

the **Banner** *of Truth*

August 2019
Volume 85, No. 8

The Official Periodical
of the Netherlands Reformed
Congregations of the
United States and Canada

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Cover Photo: Sunset over poppy field | © Pexels.com

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

Publication Number: (USPS 041-540)

Monthly, Official Publication of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations of the United States and Canada. Typeset (Archetype Graphic Solutions) at Pompton Plains, NJ; printed and distributed (AlphaGraphics) at Midland Park, NJ.

Subscription rate: \$30.00 in the U.S. and Canada, payable in U.S. funds; \$35.00 to foreign countries, payable in U.S. funds. Rates listed are for one-year subscriptions.

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Copy for *The Banner of Truth* is due the 1st of the month prior to month of publication. All copy (including announcements, obituaries, anniversary notices, and ads) should be sent to Dr. E. Nieuwenhuis. All announcements submitted for publication must be typed and are subject to editorial policy. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to the subscription manager. Change of address should be forwarded to the subscription manager one month in advance of moving date. Please provide both new and old address.

Archived copies of *The Banner of Truth* (1934 to present) are available at Digibron.nl.

PERIODICAL: Postage paid at Mahwah, NJ

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

The Banner of Truth
11 Split Rock Road, Boonton Township, NJ 07005

Additional Denominational Sources for Printed Matter

Other denominational periodicals include: *Paul* (mission periodical), 377 Poldon Drive, Norwich, Ontario, Canada N0J 1P0; *Insight Into* (for young people), Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg, Secretary, 8920-3 Broadway Street, Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada V2P 5W1; NRCEA School Journal *Learning and Living*, Plymouth Christian School, 1000 Ball Ave., Grand Rapids, MI 49505.

For a list of denominationally printed Reformed literature write to: Netherlands Reformed Book and Publishing Committee, Mr. Tom Fluit, 0-121 Leonard St. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534, or e-mail nrcbnp@gmail.com. For a list of Reformed material which embraces additional publishing companies, write to our discount book distributor: Bible Truth Books, P.O. Box 1290, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

For free sermons write to: Treasured Meditations, P.O. Box 2753, Grand Rapids, MI 49501.

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Meditation

The Parable of the Seed

Rev. J. Spaans (1930-2009)

“And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (Mark 4:26-29).

The Lord spake many times in parables, using natural illustrations to bring out rich, spiritual instruction as in the parable of the sower, the parable of the tares, etc. In verse 34 of this chapter we read, “But without a parable He not unto them: and when they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples.”

We would like to meditate with you upon the parable of the seed which has much instruction for us, taking notice of the seed, the ground, the growth, and the harvest. In it the Lord is instructing us concerning the kingdom of God. It could be used to explain the building of the kingdom by the Lord until the end of the world when the final harvest will take place. However, we will consider it this time in regard to the work of God in an individual soul.

We are first to take notice of the seed. It is something with which we are all familiar. There are small seeds and large seeds; in nature there is a great variety of seed. It was a very simple illustration which the Lord used. Normally, seed is planted into the soil. However, the seed in this parable is the Word of God. It must be sown upon all waters, preached unto all men. God’s servants are called to proclaim that word, to preach death in Adam and life in Christ. In all earnestness they are to proclaim unto man his lost state, praying that this precious seed may be planted by the Holy Spirit into the heart of fallen man. Office bearers, with the help of the Lord, can only bring the message to the ears of man, but the Holy Spirit can apply it to the heart. That is the wonderful work of the Lord. Paul could plant, Apollos could water, but only God could give the increase.

The Lord is free and sovereign in His ways. Generally, the Lord works by the reading and proclamation of His Word, the conversation of His people, and the distribution of His Word or other written materials, such as sermons or tracts. The Lord is free and able to use the feeblest means. We know how on the day of Pentecost the Lord used the seed of His Word, accompanied by the Spirit so richly, to prick three thousand souls, and in the discourse of Paul by a river side, the spiritual seed was planted by the power of God in the heart of Lydia and her household. In both

examples, hard hearts were broken to receive the seed. As the farmer breaks the ground with the plow and harrow, so the Holy Spirit breaks open hearts hardened through our deep fall in order to plant that blessed seed in its depths where it cannot be seen by the eye of natural man.

Verse 27 tells us clearly that it is not the work of man to make this seed grow: “And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” Just as the farmer can, with the strength given by the Lord, plant his fields, so the Lord uses man to scatter the seed, but only the Lord can cause it to penetrate and grow. The farmer can go and look at his field many times, but he cannot give the sunshine and rain needed for the germination and further growth of the seed which was planted, whether it be corn, wheat, or barley. This is also true spiritually. We may look and even, at times, be inclined to say that there is no fruit upon the Word, forgetting that both naturally and spiritually there can be life and growth which remains hidden for a season.

It cannot permanently remain hidden, however, for the spiritual seed planted by God in the heart of man will grow roots downward and bring forth a blade upward. What gladness fills the heart of the farmer when he sees the blade spring through the earth. Then he knows the seed was not cast in vain. However, he still has many fears whether the blade will really grow to be a full, ripe ear. The parable of the sower clearly describes four different results of the seed which was sown. Many storms will still pass over this blade, and the farmer knows that some blades turn out to be fruitless suckers. A sucker is a stalk which never bears an ear, and therefore has no value. How many children of God have feared that they are no more than a sucker—only show, and having no value. How important it is to examine ourselves; man is such a dangerous creature.

The text also speaks about growth—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Here we find described—babes in grace, young men, and fathers. The appearing of the blade proves the life of the plant. What a comfort for a farmer when he sees the blades appear and even more of a comfort for the office bearers when they see these blades appear upon the acre of the church. To what could this be compared in a spiritual sense? Life appears. It shows signs of repentance. It shows signs of great interest and love for God and His people. Ruth, as she crossed the border of Israel, was a clear picture of one of these blades. Wonderful are the works of the Lord. The dead heart then becomes alive.

That which the Lord regenerates will shoot forth a blade. That blade will experience many trials. It is not immediately a stalk with an ear, as in the second stage. No, it reads, "First the blade, then the ear." Many a day and night has passed over this child. We know that in nature there are just as many days as there are nights, but there are also many days when the light of the sun is clouded. In the same way, the soul has varied experiences, conflicts with temptations, struggles with the Prince of Darkness, and disappointments within. There are times that foundations are made of the gifts of grace, only to lose their comfort because they miss the only name given under heaven whereby they must be saved. The taller the stalk becomes, the more it bends and trembles under the stormy winds of trials. Yet, this is the Lord's way, causing the roots to be more deeply rooted. By grace, that which grows in the depth has the most profit. It is as a tree which looks the best in the summer with all its foliage, but the best part of its growth is in the winter when the growth is in the roots. The soul which may be deeply rooted in the work of the Triune God will by grace bear the richest fruit.

