
Beacon

August/September
2007

Volume LXVI
Number 8

Lights

*“Let not then your good be evil spoken of:
For the kingdom of God is not meat and
drink; but righteousness, and peace, and
joy in the Holy Ghost.”*

Romans 14: 16-17

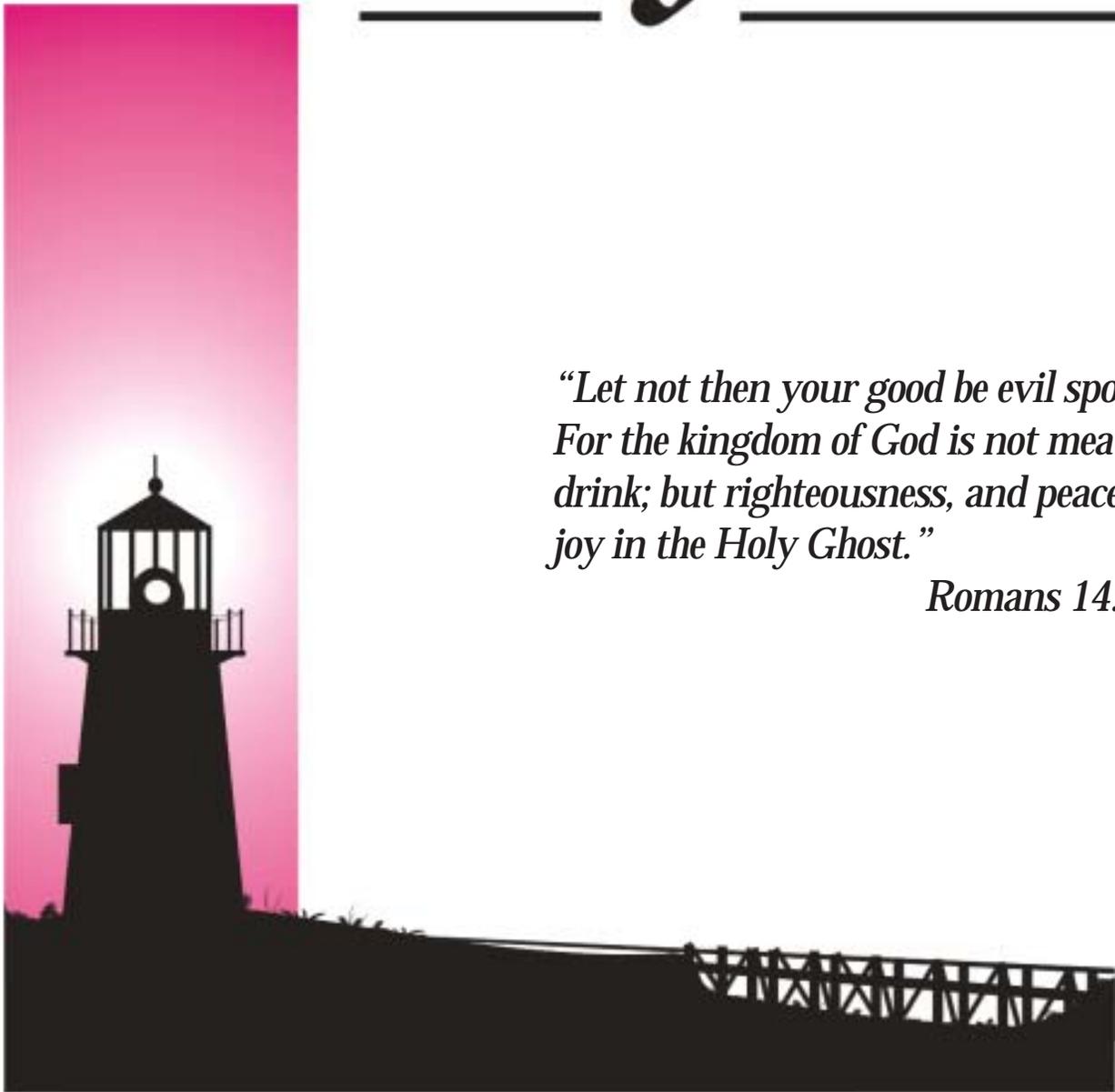


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Beacon Lights is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies. Subscription price is \$10.00. Please send all correspondence, address changes, subscriptions, and article submissions to the business office.

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Editorial

The Teachers Are Ready, Are You?

by John Huizenga



This past summer about eighty people, mainly teachers and board members of our schools, attended and participated in a seminar entitled “The Kingdom of God and the Protestant Reformed Christian School.” The seminar was held June 21-22 at Faith PRC in Hudsonville MI. Each day began with a lengthy lecture by Professor Engelsma and the lectures were followed up with time for questions and answers, and then moderated discussion groups. We were impressed, once again, with the preciousness of the heritage that God has entrusted to us. We were motivated to get into the classrooms again and take up the calling to train up the children to be citizens of a kingdom that is very strange to the world, but glorious in the heart of God’s children.

It is not my goal in this editorial to summarize everything that we learned at the seminar. You can be sure to read more of it in the publication of our school federation, *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. I would like to encourage you to obtain recordings of the seminar, get a subscription to *Perspectives* (Protestant Reformed Teachers’ Institute, 1401 Ferndale Avenue, SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534 or email the editorial office at tbergman@altelco.net), read the pamphlets and books that were used in the seminar, and do all you can to get a clear biblical understanding of the kingdom of God.

There are many different ideas about the kingdom of God, and each view has a powerful influence on the training of children in the school; and the training of children in the schools is the most powerful way to prepare citizens for the kingdom. The public schools prepare children to serve the life and glory of man, which is the kingdom of Satan. If God is establishing a kingdom within the world, then the children will be trained much like those in the public school but with the goal to transform this world into a Christian kingdom.

Do you have a clear understanding of the kingdom of God and how it relates to life in this world? Many of the teachers in our schools have been taken to God's word to see there what the kingdom of God is and what is required of teachers. But the teachers cannot stand alone. They need a school board that stands with them with the same understanding of the grand kingdom in which we serve as friend servants of God. They need parents who stand with them. Nothing bogs down board meetings, education meetings, and parent-teacher conferences with clouds of anger and fighting more than the presence of different views of the kingdom of God.

Your understanding of, love for, and dedication to the kingdom of God will dictate your whole world-and-life view. I suppose it is possible to have a proper head knowledge of the kingdom of God, but what is in your heart, your "world-and-life view," will be exposed when you are faced with some of the questions of life and need to grapple with reasons for your decisions. When we are united with a clear understanding of the kingdom of God, when we share a common "world-and-life view," then we are able to work through the difficult questions relating to our schools, our work, our home life, our church life, etc.

I am very thankful for the opportunity that many who are involved in the rearing of our children were able to partake of at the seminar. I am confident that every effort will be made to make recordings and literature available to everyone. I want to encourage the young people to study the topic of the kingdom of God and search the Scriptures so that you will be ready to work with the covenant heritage of our children and serve God in His kingdom. ❖

Story Time

Jane

by Ellen Mancusi

Chapter 1

Twelve-year-old Jane Hanson scanned the horizon for a fringe of land. They had been traveling on the *Swift One* for five months now. It wouldn't be long now until they would land in Charles Town's harbour. Father would be waiting for them and they would move into the beautiful mansion Father had built. Jane knew that the year was 1882 and it was early summer, which meant that it was June, but she had lost track of the dates.

"Are you watching for land?" asked a voice at her elbow. Jane turned and saw Luke, her little brother, standing at her elbow.

"Yes," she answered. "I don't see it, though." She squinted, but still didn't see anything but miles of water. About two days ago, a sailor had warned them that land would soon be seen. He also said that he or another sailor would tell them if land was spotted.

"I don't either," he agreed.

"How's Mother?" she asked. Mother had been sea-sick ever since they left London, England. Jane and Luke had included her in their prayers, both at bedtime and when they ate their daily meals. One reason why they had to move was because Father had gotten a job in

Charles Town. Another reason was because Jack and Elizabeth, the twins, had kept getting the flu.

“Mother’s doing fine,” he answered. “She needs your help.”

Jane sighed. She hardly had any free time to play with her friend, Catherine. Catherine had a room next to where they were living on the ship. Slowly, she scuffled to their room.

Mother was laying in her bed, her face as white as the white sheets on her bed. Even though it was dim, Jane could make out the figures of Jack and Elizabeth playing on the floor with their toys.

“Are you all right?” she asked, her voice full of concern.

“I-I guess I’m all right.” Mother said weakly.

“Did you need anything?” she asked.

“Just take care of Jack and Elizabeth.” Mother said.

Jane picked up the babies and their toys, and with them under her arm, she carried them to where Catherine was living. She knocked, and when Catherine answered, she asked to play.

“All right,” said Catherine.

But just as she said it, there was a cry from the crow’s nest!

Chapter 2

“Land! Land!”

Everyone rushed to the deck. Sure enough, Jane could see along the horizon a long strip of land. Quickly, she breathed a prayer of thanksgiving that her family along with everyone else could make it there safely.

Jane grabbed the twins and carried them downstairs to where her mother still lay in bed.

“Mother?” she asked.

“Yes, dear?” she asked.

“Land was spotted. Now we needn’t have to live on this horrid ship again!”

“Oh, good!” sighed Mother.

“I’ll pack all the things we brought,” Jane offered.

“That would be very nice,” said Mother.

As Jane packed all the things they had brought, she wondered what Charles Town would be like. What if Jack and Elizabeth would get sick again? Then she would have to go on that horrid ship again and they would have to move away from *more* of her friends. Surely she didn’t want *that* to happen *again!* Wasn’t moving away once enough?

Jane pulled the big black bag out from under the bunk. She started folding dresses, petticoats, stockings,

shirts, and breeches and placing them neatly in the sack. However, she couldn’t fit the shoes inside!

“Mother?” she asked.

“Yes?”

“I can’t fit all our things in this bag!”

“Look under the bunk, dear. There are more.”

“All right.”

Jane tucked up the folds of her old, cotton house dress, as not to get it dirty. Then, she looked under the bunk. Sure enough, there were about four more. She dragged them out and started filling them. One was just big enough to fit their shoes inside. Another was used for her sampler as well as Mother’s and the books and toys. The third was used for their special ornaments and decorations.

Just as she turned around to tell Mother that she was finished, there was a knock on the door!

Chapter 3

Jane opened the door. “Yes?” she asked.

“A sailor told me that we are going to set anchor in about 20 minutes!” said Catherine excitedly.

“Oh! That’s a relief!” cried Jane.

“What’s a relief?” asked a voice behind her.

Jane whirled around and there, right behind her stood Luke. “What’s a relief?” he repeated.

“We’re going to set anchor in about 20 minutes!” cried Jane.

“I can hardly wait! I’ll go tell Mother!”

“I’d better go help Mother with the twins,” Jane said apologetically, “but I’ll see you in Charles Town.”

“Oh, yes,” answered Catherine. “Good day.”

“Good day to you, too,” Jane replied.

Jane went into their room, where Luke was talking a mile a minute to Mother. Even though Luke was shy and barely talked to strangers, he made up for it by talking a *ton* at home! Jane walked over to Mother and started cleansing her face with cold water with the rag in the bowl of cold water on the table next to her. A little color came back into her cheeks.

“Thank you, dear.” She murmured, “That feels much better.”

Jane smiled, relieved. “That’s good,” she said. Then she added, “Luke, can you take care of the twins for me, please? I need to help Mother.”

Luke instantly agreed, and went off to play with the twins in the other room. Jane had strung a curtain through their large cabin so they would have privacy in their room. Then she turned to Mother and asked, “Would you like it if I read the Bible to you?”

“Of course.” She answered.
Opening the small Bible, Jane started to read,

*“Make a joyful noise unto
The Lord, all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness:
Come before his presence with singing
Know ye that the Lord he is God:
It is he that made us,
And not we ourselves;
We are his people,
And the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Be thankful unto him,
And bless his name.
For the Lord is good;
His mercy is everlasting;
And his truth endureth to all generations.”*

Psalm 100

When she had finished, she looked at Mother. Mother smiled. Jane smiled back. “Did Luke tell you we’re going to set anchor in about five minutes?” Jane quietly asked Mother.

“He was talking so fast I could barely understand what he said!” answered Mother.

“Do you feel any better?” Jane changed the subject.

“I am feeling *much* better!” declared Mother.

“Good. Do you feel strong enough to get out of bed and walk?”

“Yes.” Mother answered.

“Try walking around the room.”

Mother started to hobble around the room. She turned and smiled awkwardly at Jane. Jane smiled back.

Suddenly there was another knock on the door.

Chapter 4

Jane answered it. This time it was a sailor. Jane opened the door wider. “Yes?” she inquired, “Do come in.”

Ignoring Jane’s offer, the sailor said gruffly, “I came to tell you we have set anchor in Charles Town’s harbor. It is time to leave the ship.”

“Thank you.” Jane said, politely.

The sailor turned, and without a word, left the cabin. Jane closed the door and told Mother what he had said. Mother was now able to get out of bed and walk around the cabin freely as she liked without any help.

Soon everyone was on the deck, watching as the ship was pulled onto the land and the board lay so they could walk off onto land. Crowds were milling around. As Jane walked off of the ship, she scanned the crowds for Father. He was nowhere in sight. The only person that was making her way toward them was an older woman with silvery hair pulled tightly into a bun.

“Hello,” she said crisply. “My name is Miss Floss. I have been sent by Mr. Hanson to fetch you. I am the housekeeper and hope you like it here in Charles Town. Come, there is a carriage waiting. We wouldn’t want it to sit, waiting!

As they got into the carriage, Luke whispered to Jane, “She’s so chubby it looks like she stuffed red hot apples up her cheeks!”

Jane giggled. Even though Luke was usually quiet, he could be very funny. He was always cheering people up with his funny ways.

Jane turned and looked out the window. She watched the houses and shops whiz by. Some houses were beautiful and large. Others were sort of small and ugly. There were many taverns and shops, also. Children played in the streets, but at the sight of the carriage, they scampered off to watch it pass.

“*There must be a lot of rich people living here,*” Jane thought. “*But, of course, there are also poor people living here.*”

It was very hot in Charles Town, as Miss Floss had said, and Jane held her parasol to block the sun out of her face.

Luke poked her. “Which house do you think is ours?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” Jane whispered back.

She turned back to the window and watched the houses whiz by. Again she wondered which house would be theirs.

