleen

by J. P. deKlerk

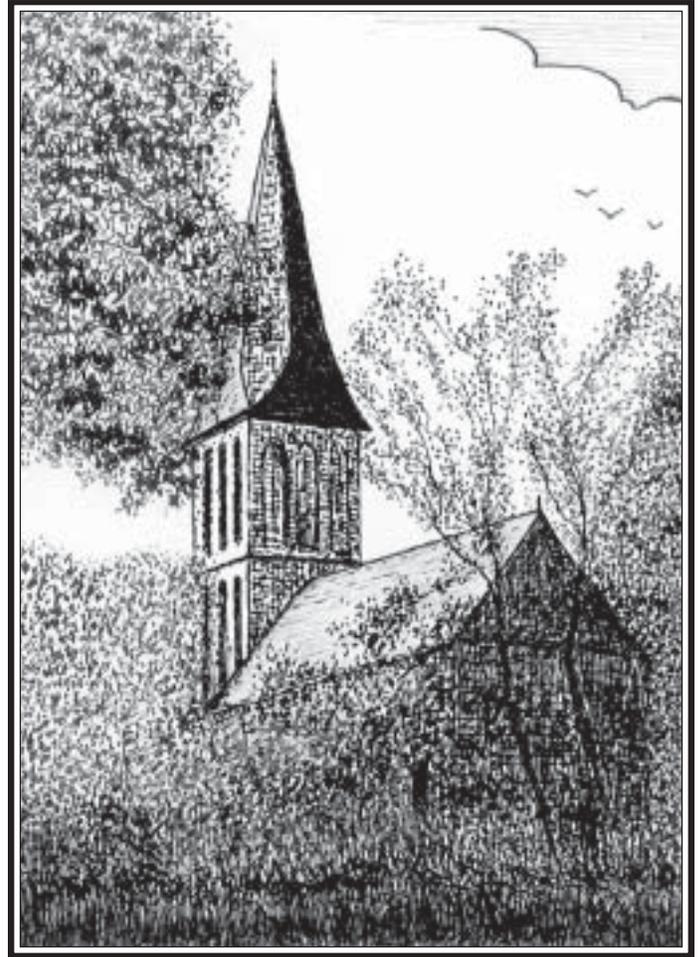
In the Southeast corner of the Dutch province of Drenthe there is a typical farm village, with many retired people also living there. The name is Sleen.

In the center stands this State Reformed church, which was built in 1480. In the summer, tourists in the area often come to see and photograph it.

The village is surrounded by forests and an area known as the “Ellertsveld” (much heather) and another with the name “Sleenerzand” (juniper berry bushes). There is also an open-air museum which demonstrates that many centuries ago this was actually a coastal village.

Statistically, a great majority of the population is of the Reformed faith. ❖

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



Reprint

Christian Living

by Rev. R. Veldman

Never does the difference between the church and the world, the Christian and the unbeliever, reveal itself more strikingly than it does on New Years Eve, the night of December 31. In its vain and foolish attempt to banish from its mind all thoughts of the end and in its anticipation of a new year wherein it can pursue the things of this present time, the world laughs and sings, drinks and dances, riots and revels as it does at no other time. The Christian, on the other hand, desires to see things as they are, and, e'er the tolling

bells and striking clocks all over the world announce the passing of another year, he pauses a moment to reflect, to meditate, and to ask himself: Where am I going?

Another year of our brief lives has sped by with amazing swiftness. Now that it is past, where did it go—all those months and weeks and days and hours? It seems but such a short time ago that it was still 1945. How we are reminded of the end of our entire lives and of all things! “Little children, it is the last hour.”

How fitting that for us this day should come in the dead of winter! Gone is the springtime with its promise of life and growth—gone the summer with its brightness and warmth and wealth of outdoor activities—gone the crisp and colorful autumn. It is December and winter—and all is cold, still, dead. So appropriate, it seems!

How are we reminded of the simple but most significant words of the author of Psalm 90, “It is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

That truer words have never been spoken is certainly the testimony of all experience, is it not? And it is the message of Scripture throughout. “As a sleep” is the life of man. “Like the tender grass which today flourishes and tomorrow is no more.” Spent are our years “as a tale that is told.”

Man soon yields up his fleeting breath,
Before the swelling tide of death;
Like transient sleep his seasons pass,
His life is like the tender grass,
Luxuriant ‘neath the morning sun,
And withered e’er the day is done.

Young people, don’t let the fact, that you are still youthful and full of hope and anticipation and plans for the future, blind you for this reality. Psalm 103 puts it very bluntly:

So man is quickly swept away
Before the blast of death.