We then read about the full corn in the ear. Here again the Lord's ways are wonderful. As the ear becomes riper, a bending down may be seen. An ear of corn, as it fills into the kernel, stands straight along the stalk, but as it ripens and becomes heavier, the shank begins to bend and the full ear points downward. What a rich illustration of spiritual life. The more growth there may be in the soul of those heavenly graces centered in a Triune God, the humbler

and more dependent it is. Does not the Bible say that unless you become as a little child, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven?

There is one more thought about the full corn in the ear. Those familiar with the natural stalk of corn in its ear realize that the connection between the ear and the stalk becomes weaker. This we find in the harvest. "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." When the fruit is ripe, the harvest begins. When the ear on the stalk is ripe, the connection is weak and just a slight shaking of the stalk causes the ear to fall off. Many times it is only a light illness which takes the ripe fruit home to glory. What a blessing if we may receive grace to grow humbler and more dependent upon the Lord in everything.

Young and old, we are all traveling to that great eternity. The Lord still provides that the seed of His Word may be sown. It shows us that it is still possible to be saved—not from our side but only from the Lord's side by the internal call of His Word. Remember that time continues on. The harvest day is coming when the ripe fruit will be gathered in, and all that is not genuine will be burned with unquenchable fire. It will be terrible to be lost under the administration of God's Holy Word. Babes, young men, and fathers in grace, the Lord shall never forsake that which His hand has begun. Isaiah 41:14 reads, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." □



Bible Study

The Life of Isaac (5)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

Based on Genesis 24:61-67

Rebekah had received precious treasures from Isaac. She had heard about him but had not yet seen him. When she had come home, many emotions must have filled her heart. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, had told Laban and Bethuel how the Lord had led him in a right way, "To take my master's brother's daughter unto his son." Laban and Bethuel had to admit, "The thing proceedeth from the LORD. We cannot speak unto thee bad or good." They gave permission for Rebekah to go with this servant to be his master's son's wife. Eliezer worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth. There is yet one request from Rebekah's brother and mother, "Let the damsel abide with us for a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go."

Rebekah's choice

Now that the Lord had blessed Eliezer's mission, he was eager to return to his master as soon as possible to make known the success the Lord had granted. However, the parents agreed that Rebekah herself would decide. It would have been reasonable to expect her to have a little time with her family before departing for the long journey. It is not a little step to leave everything behind. "Hearken, O daughter," we read in Psalm 45:10, "And consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." However, Rebekah's answer is, "I will go." Rebekah's heart is inclined to follow Eliezer in the unknown way to him whose treasures she has seen. She has seen so much of his riches, his glory, and his suitableness that she desires to go to him as soon as possible.

There is a time in the life of sinners when it has pleased the Lord to enlighten their eyes that, after all the impossibilities from their side, they may see an opening, a door of hope. They may see that there is a suitable and willing Saviour who can do what they never can no longer do, and their heart is longing to know Him. Christ is the greater Isaac, the Son of God's good pleasure, the Son of a divine miracle, born in the fullness of time. This greater Isaac (whose name, we remember, means laughing or son of joy) prepares for sinners a holy delight, for there is a way of salvation through which God's attributes are glorified, and salvation can be received in an honest way. Who can describe what joy and longing fills their heart when God shows them something of the riches, the preciousness, the love, and the suitableness of this Person, even if it is but from far away? They are persuaded in their heart that outside of Him there is no life and are inclined to seek their life outside of themselves in Him.

So, Rebekah will go immediately. She does not want to wait one more week. Then her family blessed Rebekah and let her go. Rebekah did not know the way to Isaac. There are many so-called believers who have no difficulty with finding the Greater Isaac. They do not have to make a long wilderness journey for this, they just step out of the tent and Isaac stands before the door. That is not the way with the living Church. When God is working, He allures them and afterward leads them into the wilderness. In their life it is such an unknown way, and He is such a hidden Person. They know that salvation is to be found in Him alone, but Him they do not know. For them the Word becomes so precious; they listen to get instruction and to hear about Him and who He is. They go to God's house with a desire that He may be proclaimed and may be revealed to them.

Rebekah's journey

There she goes. The jewels, the treasures from Isaac, may still be shining when she goes into the wilderness. It is now a different time for her when she was at home. There they have eaten and drunk. Do you know of this time in your life when you sometimes could eat and drink, in your first love, in the longings of your soul for an unknown Person, but also the opening of a way at a time you did not see the way anymore? In the wilderness it is so different; there is heat, a burning heat of the eastern sun; the sand is blowing and dust will soon cover your jewels and treasures. There is thirst and you may hear beasts of prey roaring. It is different from being at home. On the journey the beautiful face and clean clothes become dirty. There, thoughts may arise in the heart. How will it be to the end of this journey? Will I be able to come there? Will beasts of prey devour me? If I come to Isaac, yes, though I long

for him, what will Isaac say of me? Will he be disappointed? Will I be welcome—one from such a far country, and from such a family?

It is God's way to lead Rebekah to the greater Isaac as He does all other wilderness travelers. "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." However, that does not mean that they always see that the Lord is leading them. Rebekah does not know that Isaac is waiting for her. We read in verse 63, "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field." He was meditating, or praying, for her. He may have pleaded, "Lord make the journey to prosper, and keep her safe." He knew how dangerous the desert could be. The greater Isaac, Christ, also prays for His people. His prayer is founded on the basis of His mediatorial work. He prays for their gathering in. He prays, "Send Thy Spirit that their hearts may be inclined, that they may be kept on their journey." He knows of the dangers of the road. He knows the strength and power of the enemy and their own evil heart. He knows the power of Satan and the might of sin. The blessed greater Isaac, Christ, is always interceding for the leading and preservation of His bride. However, that was not known by Rebekah, and so it is with God's Church.

The greater Isaac, Christ, also prays for His people. His prayer is founded on the basis of His mediatorial work. He prays for their gathering in. He prays, "Send Thy Spirit that their hearts may be inclined, that they may be kept on their journey."

Rebekah's reception by Isaac

We read in verse 63, "And he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming." Isaac is the first one. He saw them coming, but then also "Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel." There is still uncertainty in her, for she asked, "What man

is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" Oh, they are unforgettable moments when Eliezer says, "This is my master." She has seen so much in him and realizes her unworthiness that she cannot stay on her camel; she bows deeply before him. There she lies, a dust-covered, tired, undeserving Rebekah. She takes her veil and covers herself. Eliezer has been a friend of the bridegroom, leading the bride to the bridegroom. What a privilege if we may proclaim, like this servant, "It is my Master." God's servants have such a beautiful work when they may proclaim His glory and His beauty in adoration. Like John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God," when they may point away from themselves, when they may recommend Him and may declare Him who invites wearied and heavy-laden ones, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This blessed Christ is still proclaimed to all of you as the LORD, who has the right to your heart and life, and there is a place. He still invites and calls.