Finally the carriage stopped and Father’s chauffeur held out his hand to help them down. With Jane carrying Elizabeth and Luke carrying Jack at their heels, he escorted Mother to the house. As they walked up the front walk, Jane studied their mansion. Yes, she decided, it was a beautiful house. It was a tall, large, brick mansion with a shingled roof and big bay windows looking out onto the cobblestone street. Miss Floss said there was even a courtyard, with shrubs growing around the walls. There were two stone benches at each end. One bench had a large lilac tree growing behind it, and Jane soon found out that that would be her favorite place to go

when she wanted privacy. In the very center was a large fountain. There were rose bushes growing around it.

After the tour of the house was over, and Jane was able to have privacy in her room, she tried to decide on what to wear instead of the old, ugly cotton house dress she was wearing now. She'd had to wear it; else if she wore her silk dresses, she would soil them. She did not want *that* to happen, because Mother would probably get so angry, blue smoke would come out of her ears! Quickly, she started to unpack her things that she had brought to Charles Town. It took about 30 minutes, but finally she was finished. Then, she got up walked to her closet, and tried to decide what to wear. She finally decided on wearing the robin's egg blue silk dress. Quickly, she changed into the dress, white stockings, and the matching blue slippers. Then, she hurried downstairs to meet her father.

Chapter 5

Father was a handsome man with a red wig and firm set jaw. After everyone had come down, there was a big welcome and hugging and kissing. Then the family talked until Miss Floss came in and announced that dinner was ready to be served.

As soon as everyone was seated and the food was served, and Father cleared his throat, he started to pray. He thanked God for the safe trip that Luke, Jane, Jack, Elizabeth, and Mother could have a safe trip across the ocean to Charles Town. He also asked a blessing on the food that had been prepared for them, that it could nourish their bodies.

After he said "Amen," everyone started to eat. After eating the stale and worm filled food on the ship, the food tasted *so good!* There was a stuffed turkey, mashed potatoes (with gravy, of course), corn, cold glasses of milk and for dessert, a large cake. It was all so delicious and Jane stuffed herself. Then there was the Bible reading, and then prayer.

After dinner, all went into the parlor. Everyone went into the parlor, and sat down to enjoy a warm evening. Jane and Luke sat on a large, overstuffed sofa, and Mother and Father each sat in a velvet settee. There was a fire in the fireplace, and it cast shadows dancing across the room and bouncing off the walls. Its light gleamed on Mother's hair, and made her cheeks turn a bright pink. She was wearing a red silk dress, the color of a red apple, and matching slippers. A pearl choker was nestled at her throat. Father was wearing a green waistcoat and matching green breeches. He wore black shoes with polished brass buckles. Luke and Jack wore pretty much the same

thing, except Luke's was blue with a gold braid running down the middle, and Jack were wearing a red one. Elizabeth was wearing a pink silk dress with little lace frills and matching slippers.

Jane sighed and turned back to her sampler. It was supposed to have her name in the center with a spray of flowers framing it, but so far, she hadn't really gotten very far yet. Instead of the needle going into the fabric like it was supposed to, it seemed to always find its way into her finger.

She glanced at Luke. He was studying his *Mc Guffy's Reader*, even though he was seven, was determined to get ahead of his class. His eyes had begun to droop, and he looked tired. It was then that Jane realized that she was also tired. She glanced over at the twins, who were sleeping on Father's lap.

Finally, Mother said, "Bedtime! It has been a big day and we should all get some rest. Now, march!"

Jane and Luke hobbled sleepily upstairs, changed into their nightclothes, and hurried into their beds. Then they pulled the covers up to their chins.

As Jane drifted off to sleep, she listened to the twins' heavy breathing. It sounded strange, nothing like the soft breathing that had lulled Jane to sleep on the ship. But lately, their breathing *had* begun to sound strange and raspy on their last few nights on the ship. But now, Jane was so tired that she didn't even think about it. She felt herself drifting off to sleep.

The next morning, Jane was awakened by a shrill scream and then uncontrollable sobbing.

Chapter 6

Quickly, Jane padded to the twins' room and peeked into their cradles. What she saw was enough to make her scream and cry, also. The twins had gotten the disease that could easily spread throughout the town. It could cause *quarantine*. Quarantine was when everyone had to stay in his own house for 40 days until the disease was over.

The twins were both as pale as ghosts, and red spots covered their bodies. From the looks of it, it looked like they'd gotten small pocks. Their breathing was even raspier than it had been on the night before.

Quickly, she fled to her room, where she threw herself onto her bed and wept until Mother came into her room. For a while, she just stroked her hair and let her cry, but after about five minutes, told her to wash her face in cold water, and to hurry up and get dressed. Then she walked out of the room to check on the twins and to

bathe their faces in cold water so they wouldn't feel so hot.

Finally, Jane got up, washed her face in cold water, and got dressed. This time she didn't wear as fancy a dress as she had yesterday night to dinner. This time, she just chose a simple green silk with fewer frills. The only lace was around the sleeves. Then she went downstairs to eat breakfast.

After breakfast, Jane went to the courtyard to sort out her thoughts. Right now, they were all in a jumble. She sat in her favorite place under the lilac tree. She sat there for awhile and watched the fountain spurt out water and go into the little pool around it.

Finally, she stood up and went inside to her room.

Just as she reached her room, she nearly ran into Miss Floss, who had been making beds and bringing yesterday's laundry downstairs to wash.

"Why, Miss Hanson!" she exclaimed shrilly. "I do believe you must be more careful!"

"I-I'm sorry, she stammered. "I-I've got so many things on my mind that..."

"It's the twins, isn't it?" cut in Miss Floss, "Well all we can do is hope and pray."

Jane nodded and hurried to the courtyard. There, she tried to work on her sampler but found that she couldn't concentrate. She hurried back inside to talk to her father.

She almost ran back to the house but slowed her step as she came inside. Jane was looking at the floor but just as she looked up, she was startled to see Miss Floss, broom in hand, with her ear to the door!

Chapter 7

When she saw Jane, she cried shrilly, "Why Miss Hanson! Young ladies do *not* run in the house!"

Jane was about to protest that she wasn't, but Miss Floss cried, "And don't sass me either! That is *not* what proper young ladies do!" With that, she went back to furiously sweeping the foyer.

Jane knocked on the door and when Father said to enter she walked inside. Father had been talking with Charles Town's doctor and both looked up when Jane entered. All of a sudden Jane felt shy. She started to stammer as she always did when scared or sad.

"F-father," she asked. "W-will the t-twins b-be all right?"

Father glanced at the doctor. He nodded. Jane thought that meant that the twins would be fine.

"Thank you," she murmured, and almost skipped out the door.

About a week later, the twins were better. They had only a little bit of a fever, but soon they would be much better. The doctor still came to check on them, but about four days later, they were perfectly fine. Jane, Luke, Father, and Mother were all happy. The twins had not died! Nobody else had gotten the sickness! Jane breathed a prayer of thanksgiving to God. There wouldn't be quarantine! ❖

Ellen is a 2006-7 5th Grade student at South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School. She wrote this story as an assignment for Mr. Mike Feenstra.

Book Review

The Implications of Public Confession

A Good Book Made Available for a Good Price from *Beacon Lights*.

As you consider making confession of faith, or even if you have, this handy little book is a very helpful read. It would make an excellent discussion resource for part of your Young People's meetings. Originally reprinted in 1989 by the Federation of Prot-

estant Reformed Young People's Societies, *Beacon Lights* continues to make this book available for \$4.00. To place an order, please contact the business office at 920-326-6186 or editor@beaconlights.org. Mail your payment of \$4.00 per copy to Beacon Lights, 621 Will-

iams St., Randolph WI, 53956. What follows is a copy of the front cover, the preface, and the text of the back cover.

PREFACE

In the past few years, a couple of people approached the editor of the *Beacon Lights* with the idea of reprinting Abraham Kuyper's book *Implications of Public Confession*. The staff quickly agreed to reprint the book and search was made to determine what copyrights still existed on the book. Through the help of a few friends, it was determined that the copyrights on the book had expired, which meant that the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies was free to reprint the book. As far as can be determined, the sixth edition in 1934 was the last printing of the book. The Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies is therefore happy to provide this excellent work for reading and study by our churches and by our young people.

The main reason for reprinting this excellent work is to provide our young people who will make or who have made public confession of faith with reading and study material on the implications of making public confession in our churches. By reading and studying this book our young people will be made more aware of the responsibilities that become theirs upon confession of their faith. By the encouraging words of Abraham Kuyper, those who make confession of faith will appreciate even more the Reformed faith to which they have confessed agreement.

As Abraham Kuyper says, ... Now she (your church, DH) is willing to admit you to the holy supper, to let you take your place at the Lord's table with the other members, provided that you are willing to confess that their confession is yours....” And also, “Bring that confession to the congregation of believers, and begin to fight one identical warfare with them. They too have nothing of which to boast in themselves. ... God is all the praise and honor.”

David Harbach editor, *Beacon Lights*

Text of the back cover

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Abraham Kuyper was born in the Netherlands. He was a Modernist when he assumed his first charge, but was led, through the influence and prayers of a saintly woman in his congregation, to see that he was feeding his people husks.

He saw the truth of salvation through the blood of Christ and responded by preaching the Gospel with unusual power. Abraham Kuyper was an outstanding theologian, famous particularly for his Stone lectures. He led the Dutch political party and was prime minister of the Netherlands.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Here is a stimulating volume for young people of Reformed persuasion answering the disturbing question, “What is expected of me after I make confession of faith?” Interestingly written and easily understood, this book gives adequate answer to that perplexing question. In a challenging way, Dr. Kuyper reveals how full Christian life does not end but begins with confession of Christ as a personal Savior.

Not only should young people find this book valuable but also Christian parents and church officials will find it desirable for answering questions such as these:

Why should confession of faith be made publicly?

Who should make confession of faith?

Should training be given in preparation for this confession?

Of what should the preparation consist?

Is Catechism necessary?

Is it necessary to examine candidates for Confession?

What is the relation between confession and being received into the church?

This excellent and worthwhile volume will prove itself indispensable indeed—and will assure interested young people all the facts and “implications of public confession.” An ideal gift book (see presentation page). ❖



A Precious Jewel

by Rev. John A. Heys

They were neighbors.

In fact, they had lived next door to each other for over forty years.

It could be said that they got along quite well, even during those years when the children did the usual damage to lawns and gardens—and to an occasional window. They settled the quarrels of their children without becoming personally involved. Their respective pets, a dog and a cat, had various exciting confrontations; yet this did not spill over to build the barrier between them. In fact, neither one of them at any time even thought of building some kind of fence between their yards.

They did, however, carry on all these years a verbal battle—let us call it a controversy—in which neither one would budge an inch, and in which neither one could be said to have bested the other and to have run away with the victory.

You see, Mr. Noel was a science teacher in the local high school. He had a keen mind, was well-educated, and was wholly dedicated to his work. He lived in the fifteen-room house which his father had built; and he was living there as a college student when Mr. Adams bought the smaller house next door and moved in with his blushing bride. This being a university city, Mr. Noel was at home all through his years of education. And though his father died the year before Mr. Adams moved in next door, there was plenty of money for the full education of this only child. Upon finishing his education and upon obtaining this teaching position, Mr. Noel moved in with his attractive bride into the home where he had been living all these years with his mother. After all, a fifteen-room house of this type could accommodate three conveniently and give privacy. Mrs. Noel, Sr., died shortly after the second birthday of the first grandchild. And now Noel and Adams were family men living next door to each other.

Mr. Adams was a certified public accountant, a man quick with numbers, but a man also quick with his mind in other matters, possessing a clear and logical mind. He

had always wanted to go to law school; and his ambition had been that of a trial lawyer. But there never were funds to make this possible; and he settled for his present position. He did delight in debate and did not hesitate to vie with his educated neighbor in this verbal battle, or contest, whatever you want to call it. In fact, they both seemed to enjoy these sessions of controversy, which they kept on a high level, never parting with any harsh words or ridicule of each other.

We must point out, however, that there was a tremendously important difference between these two men. Mr. Adams was a believer, and for years he served in an office in the church across the street and halfway up the block on the corner. He was not just a member. He was a very active and zealous member, never ashamed of defending the position of his church. Mr. Noel was an unbeliever and had never in his life entered a church to hear as much as a Sunday School lesson. His god was science; and he worshipped his god with a fervent devotion. His Sundays were spent out in the field, on some scientific research, or in sports. He was not a lazy man who would use that day to lie around and waste time. He was far too energetic for that.

Their verbal battlefield almost always was Darwinism, evolution, the origin of this world, and its development. But there was no victor in this “battle,” and really could not be because they could not agree on a common set of rules. Mr. Noel would not accept the Word of God; and Mr. Adams would not put stock in the “findings” of men who contradicted anything in Scripture. Mr. Adams often would appeal to the flood for his proof; but Mr. Noel would remind him that the Bible was nothing more than a beautiful piece of human literature. His “proof” was the words of men whose breath was in their nostrils, and who so often contradicted each other.

Mr. Adams, wishing to continue the debate that carried on through all these years, sought to undermine Mr. Noel’s claims by scientific reasoning. He did much research also to find scientists whose “findings” varied

with those Mr. Noel held to and defended with all his ability. He tried in every way apart from quoting the Scriptures to show the impossibility of Mr. Noel's position and theories about the universe and the origin of the creatures.

When Mr. Noel spoke so freely of the billions of years it took for this to form and that to happen, Mr. Adams would insist that a half-billion-year period of darkness would with its freezing, sub-zero cold kill off all life that had begun to form in the half-billion-year period of the lighted part of that day. But Mr. Noel would remind him that he was going back to Scripture which spoke of six days, and of an evening and a morning for each of these days. He, Mr. Noel, claimed no such one-day and one-evening period in that billion-year stretch of time when things began to evolve. He preferred a gradual warming up or cooling off through all the billions of years.

One argument that Mr. Adams kept bringing up did irk Mr. Noel and gave him trouble, even though he did not want to admit it. It was the question as to where that first cell, or that first gaseous vapour came from. From what did it evolve? Mr. Adams did note, though, a bit of hesitation, no matter how slight it was, in Mr. Noel's defence and counter-question as to where his, Mr. Adams's, God came from.

Mr. Adams pressed his point at a later friendly session on the edge of their lawns and asked Mr. Noel whether it was really scientific to maintain that dead matter can produce life. Living matter dies. But what has science to show that dead matter can produce life? And that first cell, or gaseous vapour, that was there, how could it change without something else being there to feed it or to exert influence upon it? There must have been something more to feed that cell. There must have been something more to cool off or heat up that gaseous vapor.