“We fly away.” “As a dream when one awaketh.” Suddenly, just when is determined by God alone, we appear upon the stage of this life. For a few brief years, 70 if we be strong, 80 at most, we play our part in the drama of life. Then just as suddenly we disappear from life’s stage—only a memory to them who remain. Whatever be men’s experiences in life, and all are different—the end for all is the same. And ah, having reached that end, and looking back, it was not long—as a shadow that declineth. And then—then it is cut off. For a brief moment our place is vacant and we are missed and mourned by a circle ever so small. Then the vacancy is filled in, as the shifting sands on the beach speedily fill in the holes our children love to make, and presently even our memory has faded from the earth. The shifting sands of time remove every trace of our ever having lived on this earth. That is life. Don’t dare to forget it! “As a dream....”

Yet, life is no dream, but terrible reality. Remember that too. It is not thus, that we live our life on this earth, and having reached its end have nothing more to do with it. This life, however brief and transient, has its purpose. It is a preparation for eternity. Consequently, every mo-

ment has its value with a view to that eternity. The Lord causes us to be born; gives us our place in the world; endows us with gifts and talents, money and goods, wife and children, faculties and time and opportunities; all in order that with all this we should serve and glorify our Maker. Wherefore, the stupendous fact is, that we have never lived one moment in vain. From a certain point of view we may say: we take nothing along with us, but leave everything behind. In another way, however, we leave nothing behind, but take everything along. Life is real! It may seem vain, but it isn’t! Every moment adds to the load I carry with me into eternity.

“We fly away.” Where to? Always into the future, my friends, dark and mysterious to us, but known to God, because He determined it for us from all eternity. Where to? To death and the grave. Precisely when we shall meet these face to face God only knows. It may be today. But this is certain: always the way leads to the grave. Somewhere on this earth is that spot, where one day our remains be lowered into the ground, and with incredible speed we are hastening to keep our rendezvous with that grave. Where to? To the judgment seat of Christ. There the final separation will take place between the sheep and the goats. Where to? To our eternal destination. That will be the end of the road. Either-or: eternal glory or eternal desolation.

Where to? In last analysis that depends on our relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else matters. Character, or works, or knowledge, or education, or preeminence in natural matters, will not determine our place in eternity. Those who perish are lost because they stand outside of Christ. Those who are saved inherit eternal life because they have Christ for their Saviour and Lord. And possessing that Christ, by faith, there is nothing to fear, neither life nor death, neither the present nor the future, neither time nor eternity. But the wicked, saith my God, have no peace.

Christian friends, in the light of all this, “what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!”

Shall we now live as the ungodly fool, who seeks only the present? His motto is: let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. He thinks of no eternity and considers no God—not today—tomorrow perhaps. Life for him is nothing else than the satisfaction of the flesh.

God forbid! Let us be wise and careful. Let us “buy out the time, whereas the days are evil.” Let us live here below as in the midst of things that mean nothing as far

as this life is concerned, but that mean everything with a view to the life to come. And let us heed the exhortations of Scripture. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:14). "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh" (Mark 3:35). "But the

end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober. and watch unto prayer" (I Peter 4:7). "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." ❖

Reprinted from December 1946.

Church News

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:

Christiana Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Chesebro—Byron Center, MI
Nathaniel James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lehrman—First, MI
Isaac Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Kortz—First, MI
David James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Langerak—Hope, MI
Jayda Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave VanEgdom—Hull, IA
Neil, son of Mr. & Mrs. Hilgard Goosen—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN
Charlotte Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Linker—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN
Addison Lael, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Lenting—Peace, IL
Isaac Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Darin Gritters—Redlands, CA
Paige Alexa, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Beute—Southeast, MI
David James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Boverhof—South Holland, IL
Adult baptism was administered to Jacob Kwikkel—Hull, IA

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. Justin Kamps and Miss Teresa Kamps—Southwest, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

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

Proverbs 22:6

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

Douglas Stewart—Ballymena, N Ireland
Rhonda Boer—Byron Center, MI
Jessica Spriensma—Doon, IA
John Huizing—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Leah Schut—Georgetown, MI
Caleb Kamps—Grandville, MI
Katelyn Kamps—Grandville, MI
Courtney Rus—Grandville, MI
Nate Bodbyl—Grandville, MI
Rosie Bodbyl—Grandville, MI
Randy Kooiman—Grandville, MI
Kelly Meulenbergh—Grandville, MI
Rachel Windemuller—Holland, MI
Emily Wassink—Holland, MI
Katherine Peterson—Hope, MI
Holly Dams—Hudsonville, MI
Mitchell Feenstra—Hull, IA
Amanda Korver—Hull, IA
Lindsey Vink—Hull, IA
Kim DeVries—Southeast, MI
Jeff DeVries—Southwest, MI
Ross Kaiser—Southwest, MI
Rosanne Kamps—Southwest, MI
Jon Kuiper—Southwest, MI
Kristen Looyenga—Southwest, MI
Tedd VanSolkema—Southwest, MI

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

Martin Luther (4):