This bride is received and accepted by Isaac. It is but a little word, accepted, but how great for Rebekah who has seen the riches of Isaac. She may now be received and brought into his mother's tent. Christ has merited a place

again within His Father's house. God's children may receive a place in the communion of God. What delight filled the heart of Rebekah after the long journey; now she had come home to be with Isaac, her beloved bridegroom. God's children may here have some foretastes of it, but what it will be to be forever with the Lord. Here the journey remains a wilderness journey. Here they often have to miss the

nearness of the Lord, also because of their own wandering away from Him. There, however, they will never be far away from Him. They will see the King in His beauty and glory; they will adore Him and give Him all the honor for what He has given them. □

(To be continued)



Lessons in Doctrine

The Fruit of the Spirit

Rev. M. Karens, Middelburg, the Netherlands

(Translated from De Saambinder, June 6, 2019)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23a).

Paul had great concerns. The Galatians had allowed themselves to be swept along by the doctrines of the Judaists. They were false apostles who taught that the laws of the ceremonies, especially circumcision, still had to be kept and, in addition, that a person was justified before God not only through faith but also by means of the works of the law (marginal notes). It seems as if the Galatians were bewitched (Galatians 3:1).

The apostle writes a strongly-worded letter. There is no other way to salvation than through faith in Jesus Christ. That is what Paul has preached among them (Galatians 1:6&7). God's children have been regenerated by the power of God's Spirit. Christ has freed them from the slavishness under the law (verse 13). They may live by faith out of Christ. They may walk in the Spirit (verse 16). They still, however, remain a dual person. When spirit and flesh in a person are placed over against one another, then by the spirit is meant that portion of the person which has been regenerated by the Spirit, and by the flesh is meant the natural depravity which still cleaves to the regenerated person (marginal notes).

In the closing of the epistle, Paul comes to a very gripping contrast. But...Over against the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) he places the fruits of the Spirit (verse 22). Luther, in his well-known commentary of the epistle to the Galatians writes, “These words appear much the same as Jesus' discourse, ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits... Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit’” (Matthew 7:16). That is why personal examination is necessary. How is it with the tree of your life? Have you, by the light of the Spirit of Pentecost, already seen your corrupt fruits?

Paul lists seventeen works. They are the works which the flesh of the depraved condition of our nature brings forth and wherein the depraved nature of mankind has pleasure (marginal notes). The listing which Paul provides is a loose compilation. He ends it with the words “against such there is no law.”

The fruit of the Spirit—nine matters form one fruit; they are inseparably bound together. Where the Spirit of Pentecost works in the heart, they are revealed. They are different grapes from the cluster of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit takes them from the fullness of Jesus Christ and applies them to the heart. They shall glorify Me. It is to the profit of the Church—the body of Christ—of His ascension, that He by His Holy Spirit in us, that is, His members, pours out the heavenly gifts.

The fruit of the Spirit—they are the works of the Spirit of God in regenerated persons which become apparent in the rebirth (marginal notes). These fruits were perfectly seen in the life of Christ. They were awakened, worked upon, and strengthened by the Spirit of Pentecost in the heart and life of those who are His. When only is this fruit visible? When a sinner is cut off from Adam and through a true faith is engrafted into Christ, the true Vine. Oh, beg night and day for that wonder of regeneration, that new creation, that awakening out of death that God works in us by His Spirit without us.

What fruit does the apostle mention to the Galatians?

Love

The first fruit of the Spirit is love. This love far exceeds all earthly love. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned (Song of Solomon 8:7b). The original word which Paul used is the most profound and has the deepest meaning for love which is found in the Bible. It is the love which proceeds from God.

This is the word which is used in the well-known text, "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16). It is a godly, one-sided, unselfish love. This love can no more be found in fallen man; it is the fruit of the work of God in the heart. This love comes out of God. Spiritual life is rooted in God. It is a love which is out of Him, through Him, and unto Him. All of God's children will confess with the apostle of love, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

Joy

The second fruit Paul mentions is joy. Grace brings this fruit along with it. The Greek word which is used here is *chara*. Grace is *charis*. In this way these words and matters are very closely related to each other. This joy is a hearty joy in God through Christ. The writers of the marginal notes tell us that it is through the Holy Ghost, originating in the assurance that we have peace with God. It is a joy which is totally different from the superficial joy of the world. "Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Do you know something of this fruit of the Spirit? There is in the life of grace a hearty sorrow about sin and a hungering and thirsting for the Saviour. What great joy is experienced when room may be seen in Christ Jesus. Oh, how the heart leaps for joy when it pleases God to reveal His Son in me. "But let the righteous, blessed of yore, Joy in their God as ne'er before, Faith's victory achieving."

Peace

It is a peace with God. This fruit brings peace in the heart because their life is out of Christ who is our Peace and who places us in a right relationship with God. It is the peace which Christ has merited through His blood for warmongers out of Paradise. Through the Spirit, He applies this peace to the heart. He spoke, "Peace be unto you, My peace I give unto you." How blessed is the person who may share in this sweet peace. Do not rest before you can say with Paul, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

Longsuffering

The word longsuffering literally means to have extended patience. This fruit is Christian patience. When we, through the Spirit, may learn something experientially, how longsuffering the Lord is with us, then we can understand the poet, "Jehovah will not chide with us forever nor always keep His anger, but deliver His people from their sorrows and distress. He has not crushed the flock of His possession, not dealt with us according to transgression; He chastens, but with love and tenderness" (Psalter 444:4). This fruit gives steadfastness to the soul also in days of trial, oppression, and assault. The experiencing of this fruit allows us to forgive our neighbor four hundred ninety times. How beneficial is this fruit, so that by means of it also our neighbor may be won over for Christ.

Gentleness

This is a property (attribute) of the LORD. He is an overflowing Fountain of all good (Confession of Faith, Article 1). Through the Spirit of Pentecost, who takes this fruit from out of the Father and the Son, it is poured out into the heart and permeates all their inclinations and affections. With this fruit a child of God can and will, even in difficult circumstances, be always friendly, hospitable, and helpful. May it be our daily prayer, "Oh, Son conform us to Thy image."

Goodness

This goodness, just as the other fruits, is not a characteristic which is naturally found in us. It is the longing to do good to both friends and enemies. Paul points us in the right way. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:20&21).

Faith

This word *pistis* has a different meaning here. Certainly, upright faith is also a gift of the Spirit, but here it will especially mean to be trustworthy and reliable. This fruit comes from God. He is as faithful as He is strong. Even so must God's child be trustworthy in his work and walk.

Meekness

This fruit refers to the tolerating of others. In Greek the word means humility, friendliness. It is to submit oneself to God, His Word, and His "rod" (Matthew Henry). It is learned in the school of Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

Temperance

This ninth fruit indicates modesty or controlling of oneself. It becomes visible in our walk and our work. A true Christian strives against the evil desires of sinful flesh. He lives by means of the Spirit and knows both modesty and time. "Teach us to refrain ourselves for excessiveness."