Mr. Noel boasted of the latest achievements of science to create life in a test tube. But Mr. Adams pointed out that this was not a case of dead matter bringing forth life and that he, Mr. Noel, was overlooking the fact that *living men* were combining chemicals to produce what seemed to have life. And so the controversy went on from year to year, assuming different forms, but always about this difference of beliefs of the two men.

Shortly after one of the most heated discussions on this subject of dead matter moving toward life—and Mr. Noel did not like the way the matter was going—the funeral of Mrs. Adams was held in the corner church.

Out of courtesy and sincere sympathy Mr. Noel went to the funeral service. The text was those words of Jesus to Martha in John 11:25,26, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" The pastor explained that the dead believer will rise again to glory. But he also took time to emphasize that there is a worse death than this physical death. He quoted Ephesians 2:1 to point out that there is also a spiritual death wherein people who are physically alive may be. He pointed out that God told Adam that the *day* he ate, he would die, and that this did happen. Adam died spiritually that day. And when Jesus says, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," He is not giving a promise to the believer that he will never die physically, but that the spiritually alive will never experience the eternal death of hell. The man who dies physically while spiritually dead dies hopelessly. The man who is spiritually alive when he dies physically shall never lose his spiritual life, nor enter the lake of fire.

Seeing Mr. Noel in the audience, the pastor "pulled out a couple of extra stops" and, looking right at him, stated, "The spiritually dead are not without hope as long as they still live physically. You still have a chance. Let God have His way with you. Tell Him right now that you want to become spiritually alive; and He will give that life to you. He will make you spiritually alive. Just ask Him. He is waiting."

Even in the midst of his deep sorrow Mr. Adams was grateful for those words of the pastor to his neighbor and hoped that they were well received.

Days later, knowing that Mr. Adams was lonely, Mr. Noel went one evening to visit him, not intending to introduce their controversy. But Mr. Adams brought up the matter without really intending to do so. He began by thanking Mr. Noel for his presence and concern to take off from his teaching to attend the service. He added that he hoped that the message was well received by Mr. Noel.

Mr. Noel's answer startled him so much that he jumped right out of his chair. "Adams," he said, "I did not know that your pastor was an evolutionist, or I might have visited him long ago." "He is not," almost shouted the shocked Mr. Adams, "he and I both hold to the infallibility of the Bible, and believe the first eleven chapters of Genesis to be fact, undeniable fact. We both believe that God created all things in six successive days of twenty-four hours each."

“Oh,” replied Mr. Noel, “I did not mean that he believes that the earth and the universe came into being by the process of evolution. I never heard him speak anything about that in the sermon. But I have my answer now to your question about dead matter producing life; and your pastor gave it to me. He told us that men are born spiritually dead but that they can become spiritually alive by an act of their own. He also spoke of a change of species: the sinner can change himself into a saint by an act of his dead will. The dead have in themselves the power to reach out for life.”

“Adams,” he said, “either admit that the Bible is fallible and that the *man* who wrote Genesis chose the wrong word and should have said, ‘God said, In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt become very weak and sick’; and that the man—I believe it was Paul—who wrote that man is ‘*dead* in trespasses and sins’ should have been more careful and written that man is spiritually weak and sickly, and therefore he trespasses and sins; or tell your pastor to preach that dead matter cannot desire life and cannot make the movement unto life. Otherwise you are not consistent. You speak of creation by an almighty God; but in the realm of salvation you hold on to an evolutionistic process whereby the dead initiate the act toward life. You speak of a sovereign creator, but you also hold to a sovereign sinner who can hold off your sovereign saviour. You teach that God *calls* all the creatures into being, but you also teach that spiritually dead creatures *call* God into the act of saving. I find it hard to follow, and very unscientific.”

Indeed, we must be consistent in our defence of the truth of creation. But consistency is also a precious jewel in our defence of the truth of salvation by grace, and as the work of a sovereign God Who *creates* us in Christ Jesus as HIS workmanship (Eph. 2:10), and does not wait for the spiritually dead sinner to step forward to obtain life. There is no more evolution in salvation than there is in creation. ❖

Reprinted from the Standard Bearer vol. 47, pp. 255-257.

To Be His Children

***B**ehold, what manner of love
The Father now bestows;
For us to be His children—
Our cup with love o'erflows.*

***B**ecause the world despises
The Son of God the Lord,
We, as His children, also
Are targets of their sword.*

***B**ut that's a badge of honor:
That we should worthy be
To suffer for the kingdom;
Mere sinners—you and me.*

***G**od says that those who suffer
Shall also with Him reign;
Our sins have been forgiven:
We'll sing a glad refrain.*

***W**e'll join the angel chorus—
Anticipation thrills;
Eternity in heaven!
He all our hope fulfills.*

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

New Devotional Material More Writers Needed

Your devotions in *Beacon Lights* for the past couple of years have been reprinted from previous years. We would like to bring you some fresh material for awhile again. Mr. Jonker has written many months in the past and has some more for us for October. Mr. Hunter has written since *Beacon Lights* first offered devotion material and is also ready to do some more. We could use a couple more writers to help shoulder the responsibility to provide God-centered devotionals as we plan for the next few years. Please give this prayerful consideration. We are looking for mature Christian writers who have a great desire to see our young people grow spiritually and are willing and able to devote some time to writing. Please contact me if you are interested or know someone you think would be able to do a good job. Writing devotionals is a lot of work, but it is also very rewarding for the writer.

John Huizenga (editor-in-chief)
editor@beaconlights.org

The Song of Zion

"A Psalter—Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God"
by Skip Hunter (Reprinted from August 1998)

August 16 Read Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 68:18 Several months ago we celebrated the Lord Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven. Have we thought about it since? Christ's ascension was part of our way of salvation. Christ had to ascend into heaven. He could not remain on this earth. He ascended into heaven and sits at God's right hand. He makes intercession for us daily. What a blessing this is for the child of God! He sits in heaven waiting for the day that He will come back to this earth and gather all the elect unto Himself. Are you waiting for that day, people of God? Think about the ascension and its benefits for you. Do

that today as you enter into God's house of worship. Sunday is an excellent day to ponder these things. But also ponder them all the days of your life. Sing Psalms 180:8 and 183:1.
August 17 Read Matthew 6:25-34

Psalm 68:19 In this part of David's prayer he blesses God for the benefits which God has given him. The word bless means *to speak well of*. It is good for us to speak well of God for all things that we have come from him. Our reading today speaks especially of physical benefits, but David obviously means more than this. He speaks of salvation in the second part of the verse. David knew what physical salvation was as

he was chased often by Saul and God saved him. But David also knew that there was more. That is why he wanted the ark and eventually the temple to be at the center of Jerusalem. We, too, must bless God because of the many gifts he gives to us. We must remember that he daily blesses us with many things; not the least of which is our salvation. Let us bless God in song and prayer daily. Sing Psalter 181:1.

August 18 Read Job 1:13-22

Psalm 68:20 David's exultation unto the God of his salvation continues in today's verse but with a different aspect. David understands that his salvation will not come to him on this earth. He realizes that he must go through the valley of the shadow of death and even unto death itself. But even this does not cause him to fear. He knows that God will make his salvation sure even through death. People of God, death is a reality. Those of you who have reached seventy or eighty understand this well. Those of us who seemingly have much of our lives before us must realize that unless Christ comes we must enter the grave. But there is no need to despair. Death and all its accompanying sorrows are in the hands of God. Because of Christ's resurrection death and the grave have no sting for the child of God. Blessed be the God of our salvation even unto death! Sing Psalter 183:2.

August 19 Read Revelation 20

Psalm 68:21 The difference between the elect and reprobate can be obviously seen in this passage. David speaks of the blessedness that God's people enjoy and then he speaks of the hopelessness of those whom God hates. This is for our instruction and our comfort. We are instructed to see that even though the wicked seem to profit in this life their end is destruction. We are also instructed not to continue in sin because its end is destruction. Even the child of God will feel the pain caused by sin. We must stay away from sin and cleave unto righteousness. Our comfort is that we have the beautiful hope of heaven. Christ has paid for our sins and we must eagerly look for the day of the wicked's destruction and the exultation of the righteousness. Flee sin, young people, and look for the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sing Psalter 181:2.

August 20 Read Obadiah 17-21

Psalm 68:22-23 The depths of the suffering of God's people can extend quite deep. Think of David fleeing from Saul. Think of the various times that Israel was attacked by enemies. Think about Paul as he suffered much at the hands of his tormentors. Think of the reformers and their sufferings. God's people today also suffer. It may not be as physically graphic or distressing in our country. Though saints in some parts of the world suffer much. God's people live a life of suffering. In this suffering God has prepared a way of escape. David knew that God meant it for good and for His glory. He had tasted of suffering and deliverance from that suffering. Thank God for such suffering because He has provided a way of escape and glory for Himself and His people. Sing Psalter 181:2.

August 21 Read Psalm Joshua 2:8-11

Psalm 68:24 The wicked know who God is. History bears this out. Today's reading is a confession of faith from one who saw the power of God even when she remained in sin. Even today the world knows who the church is. They should because we should lead a different life. Our church parking lots should be full twice on Sunday while the world plays golf, camps, swims, and attends things which are for their enjoyment not that of God. God has a purpose in making sure that the world knows who He is and who his people are. That purpose is that they are left without excuse in the final judgment. Do not be ashamed, people of God, of proclaiming God's name before men. Do not be ashamed to be different. Be counted among those who go by the name Christian. Let the world know that God is God and that He is your God. Sing Psalter 181:3.

August 22 Read Psalm Mark 11:1-10

Psalm 68:25 Music has been a part of the worship of God in both dispensations. Music expresses the joy that the child of God expresses as he blesses God. It was with music that Israel marched around Jericho. It was with music that the ark was moved up Mount Zion. The children sang as Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Does music attend our way as we praise God? Can the wicked tell by our music that we praise the sovereign God who created the heavens and the earth? Let us sing the songs of Zion as we worship Jehovah. As we go to God's house tomorrow let us give special emphasis as we praise God with singing. In this way we can be ready to hear the preaching of the Word, and we will be ready to rightly worship Jehovah. Sing Psalter 181:3.

August 23 Read Psalm 68:15-27

Psalm 68:26-27 As we look around the church auditorium this morning we cannot help but seeing the evidence of God's covenant faithfulness. We see in the families with which we have been blessed the evidence that God saves in the line of continued generations. Every family in the church is evidence that God is pleased to dwell in our midst. As we worship today let us bless God for His covenant faithfulness. The worship of Jehovah is one of the benefits of salvation. Let us be glad and rejoice today, the day which the Lord has made. Let us use this day which He has separated for this purpose of blessing God. Sing Psalter 181:4.

August 24 Read Psalm 68:28-35

Psalm 68:28 Many students and teachers will be going back to school in the next few weeks. For some of us God has given the blessing of parental covenant schools. These schools are a strength to those who have them. David prayed for God to strengthen that which He had given Israel by His presence. We, too, need this prayer as we begin our school year once more. Teachers need the strength of Jehovah as they carry out the work of teaching the covenant seed. Students need the strength of Jehovah in order to do all their

work to God's honor and glory. The work of both teacher and student is part of the council of God. Strengthen that work, O God, so that we may do it for Thy glory. Help us to work to show ourselves approved unto Thee and to Thee alone. Sing Psalter 182:1.

August 25 Read II Chronicles 32:21-23

Psalm 68:29 As David prayed this prayer, he had no idea of the victory God would give to Hezekiah many years later. He also did not know that foreign kings would bring presents to Jerusalem. We see here David prophesying of that which would happen. Because it was the will of God, it did happen. What was the reason that these heathen kings brought presents? They did it to glorify God. Was this an act of faith? By no means, but rather it was an expression of God's sovereignty over all of His creation. As we study history in this school year, let us remember that our God is a sovereign God. All things are in His hands. And all things work for His glory and the good of His church. Even wicked rulers must bow before God. Comfort yourselves, people of God, with these words even when it looks the darkest for the church. God is in control. Sing Psalter 182:2.

August 26 Read Obadiah 10-16

Psalm 68:30 Those of you who have been following these devotionals will have noticed that I have had us read the whole chapter though not in order. By now you realize that the focus of this chapter is the condemnation of Edom for going against the people of God. They had done this many times in their history. But as we saw yesterday, God is sovereign. His sovereignty over the wicked should give to us much comfort. Not the comfort that delights in "getting even". This comfort is the comfort that comes from obedience to God's covenant. Esau was brought up in a covenant household. But because of his rebellion, he was cast out and eventually destroyed by God. Obey, young people. Obey God's covenant and He will bless you with all the blessings of salvation. Sing Psalter 182:3.

August 27 Read Acts 8:26-39

Psalm 68:31 We live in the day and age where we see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Oh, it was begun shortly after Pentecost, but the full realization is happening now as the gospel is spread to the four corners of the earth. God has given to us a great heritage. We need to remember that we must spread that heritage to all lands. One of the signs of Christ's return is the spread of the gospel. He will use us to do this. We must not ignore the opportunities that we have to spread the gospel. It may be down the street, across town, or in distant lands. We must seize the opportunity knowing that this is the will of God. Let us spread His name by what ever means He is pleased to give us. Sing Psalter 182:4.

August 28 Read Isaiah 35

Psalm 68:32 It is interesting that the call to all nations is to sing. We take for granted the gift of music. Or we disre-

gard its usefulness in the cause of the kingdom. This verse, however, states that the kingdoms of the earth are to sing to God. The content of that singing never changes. That content is the praise of God. After we see these two commands, we see the word Selah once again. If a pause is indicated, we need to contemplate the importance of the preceding commands. What does God want? He wants us to praise Him in song as the almighty One that He is. Let us heed these commands and teach others to heed them as well. Sing Psalter 182:5.

August 29 Read Job 37:1-14

Psalm 68:33 In the time between the writing and reading of these words, I am sure that God's voice has been heard on this earth. There has probably been a storm that has seized the attention of the world. Maybe there has been an earthquake. Maybe disease or famine has broken out. God speaks through these things. These are not natural disasters as the news media likes to call them. These are the voice of God. Are we listening, people of God? Are we seeking to know what God is saying to us? His voice is mighty. It has power. Its power is more than the destructive nature of a storm or earthquake. In those things He speaks to both the wicked and the church. Are we listening? Sing Psalter 183:3.

August 30 Read Revelation 12:7-12

Psalm 68:34 Does God's power have meaning for us today? I mean this more than in a physical way. Do we acknowledge the strength of God in our daily spiritual life? A battle was fought in heaven, and Satan was thrown down from heaven. Today, God fights spiritual battles in our lives for us. This is a great comfort for us. If we had to rely on our own strength to fight against Satan, we would have no chance. We must realize that there is such a battle in our lives. The battle against sin is a daily one. God is powerful. By His power which He has and shows to the church, we will win the battle against sin, Satan and all evil. Confess the power of God and glory in it. Sing Psalter 182:5.