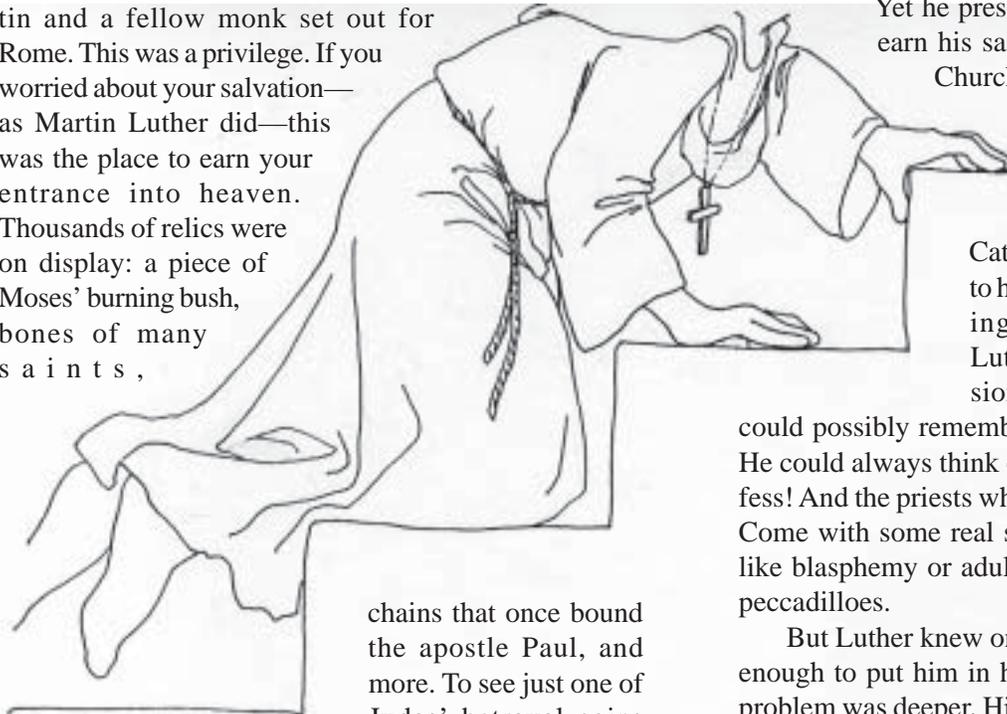
A Good Monk

... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

The Augustinian monks had a matter to settle in Rome. Some monks would have to go there. But who should they send? Martin Luther for one. He's a good monk.

So in 1510 from Erfurt, Germany, Martin and a fellow monk set out for Rome. This was a privilege. If you worried about your salvation—as Martin Luther did—this was the place to earn your entrance into heaven. Thousands of relics were on display: a piece of Moses' burning bush, bones of many s a i n t s ,



chains that once bound the apostle Paul, and more. To see just one of Judas' betrayal coins would earn 1,400 years off purgatory. Crawling up the stairs of the *Scala Sancta* (the same stairs Jesus supposedly climbed to Pilate's palace) would release a soul from purgatory altogether. Yes, Rome was the place to be.

Luther took advantage of it all. Besides attending to the business of the monks, he wasted not one moment to visit every relic and climb the *Scala Sancta*. He even kissed each step on the way up for good measure, hoping to release Grandpa Heine from purgatory's flames. "Who knows whether it is so?" the young monk said to himself at the top.

Indeed, who knows? Popes added indulgences at their convenience. One relic was worth 2,000 years off purgatory, while others spared 4,000 years. But none of this came from Scripture. On top of that, the lives of the clergy, including the pope's, was anything but godly.

Luther came back to Erfurt with no more assurance than before. Rome was a great disappointment.

Yet he pressed on in his monkery. He must earn his salvation somehow! The Catholic Church had other ways to do it.

Confess your sins—every one of them—and you'll be forgiven.

Catholic priests sit in small booths to hear such confessions without seeing the one confessing. Martin Luther spent hours at the confessional booth, listing every sin he

could possibly remember. Yet he left still discouraged. He could always think of one more sin he failed to confess! And the priests who listened to him became weary. Come with some real sins to tell us, they complained, like blasphemy or adultery, and not these insignificant peccadilloes.

But Luther knew one sin, no matter how small, was enough to put him in hell. In fact, he began to see his problem was deeper. His very nature was sinful and corrupt. The problem wasn't just his sin—it was himself! Luther was beginning to learn important truths.

Unscramble the words of Eph. 2:3b below:

"...DNA REEW YB TEARUN HET DHERNCLI FO THRAW, VEEN SA SETOHR."

"... _____
_____, _____."

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

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"Living Sacrifices of Thankfulness"

Romans 12: 1-2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

August 13 - 17, 2007

Temptation

We must put on the whole armor of God, seeking grace to withstand temptation; not conforming to, but rather standing fast in a corrupt world.

Prayer

Prayer is the chief part of thankfulness.

Victory in Christ

Our Christian walk must be as shining lights and a godly witness in this corrupt world.

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