Oh, examine what is the condition of the tree of your life. Does it bring forth the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit? Let it be our Pentecost prayer, "O let Thy Spirit be my constant aid." The closer God's child may live to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more this fruit shall reveal itself.

Is there a problem in your life? Is that the reason for your unfruitfulness? Note: Song of Solomon 4:16, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." □



From Our Inheritance

A Prayer for Restoration (1)

Rev. W.C. Lamain (1904-1984)

(Translated from *Voor Stille Uren*, 1995 Den Hertog B.V., Houten, the Netherlands, 4th printing)

“Turn again our captivity, O LORD. as the streams to the south” (Psalm 126:4).

Our text contains a prayer from the liberated Church for restoration and deliverance. God had done great things for His people and had given evidence of His love and covenant faithfulness confirmed in Christ. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was used by God to chastise the people who had departed from Him. They had been removed to Babylon as exiles because they had shamefully broken His covenant. God had visited His people with the rod and with trouble. The burden in Babylon had been great for a continuation of seventy years. In that heathen land, His people were stepped on and mocked; yet, that faithful covenant God had not forgotten them completely. No matter how terribly they had sinned or how unfaithful they had been to the God of their salvation, God had continued to think of them, and His eye had been open for them.

The enemy would have liked to annihilate those people so that they would cease being a nation, but God's purpose toward them was different. One day the Messiah would be born from those people. Yea, at the end of the ages, God would fulfill the promises he had made to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the honor of His name.

No matter how difficult it was for the people during their lengthy exile to believe that the Lord would grant deliverance, God had done so.

Those people had been humbled and had departed from their idolatry; then Jehovah remembered His covenant. The reason that they began to acknowledge their guilt and return unto the Lord was the fruit of the covenant. These people had nothing of themselves, and just like every one of the true people of the Lord, they experienced that in their fall in Adam they have lost everything. They bowed and acknowledged God's justice and righteousness. It flowed forth out of the good pleasure of the Father because of the merits obtained by Christ, and it happened because God's Spirit worked that desire in their heart.

It is all out of Him, through Him, and unto Him. God worked in the heart of Cyrus so that he opened the gates of the prison, and the seed of Jacob could again return to their own land. The deliverance from Babylon was a pledge

of spiritual deliverance from the power of Satan and the rule of sin by the great Deliverer, Christ Jesus. He delivers completely and eternally. Notice, just like it was a wonder for those who returned from Babylon, so it is also for people who are delivered, not by gold or silver but through the precious blood of Christ. Who will ever be able to fathom such a wonder? Yet, this is certain; it brings about joy and happiness to all those who are privileged to receive it. The greatest fact of all, however, is that God is glorified by it and Christ is exalted.

God is addressed with the name Jehovah, a name which appears in Scripture many times. It is God's greatest name and can only be given to Him. The Lord Jesus also carried this name because He also is God. We read in Jeremiah 23:6: “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”

In addressing the Lord in such a manner, they do not only recognize that He is the Almighty Controller of the universe, and calleth those things which be not as though they were, but that He is also able to command Zion's deliverance. He can do that especially as Jehovah, merciful and gracious and of great goodness. It is that God who passes by the unrighteousness of His people because His wrath is dispelled in the satisfaction of the Mediator and His omnipotence is seen in their deliverance. Yea, it is He who

God created and adorned man with His own image in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. We can never blame God for the fact that we have lost that image and that we live on in this life without Him. The full responsibility lies upon us. Oh, that for once in our lives we might confess our guilt before God with tears and with weeping.

by means of His promises made to the Messiah, as well as to His Church, must do so, thereby to show that He is the unchangeable One in His Being as well as in His promises, and to become what He is, namely fulfiller and confirmer of His precious promises. It is for this reason that the name Jehovah gives the Church, upon trustworthy grounds, so much freedom to come before God's countenance with all her needs. There is no danger that they will be deceived, but they may do so with complete confidence. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth forever: forsake not the work of Thine own hands.”

Oh reader, have you already learned to know God? Have you learned to know Him not only as the Just, the Holy One, but also as Jehovah, unchangeable in His Being and in the fulfillment of His promises as that God who carries out all the warnings which He has made? Poor, deathly poor is the person who does not know God. How terrible it will be to live on and soon die in this manner.

God created and adorned man with His own image in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. We can never blame God for the fact that we have lost that image and that we live on in this life without Him. The full responsibility lies upon us. Oh, that for once in our lives we might confess our guilt before God with tears and with weeping. God revealed Himself in Christ as Father. Christ spoke in this manner, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world" (John 17:6). You are living under this revelation even in the present day. Will it be to the increasing of the severity of your judgment? May God forbid it! May He grant you understanding enlightened with godly light and grant you the knowledge wherein only eternal life can be found.

God has promised His people, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." Oh, that your missing might be revealed. The revelation of that Being brings us into the missing of that Being. That missing can never press down enough upon us. Oh, how sad it is that we have so few concerns. In general, there is more of a confessing of what we are missing than a living evidence of the missing. Oh, that it would become different. Then the desire would come to the foreground, "Turn my captivity."

The Church sighs to Jehovah to turn from them their captivity. It was only a small number of the people of the covenant which had returned to Canaan. The greatest part of the ten tribes had remained in Assyria. When Cyrus gave them permission to return, many of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the complete tribe of Levi did not take up his offer. There were differing reasons as to why they did not return as a unified group. A portion of the people did not even consider it. They felt at home in this heathen land, and they were completely assimilated. They had no desire for the land of their forefathers and even less for the service of the Lord. They were indifferent when hearing about the offer to return and lived on in the sinful life of the people around them. It can never be fully calculated what moral and spiritual damage a war brings along with it for thousands and tens of thousands. Just think of the moral destruction which occurs, both by those who partake in battles and those who remain behind. How often afterwards there is a laxity and looseness to be seen in morals. People no longer go up to God's house, and many are not satisfied with a stable home life. During war time

people often exercise their freedom in committing sin and in indulging their evil desires. Also, upon this earth there is nothing new under the sun.

Thousands of Israelites remained at ease in Babylon and considered it foolishness to return to their fatherland. Sin is a slippery slope. In addition to that, many remained behind out of fear for the difficulties of the journey as well as the opposition which they anticipated with the rebuilding of the city and the temple. With some this was the result of unbelief; with others it was because of laziness, a worldly insight, or maintaining other supposed benefits. Maintaining their livelihood also played a great role for many. They began to reason—the land is destroyed, and the city has been burned; therefore, what kind of future will there be for us and our families? All in all, it was only a small group of people who left Babylon.

Those who returned from Babylon were not indifferent to the preservation and saving of those who stayed behind. Because of their kinship they felt a unity with them. The returning Israelites realized how dangerous it was for those who remained to despise the offered freedom and to remain among the heathen. Deep in their heart they carried not only a prayer for themselves but also for their fellow brethren who had remained in Babylon. God Himself had relieved the oppression of the people and fulfilled the promise once made unto them.