August 31 Read Psalm 68:28-35

Psalm 68:35 We come to the end of this month, this prayer of David, and this Psalm. Throughout the month we have learned of God's power and how He has used it for His people. This closing verse is a confession that not only is God a God of power, but that He has also given power to us. How will we use that power in the upcoming school year? How will we use that power from week to week at work? How will we use that power as we interact with those around us? That power must be used for the service of the all-powerful King. Any power we have, only comes from Him. This is not an easy confession to make. We would rather have the power ourselves. We would rather proclaim ourselves as number one. With David we must speak well of God with the closing words of this Psalm, "Blessed be **God**." Sing Psalters 182:6 and 183:4.

Watching Daily At My Gates

The Song of Zion

“A Psalter–Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God”
(Reprinted from September 1998)

September 1-9 Devotional by Mike Feenstra

September 1 Read Psalm 69:1-12; Psalm 69:1-2

“With the exception of Psalm 22, there is no other psalm that is quoted so often by the Holy Ghost than this one to describe the suffering of Jesus.” Such were the words of the late Rev. Gerrit Vos in *O Taste and See* (211). Considering that this Psalm was written by David in the Old Testament, we can surely see that the Scriptures are the Holy Spirit’s work to testify of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, as Rev. Vos states, “David suffered something like (Christ’s suffering), and I tremble when I write this last sentence down. The similarity is so insignificant. It may refer to the throne of Israel which he gave up to Absalom, fleeing the while. That entailed much for David: his house, his peace, his wives, his household stuff, his people. But when we look first at David when writing this pitiful tale in Psalm 69, and then at Jesus in Gethsemane or at the cross—words fail us. The first instance is but a shadow, the latter is reality” (215). Sing Psalter #184:1.

September 2 Read Matthew 27:39-49, Psalm 22; Psalm 69:1-3

Oh, the suffering of our Lord was an intense suffering; like unto (and even worse than) a weary man caught in deep waters that penetrate the soul so that his only hope is to cry for help between each overwhelming wave and each draining cough. This suffering by way of the insults and condemning words of the world was terrible and wounding to our Lord, but the thought that He was forsaken of God hurt the most and caused Him to cry out the words of Matthew 27:46, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” These words spoken by David in Psalm 22:1 also illustrate David’s wearisome crying in Psalm 69. There he beseeches God to deliver him from his deep affliction: “My constant calling wearies me, My throat is parched and dried; My eyes grow dim while for my God Still waiting I abide.” While on this earth below, this is also our state because we belong to Christ. In our suf-

fering let us learn to call upon our sympathetic Savior Who sustained the highest suffering possible—the wrath of the Almighty God. Sing Psalter #184:1-2.

September 3 Read John 15:25, I Peter 2:23, Isaiah 53; Psalm 69:4

For today we cite an excerpt of “Absolute Abnegation” from *O Taste and See* by Rev. Vos on the powerful words of Psalm 69:4b:

“Then I restored that which I took not away!

Properly translated from the Hebrew it should read: that which I did not rob!

Jesus never robbed anyone of anything. It was rightfully His.

But as soon as He appeared among us the howling mob of creditors came upon Him. And they never left off demanding from Him. They finally demanded the very heart beat of Jesus. They asked and got His blood. His blessed body, His clothes, His natural modesty, nailing Him naked on the accursed tree, His life, the few square feet of terra firma: He hung suspended between heaven and earth.

And though He could have destroyed all His enemies, men, and devils, He gave and restored, He returned and surrendered all His possessions” (213). What did He restore that He did not take away? He restored righteousness and life to us, His elect, who are so undeserving (Heidel. Cat. Q&A 17). What a powerful verse! Sing Psalter #184:3. (If you would like *O Taste and See: Meditations from the Psalms* please write the Reformed Book Outlet, 3505 Kelly, Hudsonville, MI 49426.)

September 4 Read Psalm 139; Psalm 69:5-6a

Young People, are we making the same confession as David does in Psalm 69:5? Are we searching our souls to see whether there is any sin in them? Or are we deceiving ourselves into thinking that God can not hear our immoral fantasies or our murderous thoughts? While in deep affliction, David thinks the opposite. He proclaims before God that wherever he flees

(See Psalm 139), God is there because God is the All-knowing God. He does not try to cover his sins as Adam tried in the garden of Eden, but he confesses them before God. In that confession, he beseeches God for deliverance from his present distress because he knows that he cannot cover his own sin. That covering can only come in David's Anti-type, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, our sins are hid forevermore from God's eyes so that we may be reconciled to Him. Sing Psalter #184:4.

September 5 Read Psalm 69:6

David's petition in the verse for today is that God would save His people from shame. While King David bore reproach at the hands of his enemies (See Verse 7), the temptation to despair and feel ashamed surely came to David's subjects. "Why do you confess God's Name when you can see that it will be unrewarded? Look at your King, he is defeated!" must have been the devil's temptation to the children of Israel. Knowing well that this temptation was before God's people, David prayed that he might be delivered from his enemies and vindicated before the world *so that* God's people would not be ashamed for their confession. Therefore, we must see that David was concerned not about himself, but with those that wait on the Lord God of Hosts. His prayer was for the elect alone. His prayer was that God glorify Himself through the vindication of the elect in Israel *by* saving him. For, "If the king of believers shall find his faith unrewarded, how will the feeble ones hold on their way" (Spurgeon). Praise God that our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, has His reward! Because He has been exalted at God's right hand forevermore, we shall never be ashamed! Sing Psalter #184:5.

September 6 Read Romans 15:3; Psalm 69:7-8

Today is the Sabbath day, the day when we go up to God's house chiefly to worship Him. But, we also go to God's house because we desire to, "bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please ourselves." We are commanded to do this, "for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproachest thee fell on me" (See Psalm 69:7, 9). What an incentive to live a life that promotes the other members of the congregation! Jesus came into this world as God's Christ in order to give His life for us! His zeal for the holiness of God's house and God's glory caused Him to be rejected of all His fellow men. This rejection culminated in his shameful sacrifice on the cross. There He despised the shame (Heb. 12:2) and rose victorious. Out of thanksgiving to God, let us follow after Christ by giving God all the glory even though we may be persecuted. Sing Psalter #184:6.

September 7 Read John 2; Psalm 69:9

"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." These were the passionate words of David. The passion that burned in David's heart was remembered by our Lord's disciples when they saw our Lord cleansing the temple in John 2. What was that zeal? David's and especially Jesus' zeal was exactly for the *glory* of God and the *holiness* of God's house. Calvin

says that Christ, "burned with such zeal, that this single feeling swallowed up every other." This zeal would not allow *any* pollution in the house of God for God's House is to be *holy*, that is, separated from sin. In the New Testament reality, this means that God's Church, which the OT temple typified, must also be characterized by *holiness*. Therefore, we must also have this zeal to keep God's house holy by insisting that our churches proclaim that great Reformation theme: Soli Deo Gloria. This zeal only flows from God, the God Who *will* glorify His Name in His church. "For though God is sufficient for Himself, and needs not the services of any, yet He wishes that His glory should be displayed in the Church. In this way He gives a remarkable proof of His love towards us, because He unites His glory—as it were, by an indissoluble link—with our salvation" (Calvin). Sing Psalter #184:7.

September 8 Read Heb. 4:14-18; 5:7-10; Ps. 69:10-11

Earlier in our treatment of Psalm 69 we said that Jesus is our Sympathetic Savior. Young People, do you know what that means? Have you experienced what that means? It means that Christ can sympathize with our troubles because he has experienced and endured every sorrow, every pain, and every temptation that we may face in this life. He knows what it means to lose a loved one. He knows what it means to suffer at the hands of wicked men when He bowed His soul with fasting. He has *endured* every temptation that we have in our lives. And those temptations to Christ were severe and very serious. Just think of the temptations which our Lord endured at the hands of the devil in Luke 4:1-13. If this is so, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Sing Psalter #184:8.

September 9 Read Psalm 69:12

If we would describe an upright young man in this world according to the Scriptures, how would we describe him? Would he be one that gets drunk at a wild beer party on the weekend? In his car on a Friday night, would he be listening to ungodly rock music on the radio while he cruises the circuit? Or, would he be a young man whom everybody mocks at the local hangout because he reproves the sin of his fellow men (See Eph. 5:11)? How about a godly young woman? Would she be a woman that seeks to entice men by what she wears? Would you find her at a friend's house watching the latest movie on video? Or, would she be a young woman who is outcast because she desires to walk modestly and humbly with her God (See Micah 6:8)? Young People, what description do we fit? David was made the song of the drunkards (Psalm 69:12). The same was ultimately true of Christ. If we are called to imitate Christ, will not our walk in this world yield the same results? It surely will. The truth of the antithesis demands this. If this is true, let us therefore walk not to seek the approval of the wicked of this world (See Luke 6:26, Eph. 5:11), but let us seek the approval of God. And if the

world makes us their proverb, let us realize they do so because we belong to Christ (See John 15:18-25; Psalm 69:4, 12). Sing Psalter #184:9.

September 10-30 devotionals
by John Huizenga

September 10 Read I Peter 2:18-23; Psalm 69:13

Today we find a sharp contrast between the believer and the unbeliever, another dimension of the antithesis, a dimension that often breaks down in the weakness of our sinful flesh under the great pressure of wicked men. What do you do when men revile you? What do you do when you suffer wrongfully at the hands of men? The unbeliever will not be able to cool the burning coal of hurt and injustice and will seek revenge sooner or later. He will speak out, protest, revile back, and have no rest until the wrong is corrected according to his own satisfaction. But the child of God is different. While the wicked reviled David, he turned to God in prayer. He prays not on the basis that he deserves to be heard, but on the basis of God's mercy and saving grace. Our Savior Jesus Christ also is an example for us in such times. We read that He also committed Himself to Him that judges righteously. May we also learn to bear injustice with quiet patience and turn to God in prayer. Sing Psalter 185 verse 1.

September 11 Read Mark 14:26-26; Psalm 69:14-15

Despair and depression can be described as sinking down into mud that is very sticky and dark and bottomless. The harder one struggles, the deeper he sinks and the more hopeless he becomes. The grave itself slowly smothers all life. Such despair is death. Christ our Lord experienced this sorrow in the garden while he prayed. He said His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. That was the weight of our sins pressing Him down as He stood before the righteous and holy God. No matter what the immediate cause of our despair is, all despair ultimately is the result of sin and there is only one way to get out of the mire. No man can pull us out with his own strength, only God is able to deliver. He is the only source of hope and life. He breaks the bondage of sin by the work of Christ crucified. He pulls us out by the power of His grace. Sing Psalter 185 vs. 2

September 12 Read Titus 3:1-7; Psalm 69:16

Why does God look upon the sinner with love and favor? So many who call themselves Christians say He smiles upon those that do good things and frowns upon those who do bad things. Such is a very simplistic, human, and therefore false idea of God. David did not ask God to deliver him because he had done this and that good work. He asked God in prayer to deliver him because of something in God: His mercy. Mercy is the will of God for the weak and helpless sinner to be perfectly blessed in Him; and what God wills, He accomplishes in sovereign power. The believer knows that God wills to save and is powerful to save because God reveals it in His word and therefore the believer comes to God on the basis of His mercy, that's all! Further revelation of God makes known

to the believer that this mercy and power to save is accomplished in the believer through Christ. This truth is clearly taught in Titus 3 as well as all of Scripture. Sing Psalter 185:3
September 13 Read Matt. 29:39-46; Psalm 104:29, 30; Psalm 69:17, 18

The face of God is a matter of life or death for the creature. The showing of God's face to the creature is the revelation of His favor and grace. The hiding of God's face is the revelation of His wrath. Apart from the favor and grace of God all is hopelessness and death. The believer, knowing the greatness of His sin and misery, is immediately plunged into darkness when he loses sight of the face of God. The face of God communicates His love for us and forgiveness in Christ. The face of God is the word of God. May God never remove His word from us. It is not enough just to have the Bible in your house. Neither is it enough to read the Bible every day. God must show unto us His face in the reading of His word. We see His face only by faith. Let us also pray that He hide not His face. Sing Psalter 185:4.

September 14 Read Isaiah 53; Hebrews 12:1-2; Psalm 69:19

Reproach is when one puts you to shame. Those reproaching appear to have the upper hand while the one reproached wallows at their feet in shame. David comes before God knowing that He sees the condition in which he is in. Not only does God see His people being reproached, He knows reproach Himself. Christ was despised of men and suffered the reproach of the cross. While He hung on the cross, His enemies surrounded him appearing to have the upper hand as they mocked One Who could save the life of another but would not save His own life. But the enemies of God are absolutely wrong. Christ would not be destroyed in shame; He despised shame and now sits on the right hand of God. The way of the cross was the way for the destruction of the power of sin and death. When wallowing in the reproach of men we come to God where we see and know life eternal. Then the reproach of men means nothing and becomes the way to our salvation. Sing Psalter 185 verse 5.

September 15 Read Mark 14:35-50; Psalm 69:20

In this life filled with sorrow and tears, we learn the beautiful truth found in these verses: God will never forsake His people. In our day to day life and interactions with people we may come to learn that even the best of friends can forsake us. It may even be that God sends you through a time when everyone forsakes you and you are completely alone and despised. This is when God opens our eyes to the truth that He will never forsake us. Then this truth will fill us with awe and reverence for God unknown to those who have never been forsaken by men. In the way of despair before men we are brought into closer covenant fellowship with God. We will never be forsaken because Christ was forsaken for us. He took upon Himself the curse due unto us as he languished, forsaken by God upon the cross. Sing Psalter 185 verse 6.

September 16 Read Matthew 27:33-50, Psalm 69:21

These words from Psalm 69 are prophetic of the suffering and events surrounding Christ's death on the cross. The wicked fill up the cup of God's wrath when they trample upon that virtue of God so fundamental to His being: His mercy. Sin is essentially a turning opposite to the way of God and opposing Him. The wicked tormenters of Christ mocked mercy itself as they pretended to be merciful only to torment Christ further. May we see the great wickedness of man for what it is that we may be humbled before our holy God. Every sin of ours is worthy of the wrath of God. Every sin of ours was put upon the shoulders of Christ as he bore the suffering there on the cross for us. Sing Psalter 185 verse 7.