The matter lay heavily upon the returning Israelites so that they now yearned, "Turn again our captivity, O LORD." They raised an ardent prayer up unto the Lord that all of the captives might be returned. It was as if it were their cause, for that is how deeply they felt it in their hearts. That prayer was not only for their fellow brethren, but it also concerned them personally.

After the initial joy the Israelites received as a result of the great deeds the Lord had shown unto them, there came sorrow and grief. When the Lord had loosed their bonds and sent deliverance, they thought that all of their difficulties lay behind them. With great zeal, desire, and love they began to rebuild the city and the temple. They thought to themselves that everything would go well. They saw before their eyes, as it were, the rebuilt temple and the full service of the Lord restored. Oh yes, that is how it is with every child of God who may share in that first love. □

(To be continued)

They would dance with the devil all day and then dine with Christ at night. They would live all their lives in Delilah's lap and then go to Abraham's bosom when they die. There are many who desire to die the death of the righteous but do not endeavor to live the life of the righteous. Gladly would they have their end like theirs but not their way. They would be saints in heaven but not saints on earth. If you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competition with Him.

— *Matthew Henry*



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Kalamazoo, MI

Since the start of the Question & Answers page in The Banner of Truth, I have repeatedly received questions regarding the content of the Form for the Administration of Holy Baptism. All questions center on the phrase in the closing prayer of thanksgiving concerning the baptized children, namely, “that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins.” Even though these and the like questions do not really fit the criteria prescribed for this page, I feel that because of the confusion and sincerity of the questions an answer is necessary and hopefully beneficial.

The importance as well as the prevalence of the matter raised is confirmed by the fact that last year our brother in the ministry in Holland, Rev. B. Labee, also addressed this self-same matter in *De Saambinder*, the official publication of our sister denomination. I realize the dilemma: based on this very phrase in the closing prayer of the Form, are now all baptized children indeed saved? Perhaps a better question to ask would be: Does the Form indeed state that the sins of every baptized child are forgiven? I would like to formulate my answer with a yes and a no. To approach it this way is not meant to add to but hopefully to remove the confusion.

First, we answer *yes* when we consider and realize that Holy Baptism—also infant baptism—is a sacrament instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ for the strengthening of faith. As such, the sacrament of Holy Baptism is *not less in essence* than the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. This is often forgotten. Essentially, the sacraments are the *same* in the sense that both are *sacraments*, both are instituted for the *strengthening of faith*. They are *distinct* in that they signify and seal *different benefits* of the Covenant of Grace. However, when the sacraments are administered, in each case, also the *essence* of the sacrament is administered. This means that a particular benefit of the Covenant of Grace is not only visibly displayed but also has a real meaning for God’s child if embraced by a God-given and Spirit-wrought faith. Then, indeed, the essence of the forgiveness of sins is signified and sealed in the sacrament, as signified in Baptism.

It is to this benefit that the Form points both in prayer as well as in thanksgiving. This not only refers to God’s *adult* children but even extends to *children*. Remember that the phrase in question says, “us and our children.” What is prayed for is also given thanks for; God’s promises are *yea and amen* in Christ Jesus. This counts for adults as well as for children. We know that the gospel has a twofold administration—outward and inward. The message of the gospel comes to all those who hear it, but are all hearers

saved? Alas, this is not the case. It is true only where the essence of the gospel is wrought savingly in the heart. Thus, it is in Holy Baptism also. The essence is administered *because* it is a sacrament. However, just as the gospel message is not indiscriminately embraced and believed, so are the things signified in Baptism not indiscriminately embraced and believed by all who are baptized (including children). Only those who are incorporated by the Holy Spirit in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ fall under the blessed essence of the administration of Holy Baptism.

Secondly, we answer *no*, knowing that not all who are baptized are saved, for it is clear that those who remain in their unconverted state are indeed under the administration of the gospel, but because of unbelief and hardness of their heart they reject the blood of the Covenant whereby they were sanctified. The whole point is this: what happens under the administration of the gospel also happens under the administration of Holy Baptism, and the Form for Baptism only seeks to reflect this very truth. Remember that Moses sprinkled blood on the whole congregation (Exodus 24:8). This is a very serious matter and the very despising of this blood constitutes the guilt of an unconverted person. In the sacrament of Baptism, it is God’s child who may thank the Lord for the blessing of the forgiveness of sins. Whether, indeed, this is also done by them depends on their measure of faith and inasmuch as that benefit is embraced with a believing heart.

The key to the right understanding of this question, then, is that the Form is written from the *essence* of what is signified and sealed in the sacrament. I realize that possibly the explanation above needs to be re-read and thought through again. Perhaps the biblical example of what Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 10 may serve as the best biblical illustration of what the Form refers to. Paul states there that *all* Israel was under the cloud and *all* passed through the sea and *all* were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and *all* ate the same spiritual meat and *all* drank the same spiritual drink (mark the repeated word *all*). In a certain sense you could compare this list to the privileges of Holy Baptism...and Paul states unequivocally that the Rock that followed them was Christ. “*But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.*” Pray that the God of your baptism will graciously fulfill what is promised, signified, and sealed in this sacrament. ◻

Please send your questions to Rev. H. Hofman, 112 Pratt Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49001, or hofman@premieronline.net.



Biblical Lifestyle

Gender

Rev. P. van Ruitenburg, Chilliwack, BC

(Taken from the Chilliwack NRC Bulletin)

Every cell in our body is either male or female. We are born as male or female. Not only every cell but every organ: our lungs, liver, skin, hands, our brain, and everything else is male or female. When you are on the operating table the surgeon needs to know your original gender, the biological gender with which you are born.

However, we live in a time that science and biology do not count much. What *does* seem to count is how people *feel* and, subsequently, how they dress and behave. Biological men may feel psychologically female, and women may feel psychologically male, and if they feel that way, they should be treated accordingly and be viewed and addressed as such, they say. For transgender activists, biology is irrelevant to gender.

Today some go so far that children in preschool are already told that they can choose a gender. No wonder many are gender-confused and that some state that they feel neither male nor female, or feel both male and female mixed together, or sometimes male and other times female. I am now lifting only the tip of the veil. It is much more complicated. This is disrespect for the body. It goes so far that males would like to use the girls' bathrooms and females the boys' bathrooms in our schools.

What to think? Now let me first say that we care for all people and with love are willing to help anyone, including those that are gender-confused, but we also have a responsibility to create clarity and to prevent gender-confusion. One of our responsibilities is to teach the biblical difference between male and female and to publicly show that we respect our own gender, the gender with which we were created. In my opinion it is more important than ever to teach that our appearance matters. In other words, let us dress properly and according to our gender—masculine or feminine.

Also, in the church we are influenced by fashion trends and, consequently, we have fewer ways of expressing our biological gender. Would it not be good as parents and individuals to consider this issue? I propose that we start thinking of our hairstyles, shoes, pants, skirts, blouses, and everything else. I admit there is a lot of overlap; for example, there is no such thing as male or female mittens, but are we as males and females blurring the gender differences? Would it not be good to make a statement to the world with our outward appearance? How can we best profile who we are and, therefore, who we want to be? Can we

not come to the conclusion ourselves how to interpret Deuteronomy 22:5? How can we best practice this text? In what way can we make a statement in today's gender-confused society? *"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God"* (Deuteronomy 22:5).

I encourage you, as my congregation, to profile your gender in a modest way. Some men do that with having a beard. Now, I am not saying that *all* men should have a beard, but I must admit it makes it very clear that with a beard we respect our biological identity. There are also other ways to show respect and to promote one's gender.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). Certainly, outward appearance is not all that counts, but we need to be the salt of the world. Please note, if you are unconverted, it is impossible for you to be the salt of the earth no matter how you dress. I am also aware of legalism; therefore, we should not deal with this as if it were the main issue in the life of a Christian. Sadly, for some, this issue is more important than conversion, the sin of unbelief, or what God tells us are the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22&23). Please talk to your children and friends more often about God, sin, and Christ—more than how they show their gender. If we respect our biological body and also respect God's Word, we will seriously consider how we should express our gender. *"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering"* (1 Corinthians 11:14&15).

Pray that the Lord will direct us to be different in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Pray that the Lord gives us all the tender fear of God in our hearts and the renewing of our minds so that we *"may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* May the love of Christ move us to holiness in all aspects of life. Until we supremely value Christ, our attitude toward clothing will be controlled by forces that do not honour God. *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"* (Philippians 2:15).

Respectfully, your Pastor

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

(Ecclesiastes 7:29)



For Young and Old

Online TV: Entertainment? Or Dangerous Distraction?

Modern Media Committee of New Jersey

Do we have TV in our homes?

We probably do, or we are closer than we know. We do not have the box our forefathers banned, but we do have the content readily available at our finger tips with TV online. A strongly restricted web filter setting may block most of these websites, but a moderate setting, used by most adults, probably will not unless entertainment websites are explicitly blacklisted. Online TV includes movies—any movie, from this year, last year, and decades ago. We do not need a DVD player or VCR in our home anymore if we have a personal, work, or school laptop or tablet. We should be concerned.

Aside from the fact that all this TV content is actually now available in our homes, the content in recent decades has become increasingly disturbing. This is a clear reason not to have a TV in our home, even more so than in the past. Yet, are we or our young adults and children finding shows to watch?

Some may say, “The content we pick to watch is innocent in nature. We always attempt to find something not too immoral and maybe even somewhat educational.” Surely this is true, but if you watch with a moral, objective eye, you will probably find an agenda across all recent media which almost always subtly steers morals away from the Word of God.

What is this agenda?

Liberal parenting, gay rights, pro-choice... Many actors, writers, and film companies are glad and even awarded when their product is “*dealing with the social issues of our time*” and “*educating the youth.*” What these really mean is “*justifying actions that they want to prove are moral*” and “*spreading new age values to our children.*” TV will only serve to eventually convince all of us of values which are based solely on satisfaction of self in this life.

Pick the wrong thing to watch and you might find yourself subjected to vile content without expecting it. With this you run the risk of becoming numb to it. “At least this isn’t as bad as the one we had to turn off last week,” or “We’re this far and I want to see what happens; we’ll just ignore the bad parts.” In a way we are endorsing anything we watch, through ratings or ad revenue.

What is some of this vile content?

Swearing, taking God’s name in vain, sexual promiscuity, glorifying those who sleep around (always outside any intent of marriage). There are an astounding number of

stories that depict couples living together before marriage. There is the telling of stories of teenagers becoming pregnant, the “need” and justification for an abortion, and finally the portraying of the effects an abortion has on a young mother. This is considered educational, a public service—all under the guise of entertainment.

Then there is the hate, murder, violence, the glorifying of thieves and criminals, and also the portraying of drugs and drug use. To show just how twisted TV has gotten, there is even a story told in such a way that watchers develop a sympathetic relationship with a man who makes and sells drugs. All this serves to slowly degrade our, and our children’s, moral beliefs and values. Could the effect of this content be part of the moral decline of our country and world?

“This has all been around for decades, is it really any worse now?”

Yes, the content is more “*cutting edge,*” or more correctly “*cutting our consciences.*” It would never have been allowed on TV when our parents were young. An important difference now is that the amount of content is exponentially increasing, and with the Internet, it is available instantly. This content, being so easily and quickly accessible, brings a large rise to some new phenomena, concepts like “*binge watching*” or “*a show hole.*”

When one episode is over, another is available, already loading to be watched. While previous generations may have gone outside and been active after a show, the current generation can watch hour after hour, binging on TV. Often whole Saturdays are thrown away and whole weekends, through the nights into early hours of the mornings. New sleep habits often emerge, regularly sleeping later and later into the days. Then when the 30 or 50 episodes are watched in one or two weekends and the show is completely over, there is a form of depression, coined a “show hole.” “What will they watch next?” They need to find something to fill the hole in their life until they find another fifty episodes of something else to entertain them for another short while. Considering all this, and with terms like “binge watching” and “show hole,” is this a new kind of addiction for our time? With this we also mention DVDs, DVD movies, and sets of DVDs that are a complete TV series. These are really no better.

Entertainment is a word of concern when considered alongside our need for **Eternity**. Webster defines the words entertain and entertainment as:

- Distraction from what is important
- Something diverting or engaging
- To keep, hold, or maintain in the mind
- To receive and take into consideration
- Amusement or diversion provided especially by performers

Does all this serve to take hold of our minds and distract us from our state for eternity? Distract us from prayer and godly books? Waste so much God-given time? Divert us from considering who and what we are? ...And as if confirming this thought, the Amazon Fire TV stick was actually advertised as: *“it could entertain humanity for an eternity.”*

So, is there no good, or at least some not-inappropriate content? There may be. Yet, if you choose to search out and consume that content please watch with a careful, conservative mind. If your conscience speaks, listen to it. See how much is littered, unexpectedly, with pieces of inappropriateness—a curse word, God’s name in vain, a gay couple portrayed (maybe quietly, outside the main plot line). Be careful, soon this can all be watched without much consideration of what it really is. Is any of it to God’s honor and glory?

If our forefathers saw us, would they think we are adhering to the rules they set out for us?

Technical Tips:

You can blacklist and block sites like YouTube, Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Yahoo Video/TV, but there are countless other video-sharing sites. There are even more copyright violating, illegal video-sharing sites, and vigilance is needed to watch your household’s web history in your filter and accountability software.

Your filter and accountability software should let you block or blacklist any of the sites mentioned above and any other site you might find a need to block in your family. Qustodio, the filter and accountability software recommended by our Synod, has this blacklist function. It also can block the “entertainment” category of websites. A manual for using Qustodio on a PC is at www.tinyurl.com/mmcnj. Smart phone filters should also be able to block apps and not just websites, i.e. the Netflix and YouTube apps.