September 17 Read Romans 11:1-13; Psalm 69:22-25

Our God is sovereign in election and reprobation. This truth is denied by most today. While many claim to believe God chooses the elect, they deny the logical conclusion that therefore He also reprobates the others. We need not conclude the doctrine of reprobation by logic alone, for God plainly teaches this in these passages. We also are made to understand by this word of God that reprobation serves election, for it was in the way of the reprobation of ungodly Israel that the gospel went out to the Gentiles. As we saw yesterday, verse 21 is prophetic of Christ dying on the cross. The words of verses 22-25 are also the words of Christ. As He hung there to pay the price for the sins of His people, He also condemned all others to hell. These are the words of our God, if you deny these words, then you deny the God Who also saves by sovereign election. Sing Psalter 185:8.

September 18 Read Isaiah 53; Psalm 69: 26-28

We read Isaiah 53 again because we read here the truth that God is the one that sends affliction. David hesitates not to confess that it is God that has afflicted and smitten him. While man by nature stands up in shock and ridicule when he hears that God, Who is supposed to care for and protect His people beats upon them with afflictions, David finds no contradiction or offence. The child of God knows the holiness of God and therefore the wickedness of his sin. He would gladly suffer a life of beatings from God when he comes to realize the terribleness of his sin. The God of the Scriptures is a just God. Sin must be punished. To this end God Himself in Christ laid down His life for His people. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Sing Psalter 185 verse 9.

September 19 Read II Corinthians 8:1-9; Psalm 69:29

Are you poor and sorrowful? God does not address the problem of earthly poverty of goods here, but rather the problem of spiritual poverty of knowing God. In comparison to life in heaven with God, our whole earthly life is one of spiritual poverty. In His loving kindness God gives to us faithful preaching and the Holy Spirit to lift us up and give us a taste

of those heavenly riches, but we all the more long for life in heaven. Let us bring these needs before the Lord in prayer. He knows our poverty for He also became poor for us. God came down from heavenly glory, put aside the riches of that glory and took upon himself the flesh of man that we might be brought to God in Him. In our deliverance from poverty we come to know the mercy and love of God. Sing Psalter 186:1 & 187:1, 2

September 20 Read Eph. 13:1-15; Psalm 69:30, 31

The Lord loves nothing more than the song of praise that wells up in the thankful heart of a forgiven sinner. A song of praise from the heart of His children is the goal and purpose of all the work of God since the beginning of creation. It is the fruit of His work. A song of praise is so simple, yet so profound. A little child and an old man can sing the same song over and over again, and yet bring new praise to God each time. A song of praise is the melting and fusing together of all your sorrows and experiences from the day of your birth and transformed by the power of God's word into a song of praise. This is a wonder that we will more fully comprehend when we are taken into heaven for an eternity of praise. Let us sing Psalter 186:2 in the knowledge of our wondrous salvation.

September 21 Read Zech. 9:11, 12; Ephesians 3:1-7; Psalm 69:29-31

From the moment Adam fell into sin, every man, woman and child is a prisoner of Satan. By nature we serve Satan and can do nothing but sin. Many of these prisoners belong to Satan, but not all. Some belong to God; they are God's prisoners. Unlike those who are not God's prisoners, those who belong to God are prisoners of hope. God opens our eyes, He makes us alive, He shows us the Door and by the power of His grace He brings us out of prison. So powerful and complete is this deliverance, that we can never return to that prison. But because the prison of Satan is so big, essentially covering the whole earth, and the child of God is separated from it, it is as though we now enter the prison of God that prevents us forever from ever living freely in the world of sin. Paul gives expression to this wonderful truth when he confesses that he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Does this truth make you glad? Sing Psalter 186:3 & 187:3.

September 22 Read Isaiah 44:21-23; 49:13; 55:8-12; Psalm 69:32, 33

When we meditate upon the garden of Eden and the wonderful life of Adam and Eve with God, it is easy for us to give praise to God, but when we see the corruption of this world it is not so easy to see the wonder in the unfolding of God's plan for a new heavens and new earth. The salvation of God's people is far more wonderful even than the garden of Eden. The accomplishment of God's purpose is reason for all creation to rejoice because then every part of creation will have served the purpose for which it was created. All things work together for the salvation of God's people. Everything that

moves from the stars to the jellyfish to the vibrating atom is called to sing praise unto God. He has created each one, He upholds the existence and life of each one, and He directs each one to serve His purpose in salvation. In all His works, God reveals His wisdom and glory. Let us join the creation and sing Psalter 186:4 & 187:4.

September 23 Read Acts 2:29-40; Psalm 69:36

The institution of the family is an integral part of God's plan of salvation. God does not randomly choose individuals from the earth as though it were just one big group of people and then bring them into the church to be instructed in the knowledge of God. He does pluck individuals out of non-Christian backgrounds at times, but then He begins to work with them as a graft that can grow and become a family. He is pleased to use the family to provide a godly atmosphere and instruction for elect children who become firmly rooted in the truth from an early age. He is also pleased to give the joy to parents of seeing covenant children grow up in the fear the Lord. This does not mean there are not branches that are reprobate and eventually pruned off. This brings extreme sorrow, but the joy of our salvation and the faithfulness of God to save His people will overcome all sorrow. Sing Psalter 186:5 with the hope of the Psalmist.

September 24 Read II Samuel 17:1-24; Psalm 70:1

The history recorded in II Samuel 17:1-24 is an answer to David's prayer recorded in Psalm 70:1. That David's prayer was answered does not mean that he was free from all his troubles. Absalom continued to pursue him and it may have appeared to David that God did not answer his prayer. Through it all, God did preserve David and eventually established His throne as a picture of the coming reign of Christ. Christ also prayed to God in the times of His great distress, and God confounded Satan by giving Christ the victory over death. Here too the way was not easy. When we pray for deliverance, we must not expect an answer that makes our life easy. God will always hear our prayer: He will never let His elect slip into the hands of Satan. He will make every attempt of wicked men to harm or lead us astray turn to their destruction and our salvation. Let us sing this prayer with Psalter 189:1 & 190:1.

September 25 Read Isaiah 41:1-14; John 18:1-6; Psalm 70:2, 3

The pride which lifts a man against God will always be met with shame and confusion because pride against God is absolute foolishness. This pride is manifest every time we sin. Sin is the willful stepping off the path to which God has directed our steps. Though we all sin and fall in shame and confusion, there is a difference between the reprobate and the elect. The reprobate can be smashed down in shame and confusion, but they get up again and persist in sin to an even greater shame and ultimate destruction. The elect are pricked in their heart and repent. In Christ they are washed clean and made precious in God's sight. They are taken within the cov-

enant fellowship of God so that God brings shame and confusion to those who rise up against His people. The church is gathered for the glory of God, and anyone who would rise up against this work of God will be destroyed. Sing Psalter 188:2 & 189:2

September 26 Read John 16:20-28; Psalm 70:4

In the midst of great distress, David does not only pray for the destruction of his enemies, but he also prays for all believers asking that they may rejoice and be glad. Here again, among other things, we see the great theme that runs through all Scripture, of joy and salvation in the way of sin and misery. We may not always see why it must be this way, but this is the will of God. In this way, and in no other way, is the love of God manifest fully to His people. In heaven we will understand this truth which we now see but dimly. Christ directs our attention to the picture of this great theme in the birth of a child. The joy of receiving a new child can only come in the way of pain and travail. Our minds forget the pain and suffering of childbirth, but the experience is intertwined forever in the love and joy that we have in the child. May we never forget that our puny created minds will never fathom the depths of the wisdom of the eternal God. Sing Psalter 188:3 & 189:3

September 27 Read Hebrews 10:1-37; Psalm 70:5

We know God does not delay His return to deliver His people, and yet we pray "make haste." We also pray for the forgiveness of sins knowing that Christ has already blotted them out. We pray knowing that God knows everything we need. Would we not be better off keeping quiet and trusting that God will come, that our sins are forgiven, and our needs will be met? Some would have us believe that prayer will cause God to do certain things. We must hold steadfast to the truth that God is in complete sovereign control and unchangeable, yet we must also pray without ceasing because God is a covenant God and we are covenant people. The covenant is a bond of friendship, and there is no friendship without fellowship. In the friendship between the sovereign God of heaven and earth and frail, created, sinful man, such a fellowship in prayer is necessary and pleasing to God. God wills to come quickly, God wills to forgive our sins, God wills to supply our every need, and we confess that our will is knit with His when we ask for these very things. Sing Psalter 188:4 & 189:4

September 28 Read I Peter 2:1-10; Psalm 71:1, 2

We have seen in the Psalms a number of times now where the Psalmist prays for confidence and steadfastness on the basis of his faith and trust in God. Knowing our God to be unchangeable and faithful, like a solid rock that can never be moved, we also pray that God sets us firmly upon that rock. What exactly is that rock? The Old Testament saints had only the promise of salvation as their rock. They prayed for faith to believe that promise. The Rock is Christ. We are delivered from sin on the basis of His death and resurrection. He is the

only way to renewed fellowship with God. We are saved in His righteousness which is imputed unto us. He is our only hope. All other ways will only lead to confusion and death. In him we will never be confounded. Sing Psalter 190:1.

September 29 Read Revelation 7; Psalm 71:3

Today we focus our attention upon the words “thou hast given commandment to save me.” These words are very personal and reassuring. The God Who commanded the world to come into existence also commands our salvation. Nothing can hinder this commandment. It is a command that has been given from all eternity. The passage from Revelation teaches us that God sends His angels into the world to gather His people in time. The elect are sealed with a seal that distinguishes them from all other and guarantees their entrance into heaven. In this connection God gives to us the reassuring picture of Himself as a strong rock. Not only does He command our salvation, He also gives to us His word to comfort and shield us all our life until we are gathered into heaven. Let us put our trust in God our Rock. Sing Psalter 190:2

September 30 Read Romans 15:1-13; Psalm 71:4, 5

Hope is expectancy or expectation. It is a thing that one longs for with expectation. Hope is not a wish. You might wish that you would find a new car in the garage in place of your old one, but there is no expectancy and therefore no hope. Hope is based on something known for certain. David expected God to deliver him from his enemies because God had done it before and He knew God is a God Who saves. Today we might hope for rain on the basis of a weather prediction for rain, and the fact that it has rained in the past, but we can't be certain because God also sends drought. Hope in God has an absolutely certain basis. God is unchangeable. He reveals Himself as “the God of hope.” We are filled up with the hope of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in His hope we have peace and joy. May you be filled with the hope of God. Sing Psalter 190:3

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Cornelius Jonker

October 1

“Whereas ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:6, 7). We have a paradox here, that is, a statement that appears contradictory, yet is true in this case. Sometimes our lives are relatively easy. But this can soon change when calamities come, when a loved one dies or persecution is thrust upon us. God knows our way and our desires, and when He sends us trials, it must serve to strengthen and purify our faith. Then, at the funeral of a loved one we can sing amidst our tears, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” By grace we can rejoice through our heaviness, for we possess that which gold cannot buy, the promise of an eternal inheritance purchased by Christ our Savior. Psalter 398.

October 2

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). This text contains a great contrast. It proclaims mercy and forgiveness to those who are sorry for their sins, who seek pardon at the foot of the cross, and who no longer embrace those sins. It also warns those who attempt to cover their sins with a so-called confession, but are determined nevertheless to continue living in them. One common example is the marriage of divorced persons, who claim that they confessed their sin of divorce and the breaking of the marriage vows. However, they continue to live in this sin of adultery, thereby refusing to forsake that sin. And anyone who either openly or covertly continues to hold to or cherish certain sins, will not find mercy, but stands condemned before the face of God. Oh let us pray the prayer of Jeremiah: “turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.” Jeremiah 31:18(b) Psalter 110.

October 3

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). This is a text that affords much comfort to the believer. Dear reader, whether you are young or old, take these words to heart with introspection, which means to examine one’s own inward thoughts. What do you find there? Do you see the fruits of God’s work in you? Are you sorry for your sins and have a desire to walk antithetically over against the world and its wickedness? To be sure, our sins beset us daily and we often see only a small beginning of that new obedience. But God never begins a work that He does not also finish, and therefore we have full confidence that we will persevere to the end. Let us go forward then, not in our own strength, but in the assurance that God will lead us all the way to our eternal home, because this work of grace is based on the finished work of our Savior who loved us and gave Himself for us. Psalter 185.

October 4

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word” (Psalm 119:9). A searching and important question is asked and a beautiful and significant answer is given. Who is asking this question? Obviously it is a young man. However, cleansing of the way is not for the young man only, but also for the young woman. This cleansing is also necessary for all of us even up to the time we draw our last breath. This is a unique and beautiful question, young people. A youth’s way is his path of life as he travels his earthly journey. There are many sidetracks that beckon the young traveler to turn aside and enjoy the pleasures of the wicked world. These so called pleasures are tainted by the smut and filth of ungodliness. The answer to the question is one of grace. That answer is to take heed to the Word. That Word is the precepts and testimonies of Scripture. That Word is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel causes us to flee to Him for forgiveness and cleansing. There is delight in that way for young and old, for it is the way of the cross that leads to a glorious home. Psalter 322.

October 5

“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lamentations 3:22). Ever since the dawn of history, the church could echo the above words, and it will repeat them until Christ comes at the end of time. Countless examples could be mentioned how Satan and the world harassed the church and were determined to blot out their very existence. From bondage in Egypt, rebellion in the wilderness, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which gave rise to the lament of Jeremiah, the church has been frequently cast in the furnace of affliction, yet never destroyed. Can we ascribe to this remnant some inherent strength in itself that can withstand all the onslaughts of the powers of darkness? Not at all, for we read that it is only because of God’s mercies that we are not consumed.

His compassion or pity is a sovereign and eternal compassion that cannot possibly fail. What a comfort for the church of all ages to know and experience that great truth. Because Christ, on the cross, redeemed that church and because He now reigns victoriously, not one of that church shall ever be lost. Thank the Lord that you are privileged to be a member of that church and humbly praise Him for His mercies. Psalter 378.

October 6

“I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8). What a beautiful expression of serene tranquility and quiet confidence that we do well to repeat each night as we lay our heads on our pillows. Our lives usually are so busy that our heads are filled with all sorts of worries about the present and the future. The farmer may worry about the weather, the rich about the security of his wealth, the poor about his empty cupboard, and the student about tomorrow’s lessons. We do not mean to infer that we should not be concerned about the things in our lives that affect us very deeply, but “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”. The ungodly may rightly toss and turn during the night, for we read, “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked”. But the child of God goes to sleep with a prayer on his lips for the peace that only God can give. Then all anxious questionings cease, and we can rest in the arms of the Almighty, faithful covenant God who never slumbers nor sleeps and who will keep us in safety. Psalter 7.