If you desire to allow some limited YouTube use, there are controls at the bottom of the webpage for “restricted mode.” You must also lock restricted mode “on” as it can easily be turned off. You need to do this for every browser on your device, as well as for every device you have. To lock this setting, log in to YouTube with your own login (usually a Google account), lock restricted mode “on,” and log back out. Now only your login can turn it off. Note YouTube itself disclaims: “No filter is 100% accurate, but it should help you avoid most inappropriate content.” Thus, you must be present to keep an eye on what is being viewed. □



Church History

Selcart (32)

(An historical account of the persecution of the Churches Under the Cross)

W.J.D. van Dijck

Some friends have placed themselves along the wall which separates the place of execution from surrounding areas. Others are standing directly behind the servants who in the place of execution keep onlookers away from the platform where members of the Inquisition and the counsel of the Dutch court will assemble.

Barely has the large clock of the St Jacob’s church sounded ten o’clock when also the clocks of the surrounding churches are heard. To these sounds are added the bells of the clock in the town hall. They are all drowned out, however, by the heavy bell of the St. Jacob’s tower.

The onlookers start to become restless. People in neighboring homes open their windows to look down at the crowds and the execution place. The guests in the inn rush outside and climb up on tables and stools in order to see what is happening. The heretic will shortly appear. Riders upon the horses have their hands full trying to maintain a

path for the expected procession. Just a few moments and then the sound of the drums is heard, signaling the arrival of the long-awaited procession.

Those who stand toward the back cannot see the procession, but they can see the cross which is carried by an altar boy and held high above the procession. This is a token that the judges and the priests will soon take their place upon the small hill to the right of the scaffold.

Slowly the procession moves forward. In the front are members of the Dutch court in their black robes, followed by priests in their white robes embroidered with gold. In mounting expectation everyone is looking for the halberdiers who will be surrounding the victim. Above the mass of people their long-handled weapons glisten in the morning sun.

Cors has exited the jail. His emaciated face exhibits the misery and suffering which he has undergone. His glistening

eye and the faithful picture of a soul rejoicing in His God tells the surrounding multitude that for him it is a triumph to take the last steps on his way to his heavenly Father. The executioner, who walks directly behind Cors has thrown a long yellow robe over him to cover his meager clothes. Cors's hands are held bound under the robe.

When he leaves the jail, Cors hears the "Te Deum," a song of praise being sung by the four priests. Cors's face radiates a calm submission and a holy joy. The brothers who soon will also be condemned to death, are singing the song of victory, the song which Cors will sing in a very short time before the throne of the Lamb with all the other saints.

With a firm tread he moves forward. In the front rows of the onlookers Cors recognizes many friends with whom he has walked the way of faith in days past and who have shared in his troubles and his conversion. They call out his name and wave to him. Their hearts are filled with a holy jealousy. Cors comes near to the place of execution. With firm steps he climbs the elevation followed by the executioner and four halberdiers, who take up their positions on the four corners of the hill. Cors turns his face toward the sun as if he would for the last time rejoice in seeing it. After that he looks at the crowd. Even though his head is uncovered, the cold east wind does not seem to bother him. His long hair, which has not been cut while he was in jail, flutters about his shoulders.

Cors raises his bound hands and motions to the crowd; a great quiet is noted, and Cors begins to speak. "Men and brethren," says the emaciated Cors, whose strong voice is heard throughout the area, "Men and brethren, standing before the face of death, the time when I may appear before my heavenly Bridegroom, I pray you, that if I have done wrong to any man, you will forgive me, as the Lord Jesus Christ out of free grace has carried all of my sins upon the cross. I urge you, seek the truth and remain with the truth; search the Scriptures and seek after life eternal."

At this moment a Franciscan monk comes near and places a cross before him while with a wink from the priests, the drums and the flutes begin to make so much noise that the remaining words of Cors cannot be heard by the crowd. Cors shakes his head to show his friends and acquaintances that he in no wise will give any honor to the cross which is placed before him. He raises his hands as if in prayer, and the surrounding crowd, including the faithful sons of the Catholic church, uncover their heads in respect.

The executioner comes closer and bows his knee, and according to the custom of the times, asks forgiveness for what he is about to do. Cors shakes his hand and says, "Not for me, my friend; only for God shalt thou kneel and bow down before Him." Cors then bends his knees before the block, upon which he rests his head, and lifts up his soul with a heartfelt prayer of faith to his heavenly Father.

Suddenly, while the condemned man lies there, there is a commotion which soon involves the entire crowd. With a lot of screaming and hollering the people push forward. Many raised sticks and stones are thrown toward the platform.

"Away with the strangers, long live the patriots. Death

to the Spaniards." These and other cries are heard above the commotion. The citizens of Naaldwijk quickly come together and push up against the foot soldiers so that they are not able to hold back the crowd. The people near the prison begin to shout, "Holland and freedom. Away with the taxation."

Cors stands up, and while the executioner takes the robe from his shoulders, he casts a glance over the noisy crowd. Did Cors see his second son with his hair flying and with a reckless look about him at the head of a small group, trying to reach the scaffold? We do not know. "Do your work," comes the command from the tribunal. Cors bows his knees. There is not even time to place a covering before his eyes. Just a few moments, and the crowd, the greater part which had taken the side of Cors, would have reached the scaffold.

All at once the short ax of the executioner glistens in the sunlight. With one blow the head is separated from the torso, and the number of the martyrs who are before the Throne is increased by one. There is but one penetrating scream, but it does not come from the victim. The unconscious son of Cors who had made a final attempt to save his father is carried away by his brother and friends. While they carry the unconscious son to the side street, the cart on which the body of the departed martyr had been placed passes by them on its way to the cemetery in the dunes.

"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay saith the Lord," says Adriaan, repeating the last words of his father while the tears flow from his eyes. While the sad glances of the son of Cors and his friends follow the departed one, Cors has already entered Paradise where the palm branches of victory have been extended unto him. Rest in peace, dear martyr in whose blood the church in our country has been established. Rest in peace in your unmarked grave until the great resurrection day when with a glorified body, you will take your place among the blessed saints in life everlasting.

Must we still add to this history? We only wish to record what happened to some of the friends whom we have met in the previous pages:

Selcart worked faithfully as a printer in Emden where an edition of the Bible was published, which was a blessing and a light in the darkness for many in those days. The death of Cors also for him, in view of the sparing of his own life, was an incentive to preach the gospel to many who still lived in darkness. It is reported that Martha served as his faithful companion in his labors.

Adriaan took the place of his father in the family, caring for his mother and sisters until it was safe for him to return to his home while Cornelius his brother joined the army of Prince William of Orange and in this way continued the battle for which his father had given his life.

And Mina, the old servant maid? Her catholic acquaintances claimed that she had died as an insane person, but if the truth be told, she died rejoicing in the free grace merited by the blood of Christ. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Amen. □

(This installment is the final in this series.)