October 7

“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). What a warm and comforting assurance this is for the righteous who must walk daily in a world that is hostile to God and filled with evil and wickedness. Who are the righteous? Those are you and I, and all who are clothed in the garments of Christ’s righteousness, who have been redeemed by the wonderful power of His sovereign grace. Sadly, however, we often stumble and fall into sin each day anew. But thanks be to God, He does not leave us in our sins, but convicts us by the Holy Spirit, so that we cry out “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” God’s face is against them that do evil. Those are the unregenerate wicked who delight in evil. Against those, the Lord sets His face in consuming judgment. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Who is a consuming fire. But He is ever merciful to His children whom He sees with loving eyes and whose prayers He hears with attentive ears. Psalter 74.

October 8

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17). What is a sacrifice? Do we still bring them to God? The Old Testament church knew much about sacrifices, for in this way they worshipped God. Their sacrifices were commanded by God Himself and required an offering of something precious,

such as a lamb with no imperfections. These of course pointed to the perfect sacrifice of the perfect Lamb, namely Christ. Do we still bring sacrifices to God? Most surely we are required to do so, not with a bloody offering, but that of a broken spirit and a contrite heart. A broken spirit is that which is emptied of all pride and haughtiness of sin. A contrite heart is a heart that is filled with genuine remorse and penitence because of our corruption and guilt. By nature we are proud and have to have the preeminence. Do we flaunt our appearance, our possessions or our intellect? God despises proud looks and all boasting of self. All we are and all we have are from God alone, who desires truth in the inward parts. Let our prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24). Psalter 384.

October 9

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Numbers 23:21). Such beautiful words uttered by such a despicable hypocrite! Balaam, the false prophet, was hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel. Oh, certainly, the nation of Israel as a whole, was worthy of curses. Didn't they murmur against God despite His repeated signs and wonders? They trampled His commandments under foot and rebelled numerous times. Balaam perceives how imperfect this people were, and since he covets the earthly reward from king Balak, he agrees to this wicked maneuver. But God has other plans, and because God is sovereign, even over the wicked, He turns the intended curses to blessings. What a comfort for you and I, dear reader. Despite our sins and rebellion, God beholds us, and all His elect children, as righteous in Christ. The King has engraved His people in the palms of His hands and loves them with an eternal love. Shall we not then give thanks to that King and strive to walk in thankfulness and obedience all our days? Psalter 239.

October 10

"And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). What are you looking for, dear reader, and how does this affect your life? This text refers of course to Christ Who appeared once on the earthly scene, but then disappeared. The first time He came with sin. Indeed not with His own sin, for He had none. But He took on Himself the sins of His dear elect children and laid down His life as a perfect sacrifice to redeem them. The second appearance of the Redeemer will be glorious for those who look for Him in faith and blessed expectation. Oh, He will appear to the wicked also, for every eye shall see Him and every knee shall bow before Him. These wicked do not want to see Him for He comes with a dreadful judgment. But those who look for Him shall not be disappointed. In the meantime, do not look for earthly riches, for prestige in the eyes of the world, or anything else that would

disturb your focus on His appearance. Look by faith at all the signs of His coming that take place in the world around us and listen to our Savior Himself who said "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Psalter 276.

October 11

"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalm 119:32). This is quite a commitment that the psalmist makes in this verse and it is the same for us as we take it on our own lips. Notice that we will not only stand or walk in the way of God's commandments, but we will run. Running takes much effort and exertion in order to reach a certain goal. That is how we must seek to serve and love God, zealously living for His sake, keeping His commandments and loving Him with all our hearts. The psalmist realizes that this can only be possible when God enlarges his heart. To enlarge one's heart, which is the center of our spiritual life, means to make it more spacious and more receptive to the things of God's kingdom. By nature our hearts, even though regenerated, are small, and do not seek the commandments of God. But God enlarges our hearts and makes us willing to live for Him. Pray daily for this work of grace so that our lives may manifest to everyone we meet that our one desire is to run in the way of God's commandments. Psalter 38.

October 12

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him" (Ephesians 1:3, 4). What a doxology of praise to our God this is, as we take these words upon our lips. To bless, means "to speak well". God, from all eternity loved us and spoke well of us in His eternal counsel of election. He blessed us in Christ, and because of that divine work we in turn bless God. We speak well of Him because we taste that He is good, merciful and sovereign in all His words and works. We may have doubts sometimes and wonder if this blessedness can actually be ours. Our sins overwhelm us, and we realize with sorrow, our hopeless condition. But God does not leave us in our sins. He causes us to sorrow because of them, and works repentance and conversion in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. He is always the Giver; we are always the receivers. Because He has blessed us in Christ, who redeemed us by His blood, we are already in principle citizens of those heavenly places where Christ reigns as eternal King. Blessed be our great God! Psalter 280.

October 13

"From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" (John 6:66, 67). Jesus had just performed a great miracle, the likes of which the people never before had beheld. Five loaves of bread and two fish were multiplied in sufficient quantity to feed five thousand people. Prior to this,

the multitude witnessed great miracles of healing. Is it any wonder that they wanted to crown Him their king? With this king to lead them their stomachs would be full and sickness banished. Jesus then preached a powerful sermon, the subject of which was, "My kingdom is not of this world". What a disappointment for those whose hope was centered in an earthly kingdom. As a result they walked no more with Him, but forsook Him. Jesus turns to His twelve disciples and asked, "Will ye also go away?" This question comes to us today also, dear reader. Will you hold fast to the truth of the gospel of sovereign, particular grace and unconditional covenant views, Biblical concept of marriage and prohibition of remarriage of divorced persons? Many do like to pay the price of the truth and so they leave and find teachers that will tell them what they like to hear. People of God, let your answer by grace be that of Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Psalter 94.

October 14

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). The context in which this verse appears describes us in our natural state, namely that we walked in disobedience, fulfilling the desires of the flesh. But God who is rich in grace, quickened us according to His mercy, and showed us the riches of His kindness in Christ. Then we are told that by grace alone we are saved. That grace is never earned by our works and is never bestowed upon us because of our goodness, for then salvation would be by man and not by grace. Rather it is a

free gift by pure and sovereign grace through faith. Oh, there are those who claim that salvation is all of grace and that it is made available to all those who fulfill the condition of faith and accept this grace. If that were true, then it is not of grace, but of man who determines his fate. And man is fickle and given to change and foolishness. Thanks be to God, salvation is a free gift, bestowed on the elect through Christ, the objects of which are kept by the power of faith, so that they persevere unto the end. All praise and thanks be to God alone! Psalter 187.

October 15

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it unto the end. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments: for therein do I delight" (Psalm 119:33, 35). We all know what paths are, don't we? The most common definition would be a laid out track or route upon which we walk. It can also refer to a way of life or conduct. Our text today is a prayer for divine instruction as we travel our pathway of life. Young people, you are beginning a journey, a journey that will take you through life. You have never traveled it before. What is your road map? Who is your guide? We are so often inclined to follow our sinful desires and stray into paths of sin. But that way ends in death. Listen to these directions: "Teach me the way of thy statutes, Lord. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments." That is a wonderful and blessed way. By God's grace we pray this prayer, and in this pathway we take delight. God will keep us on that path until we reach our glorious destination. All praise and thanks to Him! Psalter 321.

Church Family

To the Guys: Let's Wake Up

by Stefan Griess

Why am I singling out only guys? As young men, we are being attacked by Satan every day, even though we don't usually realize it. He wants to attack us when we're young in our faith and still closely attached to the things of this world. He attacks slyly, and we would be foolish to think that he wouldn't attack the future leaders of our churches, homes, and schools. And he wants to attack us especially now because he knows his time is running out; he knows that

Christ is coming, and coming quickly. Because Satan is especially attacking young men and because we can be so spiritually vulnerable at this time in our lives, I want to encourage young men at this crucial time in the battle.

Let's first read together Romans 13:11-14. "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put

on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting (revelry) and drunkenness, not in chambering (licentiousness)¹ and wantonness (lewdness)², not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

Do we know what time it is? Paul is telling us here what the time is on God’s clock. God’s clock reads, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” We are living in the end times, and there are only a few final ticks before our Savior comes this last time. He prophesied of the signs that will point to His second coming, and some of those signs are occurring now. People have been telling us, “Lo here is Christ; or, lo, he is there,” and He is not (Mark 13:21). The world is failing to even show natural affection (II Tim. 3:3). Young men of the world, our peers with whom we rub shoulders with week in and week out, are taking much pleasure in unrighteousness because God is sending them a strong delusion so that they are believing the deadly lies of Satan (II Thess. 2:1-12). But really, “of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly...” (I Thess. 5:1) With all of the teeming wickedness of this world so close to us, we *know* that God’s watch definitely reads “*night*.” And not only is it night-time, but the night-time is far spent. Just before the sun rises in the morning the night is at its darkest. So it is with the time right now on God’s clock, as we near the time when Christ comes. The black and dark night of wickedness is so dense around us that it is *inky*. These are the spiritually dangerous days that you and I, as young men, are living in before Christ returns.

We’ve been told by the world and we’ve even told ourselves that now is the time in our lives when we can live it up for ourselves.

Because these are the dark days of wickedness, and because the night is far spent, “it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom. 13:11). We, as young men, need to wake up. On this morning, with just a few ticks before the dawn of Christ’s second coming, we need to shake off our sleepiness and laziness. The night is at its darkest, and we really feel like sleeping more ... but we *need* to get up! Christ is pulling at us, shaking our arm, even

giving us a few good hard shoves and saying, “Your salvation is now nearer than when you first believed—the day is at hand! Get up!” We’ve been sleeping in the darkness by living and dying for sports, selfishly pursuing girls for our own satisfaction and lust, and seeking approval from our friends (and not from our Lord). And I’m guilty right there with you. We’ve stepped out on the court or field seeking for the praise of men. We’ve been more concerned about standing strong for ourselves and our own “image” in front of people than being concerned about standing strong for our Lord when His name is taken in vain or His glory is thrown into the dirt. We’ve been told by the world and we’ve even told ourselves that now is the time in our lives when we can live it up for ourselves. We’re in our prime, with few responsibilities, and we’re not “tied down” (as they sadly say) by marriage. So we foolishly think, “I’ll never get another chance at this kind of freedom,” and we put aside the thought of marriage for now because we’d like to avoid godly, honorable responsibilities. We’ll enjoy the single life as much as we can, gaining whatever pleasures our money and time can afford to fulfill our youthful lusts. We’ll devote our God-given talents and masculine energy towards ourselves. By doing all these things, we toss aside God and His church from its necessary central position in our lives and place the big ME there instead. By thinking this way, we’re sound asleep spiritually. We’re sleeping, ignoring the coming kingdom of Christ!

That is a sleep from which we’ve got to wake up; we’re not living as if Christ is coming soon! Rather, we’re living like we’re totally unaware of the imminent, grand marriage feast of Christ when He comes, almost as if we’re no longer invited to that celebration (Matt. 22:2-10). Or, even worse, we’re living as if we don’t even want that celebration to happen! We can say to ourselves, “I’ll get serious when I need to, when I get a little older,” and we can arrogantly toe the edge of the cliff, hoping to play with the fire of friendship with the world and not get burned. However, that’s exactly what Satan wants us to do and think. He wants us to think those things because then he knows that we don’t care about Christ’s coming marriage feast. Then Satan’s got us right where he wants us. Satan doesn’t have to get young men to leave the church outwardly by getting erased or excommunicated in order to destroy us. All he has to do is get us to think that the time is ours, that we have the time to live it up now for ourselves and seek to be men of God *later*. But there is no *later* with God when He demands

obedience from us *now*. If we think we have the time for “later,” or if we think that our Lord delays His coming, then Satan will soon strike the death blow with the fiery darts of lies and temptations for which we’ll be unprepared. And even worse, Christ will come and find us unprepared and wrapped up in the pleasures of this earth (see Matt. 24:45-51).

**there is no *later* with God
when He demands
obedience from us *now*.**

Do you know how I know some of the specific areas in which young men can be so weak? I know because I have to struggle and struggle against all the temptations, too, and too often I’ve been tempted to quit struggling against them. Why? *Because in those times and moments I haven’t put on the “armor of light.”*

What you and I need to do is “cast off the works of darkness,” and “put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12b, from our opening passage, remember?). If we’re truly awake now, and we see the inky darkness of our sin to which our eyes had been closed, we’re going to want to hastily (and we mean hastily, too—fast and furiously!) cast off those works of darkness and put on Christ and His “armor of light.” This is the same armor that we learn about in Ephesians 6—the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the prepared gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. We could study in depth about what putting on each of those pieces of spiritual armor means for us as young men, but for now just imagine that you and I have put on a full suit of actual medieval armor. If we’ve got that clunky, protective armor on, there is *no way* we will be able to fall asleep! Even more, by putting that armor on consciously, we’re preparing and setting our minds to fight. So it is when we’ve put our spiritual armor on. We won’t fall asleep with our “armor of light” on because we’re busy battling our spiritual foes. That is how we must put on Christ—by putting on His armor of light.

With our eyes focused on Christ, we’re going to fight in the thick of the battle, and we’re going to put on this armor by being in the Word and in prayer. Before, we’ve been fooling around behind the battle lines like little boys, and by our selfishness and foolishness we’ve been hurting our brothers and sisters in Christ. We used to hear the quick warnings of the knights and soldiers (our pas-

tors and parents) on the battle front shouting, “Watch out!” and we’ve barely managed to scramble out of the way of the arrows and cannon shot of our enemies just in time. But now we’re going to fight on the front lines. We’re going to be using our shield of faith to quench those fiery arrows of the devil. We’re going to go on the offensive with the “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” against our sins, learning how to use our sword effectively, not clumsily (Eph. 6:17). We’re going to live in the Word of God so that we can use it to witness and testify of our King Jesus, bringing others to join Christ’s camp of Truth. We’re going to be praying long and hard to lay hold of His spiritual agility and energy to battle long and hard for Christ like *men of God*.

First, however, we need to get our orders and training from the Captain of our salvation. We can put on our suits and look really nice to go to church, and we can totally look and act the part of a soldier of God, but if we don’t have real soldier-hearts as men of God, then we won’t have a clue how to fight. We need to have a Christ-like mind in order to be real soldiers of God (see I Cor. 2:16, Phil. 2:5-8). Christ needs to transform our selfish minds into minds that deny ourselves in serving and washing feet. He says to young men, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men (i.e., be brave men), be strong.” And yet, in the very next breath, He says, “Let all your things be done with charity” (I Cor. 16:13-14). Christ is telling us to stand up, stand strong, be brave *in Him*; and yet in the same command He tells us to do all things “with love,” His love. We need to be praying for His strength to endure hardship, to be strong and firm for Him while at the same time being loving, gentle, and kind. He commands us to be courageous to love and to serve as men of God. We must seek to bless people and to encourage them, and not to seek to gain whatever we can get from them.

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Christ next gives us the command to “untangle ourselves from the affairs of this life; that we may please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers” (II Tim. 2:4 para-

phrase). In our modern world, we're so distracted by the lights, sights, and sounds that flash at us: promises for fake and fleeting gratification for our flesh. Let's pray that God's powerful grace would untangle us from the world's pursuit for more money for buying, better cars for driving, and an easier life for living. We can be filled with so many of the earthly affairs and desires during the week that they are still twirling around in our heads on Sunday, distracting us so that we hardly hear any of Christ's words to us. We have to purify ourselves from these distracting desires so that we can be focused soldiers. I know that if I'm truly battling hard, I still have such a hard struggle to fight my own besetting sins (Heb. 12:1). I can't be distracted with the extra weight of earthly pleasures and cares of this world, too! If I am distracted, I hinder my own struggle to fight and to pray seeking God's strength against sin.

If we do put on Christ, we will be *noticeably* different than many other young guys. He will mark us and people will know that we belong to Him. We will stick out like strobe lights in this inky dark world of sin. But we don't put Him on just to be different. We put Him on because we are determined that His work in and through us will not be hid. We are determined that His refreshing and renewing love for us will refresh and renew those around us. Let's rely, then, upon His love in true humility, knowing that there is no way that we can even begin to be young men of godliness of ourselves. Listen to Psalm 119:74: "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see us; because we have hoped in Thy Word." Our hope is in Him and His Word, and not in ourselves! Isn't that exciting! When God's people see a generation of godly young men whose lives are obvious testimonies to their sole reliance and hope in God, they are so encouraged and they praise God's grace. What a testimony that is to the faithfulness of God!

We can't compare ourselves to others and conclude that because we don't have the talents they have we don't have any talents with which to serve the Lord.

God isn't looking to use for His kingdom only the athletic, the popular, the *self*-confident, the extremely-

smart. Some guys may think, "Well, I don't have any talents to give. I just don't have the smarts like _____, or the outgoing personality like _____, or the athletic abilities like _____." However, God's did not create us to have our chests out, chins up, and shoulders squared in order to put in a good showing, having only an outward aura of a man of confidence, purpose, and ability. God created us (and all His people) with talents with which to seek the kingdom. We can't compare ourselves to others and conclude that because we don't have the talents they have we don't have any talents with which to serve the Lord. God *did* create each of us with certain gifts and abilities with this purpose in mind: that we would explore those talents and develop them to their fullest to serve Him and His kingdom. So let's do that. We were created to seek His kingdom with all that we are and have.

So let's not worry about what others think, worry about what will be accepted, worry about what is in and cool, worry about what we look like in the eyes of men. Rather, let's despise the gaining of attention to ourselves, and be concerned that our life is always a testimony to God and His glory, especially with the talents that He has created in us. Let's forget about relegating ourselves to our culture's "manly" mold, having an attitude of stoic indifference towards the well-being of church, family, friends, girlfriend, and women in general. If we put on Christ, we'd much rather show loving concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ, for our siblings' and friends' welfare. We'd much rather serve God and His Church (and therefore supposedly look "unmanly" and "soft" to the world) than conform ourselves to the world's idiotic definition of manliness.

God desires to make us to be *faithful*, not unmanly and soft. Faithful men are men who are solid. These men are solid because they know their Lord, and they pattern their "manliness" after the example of Christ. Faithful men are strong in heart because they are strong in Christ. These faithful men stand for the Truth no matter the cost, following His will from the heart even though they will be despised by others, even within their church. They learn obedience by enduring suffering and pain (Heb. 5:8), and their minds are blessed with a continual emptying of self and a "full-filling" with Christ that gives and serves others. Godly men find their confidence and strength in knowing the loving will of God for themselves and for others, and they have learned thankful obedience through prayer. These are guys who watch, guard, and protect their brothers in Christ, their sisters

in Christ, and their own hearts. They stand fast in the faith, brave and strong in the Lord (I Cor. 16:13). And they do this all because they love God and their Savior so much; He is everything to them.

Too easily do we put on an impressive (and really a not-so-impressive-at-all) show of the world's version of manliness by saying and doing all the "right" things. Let's forget that and put on the only perfect, real man that ever lived.

Finally, (and this subject is part of faithfulness, too!) ... we like the ladies, don't we? It's pretty obvious, isn't it? That's a good thing, but what is not good is that too often we're trying to be ladies' men around whom the ladies love to flock. We're trying to get whatever we want from them. Too easily do we put on an impressive (and really a not-so-impressive-at-all) show of the world's version of manliness by saying and doing all the "right" things. Let's forget that and put on the only perfect, real man that ever lived. Let's put on Jesus Christ and seek to follow His example of godliness, even in our dating. Let's put on Him and be looking (not for all the girls we could date, but) for the right one to marry and love in Christ. Any girl that isn't really attracted to you because you've put on Christ isn't worth your time anyway. Besides, putting on Him makes it easier for you to pick out the right one, and you won't have to worry about whether you've made the right choice either! This doesn't guarantee that God will give you "the perfect girl" really soon. But if God did create one for you, then your putting on Christ will be really attractive to her.

We've got a long way to go in following after Christ as young men of God, don't we? I know I do; I'm still just a little boy stumbling after Christ, falling flat on my face again and again. Really, that's what we'll be and be doing the rest of our life (when we're 15, 50, and 93)—little boys stumbling after Christ. But the Savior who saved us from our sins and selfishness, and who is now ruling at God's right hand in sovereign *power*, is the same King who walked His whole earthly life as the only One Who lived as the perfect real man of God. He has been

our age and has faced the same temptations and struggles that we face now as young men, but He never failed His Lord! Now He fights for us against our enemies of lust and selfishness, and He doesn't leave us to our own ideas and strength to figure out what it means for us to be faithful young men. He says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (I John 2:13b). He's given us Himself for an example, and He's given us grace that now strengthens us for our nearly impossible calling. He's already gained the victory, and now He's making us to be the men He desires for His kingdom now and in heaven. So let's focus our eyes on our Captain with hearts full of confidence that He will lead us to His victory over our sinfulness. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thess. 5:24, check out vs. 23, too). In that confidence, then, "Rise up O men of God."³ We don't rise up, from our sleep with some fleeting feeling of revival or in hasty foolishness, but in loving obedience and focused reliance on Him... "for the Lord is calling faithful men."⁴



Endnotes

¹ Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 765. "Licentiousness—undisciplined and unrestrained behavior, especially a flagrant disregard of sexual restraints (Mark 7:22, II Cor. 12:21, KJV). The Greek word translated as licentiousness means "outrageous conduct," showing that licentious behavior goes beyond sin to include a disregard for what is right."

² Youngblood, Ronald F. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 766. "Lewdness—preoccupation with sex and sexual desire; lust (Judg. 20:6; Hos. 2:10; 6:9; Rom. 13:13). The Hebrew word translated as lewdness means an evil plan, purpose, or scheme; a wicked thought, especially with reference to sexual unchastity; ideas and practices that are indecent and disgraceful."

³ Merrill, William P.. *Rise Up, O Men of God*. Music by William H. Walter.

⁴ Paris, Twila. *Faithful Men*. "Perennial: Songs for the Seasons of Life." Sparrow Recordings. Online streaming.

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Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 26

Hudsonville PRC — 1971–1978

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Notes: These seven years saw Rev. Hanko do a great deal of traveling on behalf of the churches. The denomination also celebrated its fiftieth anniversary during these years. While Rev. Hanko does not mention the occasion in his memoirs, it must have been a joyful one for him. But his joy was surely tempered by the grief of losing his dear wife, whose death is recounted in this chapter.

Thys and Jeanette Feenstra rode with us from Redlands to Hudsonville, giving us the advantage of not having to travel alone, and giving them the opportunity to visit their family in Michigan.

Not long after we came, our furniture also arrived. So it was a matter of unpacking and getting settled. Once more the whole family was together in the Grand Rapids area, including Herm and Fred and their families.

It was especially nice for Mother to be near the grandchildren and to see them again. She knew that she would not have many years with us any more and was glad to have this short time. No noise was too great for her, as long as the grandchildren were having a good time.

Shortly after coming to Hudsonville, two young men of the congregation were killed in separate accidents. I took both funerals.

I also was called back to Redlands for two funerals there. I had very few funerals during my stay in Redlands, but Mrs. Ade Van Meeteren, mother of Chuck Van Meeteren and grandmother of Mrs. Don De Vries, died and I went to take her funeral. It was interesting to stay in the home of the deceased and see how the most intimate acquaintances came to the home to meet the family. It seems to me that this is so much nicer than going through the difficult period of endless visitors at the funeral home, often those who are virtual strangers to the family. What also appealed to me was the fact that the whole congregation, including the men, came out for the funeral service, which was at 11 o'clock in the morning.

Afterward, lunch was served at the home of the deceased, and everyone was expected to be there.

A lot of our people were moving into the Hudsonville and Jenison area so the congregation grew steadily. The work was enjoyable here and the consistory most cooperative. One could never escape the fact that Rev. Vos had spent some years in this congregation and had definitely put a lasting stamp upon it. Throughout the years, even to this day, the older people liked to speak of something that Rev. Vos said or did.

In 1972 I was given permission to go to Jamaica to encourage and help Rev. Lubbers in his labors there. On my way out there, I intended to take the Jamaica plane from Chicago to Montego Bay. In fact, the plane did start out about 10 AM, but we were hardly airborne before an engine gave out. The pilot re-landed rather abruptly. The man sitting next to me said, "They almost killed us." I answered, "It wasn't that bad." In the terminal this man stayed close to me, possibly thinking that, "in unity there is strength." When I went for lunch he went along. At about two o'clock a call came over the intercom that the Jamaica passengers should go to the Delta desk. Soon after we arrived there, we were informed that there would be no room for us on that flight. The man responded, "That's twice."

Between three and four o'clock we boarded a flight to Jamaica. But we were no more than airborne and the announcement came over the intercom, "This plane will not stop in Atlanta, as intended, but at Jacksonville." My new friend responded, "That's three times. I'm going back to Chicago." I asked him whether he did not have a God in whom he put his trust. I told him that if God wanted me to go to Jamaica, I would get there, no matter what. He said, "Never mind. Don't start that kind of talk." From that time on he was silent, but at Jacksonville he disappeared, and I continued on my way without him.

Rev. Lubbers was looking forward to my coming and was sadly disappointed when I did not arrive as scheduled, without an explanation of my delay. In fact, I had requested that he be paged at the airport, but he never heard it. Since I did not know my exact destination I was not allowed to leave the airport. But I called a taxi driver who agreed that he would take me to a hotel in the city. The next morning, I visited the post office to get the Lubbers' address. They only knew the general direction. We headed that way and, when we got close, we stopped at a store. I walked in and called, "Does anybody here know Rev. Lubbers?" A lady in the store, who was also a neighbor of the Lubbers, told the taxi driver how to find their residence. How surprised they were to see me! If I had suddenly dropped out of the sky, they could not have been more elated. Rena was raking the lawn, and she dropped the rake, did not even greet me, but ran into the house crying, "George, George, Case is here!" Soon we were busy visiting the various churches, as well as teaching his students.

One Sunday evening we were coming home from a church service when the engine of our car began sputtering. Every time we climbed a hill the sputtering increased. Down hill we had no trouble. This part of the island was not very safe, especially not for white folk who might have money on them. So we sputtered along, breathing a prayer that we might make the next grade. We were thankful when we arrived home again.

I should tell about an interesting experience in one of Rev. Eliot's churches.¹ This church was on the eastern section of the island. To get there we had to get off the main road and ride five miles along an almost impassable road, full of deep ruts. Every time we dropped into a rut we wondered whether we would pull out. After that there was a forty-five minute climb to the church. A young woman, eight months pregnant, a Miss Hill, took it upon herself to lead us to our destination. She climbed easily along those rocks. When we arrived, the church mother set out two chairs for us, and told the women to keep away from us. When all was arranged in the tabernacle, the mother came out and said to the women, "Cume, Cume." So the women went in. It was evident that this mother was going to be sure that she had charge of the situation. So I told Rev. Lubbers to go to the pulpit at once and conduct this as a formal service.

The reason we had come was that Rev. Eliot had complained that this group did not want him to preach for them any more. So we were here to investigate what

the problem really was. A thunderstorm came up out of the sea. Immediately the mother ordered me away from the open window and moved my briefcase closer in as well. She wanted to remain in authority in her church. She also requested that we ordain two men, who in her estimation had come to "the state of grace." This we refused to do.

It took a lot of questioning. We even called aside Rev. Eliot with some of the men of the group. Finally the information seeped out that Rev. Eliot was chasing away the young people of the church. It took a bit for Rev. Eliot to admit why this charge was brought against him. But finally it came out that this group would have their love feasts at which curried chicken was enjoyed and everyone joined in a lot of singing. Emotions rose as the tempo increased, until two of the opposite sex would wander off to the tabernacle, or to the manse, or to the woods, to engage in sexual improprieties.

This we strongly condemned, agreeing with Rev. Eliot that these things ought not be. We insisted that either they would be willing to have Rev. Lubbers come there at regular intervals, or we would shake their dust from our feet. After a few days we were informed that they preferred the latter. No more was heard from them.

On the last Sunday I was there, we both preached in the Waterworks congregation, Rev. Lubbers in the morning and I in the afternoon. There was a couple with three children who had walked three miles to church in the morning and three miles back home. We told them that we would pick them up for the afternoon service, but by the time we arrived at their home they had long ago left for church.

During the service we had a severe electrical storm, so that I had to quit preaching for awhile. We all huddled in the center of the building and sang Psalter numbers. When the storm was over, the elder reminded the congregation of what I had already said, repeating it almost verbatim, and even adding parts of Rev. Lubbers' sermon of the morning. After the service we offered to take this family home, but we had water in our gas tank, so they were forced to walk home again.

Some of the older folk in Jamaica were taught the five points of Calvinism. When one woman was asked what Calvinism meant to her, she was able to respond, though she had little or no formal education, "I am nothing but a poor, lost sinner. God always loved me as one of his sheep. Christ died for his sheep, so also for me. He gave me faith, so that now I believe in Him. He will always care for me, protect and watch over me as one of

his sheep.” In her own way she did include all five points. Not a bad way to know Calvinism.

Two and a half years Mom enjoyed her new surroundings in Hudsonville, but gradually the full reality dawned on her, that no amount of exercise could change her condition. More and more she became discouraged with the effort, but we felt that as long as she was trying she would not give up completely.

Going to church was difficult for her, especially because the crowds bothered her, and she could not communicate. She did attend the Adult Bible Class even until the very last. On the last evening that she attended she suggested that we sing Psalter number 17.

One of the last two Sundays that she attended church, coming in by the back way with the least steps, she complained, “I can hardly do it anymore.” We also realized that it was getting very hard for her, but did not want to discourage her from going.

On Thursday evening, March 6, 1973, she complained that she was sick, terribly sick. I tried to get a local doctor, but none was available. It became evident that she might soon lose consciousness, so we called the ambulance, which took her to Blodgett hospital. Dr. Avery was there, waiting for her. He gave a complete report of her case history to the resident doctor without any notes before him. I was amazed how detailed he reported on all that had happened since he first saw her in 1948. Afterward he said to me, “I made one mistake. I said that you had gone to Wisconsin. I meant California.”

On Friday evening he told me that Mom’s heart was so severely damaged that she could not possibly recover. A year before that, he had called me into his office to show me x-rays of her heart. At that time he said, “Have you ever seen a heart as large as that? That is going to give us trouble.”

I urged Dr. Avery, if there was no possibility of recovery, to make the end as easy for her as possible. I did not want him to hook her up with all kinds of artificial means of survival, if it was hopeless anyway. During the night from Friday to Saturday the nurses did start her heart again. Again I urged the doctor not to add any unnecessary suffering. He gave the order to the nurses to let her rest as quietly as possible. That same evening she left us to enter her heavenly home. The next few days were almost like a nightmare. It is nice that people come and express their condolences, but this was so wearisome that I gave a sigh of relief when it was all over. What I did appreciate was that the night Mom died, the

family went to Fred and Ruth’s house where we sang Psalter numbers. I also appreciated the fact that on Sunday morning Prof. Hoeksema preached on Hebrews 4:15-16, which was very comforting. I also was glad that after the funeral we could be together as a family in the basement of Hudsonville church, where the ladies served us supper.

Mom was sixty years old when she died. She had a hard life behind her. Since she was twelve years old, she had had a weak heart, but she was still required to do much of the work in caring for a family of thirteen. Married life was not always easy either. There was not only our growing family, but also the near poverty conditions in the early years of our marriage. Besides, a certain extra responsibility rests on the shoulders of a “Juffrouw,” or minister’s wife.

So Allie and I were left with just the two of us. But the Lord has always provided, even in an amazing way.

For a few years, Ann Griffioen came in one day a week to clean the house.² Allie had a job of babysitting in a home where the mother had died and left the husband with three children. Later she worked a year and a half in the kitchen of Brookcrest Nursing Home washing dishes. And after that she had another job of babysitting for a lady who worked and needed someone to watch the little ones.

In the summer of 1974, I was asked to make another trip to Jamaica, this time with Rev. John Heys. Because this was so soon after Mother’s death, Allie accompanied me.

When we left, I picked up my tickets, assuming that Allie’s was included with mine. When we arrived at Kent County Airport, I had no tickets for Allie. They would furnish me with tickets to Chicago, but not beyond. When we took our seats in the plane, a man came to sit across from us, who said that he overheard us at the airport. He wanted to pay for her ticket to Jamaica. I told him that this would not be necessary, since I was meeting Rev. and Mrs. Heys in Chicago, who would help me pay for the ticket, if I lacked the money. Upon arrival in Chicago, the man accompanied us out of the plane and down the concourse insisting that he was going to buy a ticket for Allie. Since I did not know what he was up to, nor why he would be willing to do this, I insisted that this was not necessary. But he kept coming along. Finally I stopped and told him that we were not going on until he left us. Rev. Heys helped us buy a ticket for the rest of the trip.

We met Rev. and Mrs. Heys in Chicago, since they had gone earlier to Chicago to see her mother. Rev. Heys requested and received from the airlines a pass to sit in the cockpit of the plane on the trip to the island. So he sat in the cockpit from Chicago to the Bahamas, and I sat in the cockpit from the Bahamas to Jamaica. The captain kindly explained the various instruments to me while in flight, and told me to watch when we were making our descent.

We rented a motel room at Montego Bay and rented a car. We were supplied with two maids who made the meals and cleaned the rooms. Soon we were under way visiting the churches.

One task that was entrusted to us was the ordination of Kenneth Brown and Leonard Williams as ministers in the Jamaican churches. Rev. Heys made a trip to Shewsberry to pick up five women, relatives of Brown, who was to be ordained in Fort Williams. Rev. Frame read the Form for Ordination. At the close of the service, various people stepped forward to make a speech of congratulations. Especially the women from Shewsberry became very emotional and began singing and swaying. In fact, they almost pushed Mrs. Heys and Allie out of the tabernacle, so that Allie grabbed hold of Mrs. Heys. We decided that this was enough, so we told Rev. Frame to end with the benediction. He called them to order, pronounced the benediction, and then Rev. Heys and I left. How long the ceremony lasted in the tabernacle, we will never know.

One Sunday, Rev. Heys and I decided to join a service that was being conducted by Alvin Beckford. We quietly took our places in the back seat. He was preaching on the same text that I had used for the in-

stallation of Rev. Brown. We both were amazed how well he had remembered my sermon, and did not mind at all that he was repeating it. It just shows that the Jamaicans for the most part could not read well, but that they have learned to listen and retain what they hear.

Rev. Heys and I also supervised the ordination of Leonard Williams in Belmont by the sea. This congregation had a very poor tabernacle consisting of nothing more than a few posts with palm branches for covering. Since it was raining, the water was dripping down our backs. I suggested to an elder that we have another meeting place, so he offered his home. As we walked to his home, we walked through the weeds getting our suits wet and muddy. There the living room was set up for the service. Rev. Eliot requested that Leonard get down on his knees next to the table. Throughout the reading of the Form, Leonard was there behind the table. When Rev. Eliot came to the point of asking the questions he leaned over to Leonard, who lifted his head to answer. This went on with all the questions. Finally, he was allowed to get up and sit on a chair.

Later, Alvin Beckford was ordained in Cave Mountain, and Trevor Nish in Lacovia. But we did not participate in those ordinations.



Rev. and Mrs. Heys and Allie Hanco climb the hills to church in Jamaica.

During our stay on the island we had two funerals. One day we were informed that the sister of Kenneth Brown, who lived in the States, had been beheaded, and that her body was being shipped to her mother's home. The funeral was planned for a Sunday, so Rev. Heys and I agreed to take the service if they could have it at 7 o'clock in the morning. They agreed to this. After the service, the casket was placed on a pickup truck and taken somewhere to the hills where it was buried.

One Sunday morning while Rev. Heys was preaching in Waterworks, a man was called out. He came back, took his seat, and sat through the service. After the service, he asked if Rev. Heys would take the funeral for his seven-year-old boy. Rev. Heys looked at him in amazement. "Yes," he said, "I was informed during the service that my boy, who was in the hospital, had died." The next day Rev. Heys and I went to conduct the funeral. We found that the casket was not yet ready. The ladies in the church had washed the body, and others were making the casket. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon they were ready for the service. We went up an incline, set the casket on a chair and the father stood by the casket. Rev. Heys preached the funeral sermon. This man's wife was with the women who stood to the side, availing themselves of every opportunity to sing. Then we went to the top of the hill where a grave had been dug. I conducted the committal service. The father wanted to say a few words, but the neighbors thought it was growing late and started shoveling in the dirt. I took the man by the arm and walked down the hill with him. I said to him, "You have not cried since your boy died, have you?" He shook his head. I asked him, "Why didn't your wife stand by the casket with you?" He answered "It's not her boy." Then I suggested to him that he go off somewhere by himself and have a good cry. "And," I added, "tell God how you feel. He will understand." A few days later he came to me and whispered that he had cried. Strange! These people were often so emotional, and yet at funerals they seemed to hide their feelings.

The time had come to return home. The air was very turbulent on the way home, so that we had quite a bumpy ride. Most of the way it was like riding on a rough road.

This same year I went to Lynden to spend a few weeks there. Since I was alone in Lynden's parsonage, the daughters of Ralph and Etta Vander Meulen called every day to inquire about my welfare. Many of congregation either brought in food or invited me over, so that my main meals were usually supplied.

Hudsonville PRC continued to grow. Every week it became increasingly difficult to find seats in the auditorium. We were soon compelled to place some of the people in the basement. Later, we installed a closed circuit TV for those who sat downstairs. But this could be only a temporary measure. Almost everybody talked about building a new church.

We looked for a piece of land at our present site off 32nd Street, but the farmer who owned that entire section and raised corn on it demanded an exorbitant price. So we bought land by the water tower on 36th Street. No one was happy with that, especially because New Holland did not yet run through and the people coming from the south had to go way around to get there. Then someone bought the entire cornfield off 32nd Street for condos. He was interested in having people move into these condos, so he offered us the top of the hill, exactly the piece of land we had been wanting to buy.

A ground breaking ceremony was held and the work begun. We had opportunity to sell our old building, so we rented the public high school auditorium and met there until the church was ready. On Thanksgiving Day of 1977 the cornerstone was laid with a short ceremony.

At first there was some objection to building a new church. Some of the older members were attached to the church edifice where they had worshipped for so many years. The architect suggested that we acquire as much help from the members of the congregation as possible. This had a very favorable result, for even those who had been opposed felt that this new building belonged to them, because they had done some of the work on it.

In every congregation, there are quiet unassuming members of the church, who are virtually unnoticed among us, yet are a real blessing to others. These are often wives who are submissive to their husbands, yet in a kindly way do guide their mates with spiritual wisdom. As mothers in the home they teach both by word and example. They often have a word for the weary, encouragement for the distressed, a pot of soup or some baked goods for the sick and aged.

One of these saints had seen her children grow up and leave the shelter of the home. She had experienced the loss of her husband and was now in a home for the aged.

One morning I found her poring over her Psalter. To my inquiry, she answered that she was reading the Lord's Day on which the minister was to preach the following Sunday. She said that her memory was so bad that if she

did not read the Lord's Day every day she would not be prepared to listen properly on Sunday.

I often saw her in the audience, listening so intently that, unawares to herself, she was sitting on the very edge of her seat. That alone is an inspiration for any minister. Besides, what an untold blessing these women are for their children and grandchildren as well as for others. These saints may far exceed us in glory. ❖

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:

- Rylan Vance, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rich Sleda—Byron Center, MI
Brycen Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lee Jansma—Cornerstone, IN
Brooke Nicole, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Meyer—Doon, IA
Matthew Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Kuiper—Faith, MI
Luke, son of Mrs. Christy VerStrate—Georgetown, MI
James Elliot, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael VanderKolk—Grandville, MI
Tatum Allira, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Brummel—Hull, IA
Jaylie Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike DeJager—Hull, IA
Hanna May, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Irwin Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, Alberta, CAN
Caleb James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Vlietstra—Kalamazoo, MI
Sarah Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Moore—Loveland, CO
Rebecca Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Griess—Loveland, CO
Madison Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Hollema—Loveland, CO
Joshua Brady, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rick Span—Lynden, WA
Gavyn Frank, son of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Hiskes—Peace, IL
Ryan Marcus, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Drnek—Trinity, MI

Endnotes

¹ Rev. Eliot was a minister in the Jamaican churches.

² Ann is the wife of Arie Griffioen, a nephew of Rev. and Mrs. Hanko.

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

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:

- Abigail DeVries—Byron Center, MI
Tricia Mingerink—Byron Center, MI
Sara Huisken—Redlands, CA

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 Griess and Miss Heidi Gunnink—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Tim VanTil and Miss Amy Hekstra—Byron Center, MI
Mr. David Blankespoor and Miss Sheila Van Maanen—Doon, IA
Mr. Nathan Decker and Miss Jessica Karsemeyer—Faith, MI
Mr. Todd Kaptein and Miss Vonda Bleyenbergh—Georgetown, MI
Mr. David Mokma and Miss Annalynn Kamps—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Kyle Kooienga and Miss Sarah Van Uffelen—Holland, MI
Mr. Eric Pols and Miss Katherine Peterson—Hope, MI
Mr. Jon Mingerink and Miss Tina Zuverink—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Kyle Lems and Miss Jessica Van Den Top—Hull, IA
Mr. Mark Feenstra and Miss Bethany Haak—Southwest, MI

Music in the Woods (1)

Though the sun shone brightly overhead, the shadows were thick and dark in the forest. The trees were massive and the foliage was dense. The faraway rat-a-tat beat of a woodpecker's tapping was the background to other bird melodies nearby. It was a joyful chorus, with only the rustling of leaves in the breeze now and then for accompaniment. This was western Michigan in the early 1800s.

A small village of Indians camped alongside Black Lake, with one Congregationalist missionary and one government agent living close by. It was a quiet life, but primitive. Travel was difficult and roads were little more than hiking trails through the woods. Visitors were few—until one December day in 1846.

Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte came from the Netherlands to look for a place to move with his congregation. Life had been difficult for them in Holland. The Reformed doctrines of God's absolute sovereignty in salvation that he and his congregation confessed and loved were not tolerated there. They had been forced to separate from the State Reformed Church along with a handful of other congregations. They were a poor and persecuted little band. No one would hire them to work if they were from *that* church. They were fined and arrested. Soldiers were stationed within their own houses to harass them. The potato crop in the Netherlands, their main source of food, had failed. The situation for these devout Dutch farmers had become des-



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

perate. Maybe life would be better for them in America.

Van Raalte dug through the snow to see what kind of ground lay beneath the trees. It was good, dark soil. His farmers would like that. Lake Michigan and several rivers were situated nearby. Transportation could be had through these waters. Yes, life could be better here.

He looked up at the trees. Trees could be used to build houses and shops. He could see many houses lining the streets here in a new town. It would be a new Holland for them. And a new church, without persecution, could be built here too. And schools. Yes, life could be better.

But easier? He looked at the trees again. They would need to be cut down, and sawn, and nailed. They would need to be cleared away to make room for gardens and fields. The men who followed him to this new land were not lumbermen or builders; they were only poor farmers. No, it would not be easier. They would need help. He looked up again, this time in his soul. Help would surely come.

Help would come from their Lord in heaven.

Find the following underlined words in the puzzle below:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Psalm 121:1, 2

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

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

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