Church Life

An Admonition

From a Circular Letter by M. Gill

To all whom it may concern,

How many a faithful pastor's heart has been saddened and his spirit grieved by the empty seats of those who ought to have filled them. Of how many it may be said, "David's place was empty." Members owe a duty to Christ and His Church and should fill those places on the Lord's Day. Is the exhortation of Paul meaningless—"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is"?

These neglectors are among the first to complain of the small attendance and frame all manner of petty excuses to cover the sin of their own neglect. A slight cold, a headache, or a few friends or some of the family came to visit, and we could not leave. Ought these excuses to be made? Recently, in conversation with a thoughtful young man, a regular worshipper, the question was asked, "Why do you not join the church?"

Here is the reply, "Because so many of those who call themselves members and should set an example are not in their place but are walking about when they should be in the house of God, and this staggers me." Is the cause far to seek? May it be that private communion with God is at a low ebb? Excuses to justify non-attendance are coming easier and more frequent. One service breaks the secular or semi-secular spirit of the day but scarcely ever are their souls brought into direct fellowship with the Unseen. Insensibly they are slipping down to a lower and unscriptural view of worship as something which has value when performed decently and with due circumstances in and by itself, quite apart from the soul's direct personal communion with God.

If these men were told that they were making a bad investment or that they were going bankrupt, they would sit up. Yet, this is the spiritual effect of neglecting the services of God's house. Swinnock says, "To live above ordinances is to live below a saint." They who do not reckon the means of grace as their greatest privilege on this side of glory may well question whether they have enjoyed God in them. Let us not forget that every Lord's Day the Lord says to His children, "Seek ye My face," and the glad response should be, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8). The promise still remains, "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exodus 20:24b).

Morning and evening, whenever the house of God is open, those who are able should be in their place, whoever occupies the pulpit, whatever the temptation to go elsewhere or to run after the last new preacher. The members of the church ought to appear in their own place of worship. They should not neglect the sanctuary to entertain company at home or visit friends. In my former congregation, I had a lady who was totally deaf but she was always in her place. A friend would find for her the songs, chapter, and text. When asked on one occasion why she came to the service though she could not hear, she replied, "I like to fill my place, and set an example for others." And every true Christian in full sympathy with God can say, "LORD, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth" (Psalm 26:8).

Diligent and Regular Use of the Means

The Scripture abounds in commands and cautions for our utmost diligence in our search and inquiry as to whether we are made partakers of Christ or not, or whether His Spirit dwells in us or not—which argue both the difficulty of attaining an assured confidence herein, as also the danger of our being mistaken, and yet the certainty of a good issue upon the diligent and regular use of means to that purpose.

— John Owen



Current Events

The rate at which people are leaving the church behind is accelerating rapidly. A recent Gallup poll showed that between 1976 and 1996 there has been a drop from 70% or better in 1976 to less than 50% in the mid 90's of people belonging to a religious organization in America. According to "authorities" there appears to be less interest in religion, and this is true even for older people. In most cases the idea that "entertainment" such as praise bands will bring in people or keep them in the pews has not proven to be the case.

—USA Today (6/17/2019)

The recent trade war with China has had a serious effect on the prices of Bibles. China is the world's largest Bible publisher, printing about twenty million copies annually, of which 30% are made up of the King James and New International versions. The anticipated 25% tariff increase on books includes Bibles and other religious publications. Attempts are being made in Congress to exempt religious publications from the tariffs.

—Christianity Today (6/26/2019)

In the African nation of Nigeria, the war between Christians and Muslims continues unabated. Although some will allege that the strife is for arable land because of the continued drought in the Saheel, the numbers paint a different story. In 2018, seventeen hundred Christian farmers were murdered, and that number has risen to approximately twenty thousand since 2009. More than two million Nigerian citizens have had to flee to safer areas to protect them from the marauding bands of Fulani's from the north who plunder and burn villages and rape and murder the local populations.

—Reformatorisch Dagblad (6/25/2019)

A Christian restaurant which has corporate values that adhere to the law of God, is officially the third largest restaurant in the United States. Chick-fil-A climbed from No. 7 to No. 3 in the latest rankings, despite being closed on Sundays. The company's Christian founder saw the importance of closing on Sundays so that he and his employees could set aside one day to rest and worship if they chose—a practice they still uphold today. Mall owners are usually conflicted about the restaurant being open only six days, but they make an exception because the company has a track record of generating more business in six days than other tenants were realizing in seven. The company also has a record of treating their employees well, especially accommodating college student employees' schedules. In an age when business is 24/7, we can see that companies who follow God's laws can be blessed with success.

—ChristianHeadlines.com

Amid some promising abortion legislation around the United States, there are still some discouraging pro-choice laws being made. The democratic Governor of Illinois signed a bill into law establishing a woman's "fundamental right" to abortion. The bill, effective immediately, repeals other Illinois abortion laws. It eliminates many of the restrictions on women's abortion decisions and even health and safety inspections on abortion facilities. It establishes "that a fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus does not have independent rights under the law." The bill has been decied as "the most radical sweeping pro-abortion measure in America," and "legalizing the death penalty for innocent unborn."

—FoxNews.com

According to new Gallup data, an increasing majority of Americans view divorce, sex outside of marriage, gay relationships, and birth control as morally acceptable, while a majority of Americans continue to view abortion as morally wrong. The polls show that Americans are becoming increasingly more liberal, accepting things that were once considered morally wrong. But the data also shows for the hot-button issue of abortion, that views largely fall in line with the results of the past eighteen years: fifty percent of respondents still view abortion as morally wrong. When broken down by political persuasion, only twenty-three percent of conservatives in 2019 viewed abortion as morally acceptable, while seventy-three percent of liberals said the same. "A strong ideological split remains across many of the issues but none is as divisive as abortion," a Gallup consultant explained. "As some states move to limit or restrict abortions, the debate around this issue will likely get only more intense."

—ChristianPost.com

With Scripture passages scribbled on scraps of paper and smuggled into prison, Chinese Christians imprisoned for their faith are memorizing the entire Bible. "...Even though they [the jailors] can take the paper away, they can't take what's hidden in your heart," said a woman who had been imprisoned. On a recent trip to China, a pastor asked his training-session audience to turn to 2 Peter 1. The group had only fifteen Bibles for twenty-two people, and he noticed that one lady handed her Bible to the woman next to her. He realized that she had memorized the whole book. When he spoke to her later, she said, "In prison—you have much time in prison." If this pastor, an American, was caught at such a training session, he would have been deported within twenty-four hours, but the fate for the native attendees would have been much worse: three years in prison.

—ChristianHeadlines.com

More than two dozen Pentecostal Christians were reportedly arrested in recent days as the crackdown against nondenominational Christianity in the northeast African nation of Eritrea continues. Over thirty Christians while praying in three different locations in the nation's capital were rounded up and detained. Previously, on May 10, 141 Christians were arrested in the nation's capital after gathering for a private meeting ahead of the country's Independence Day. The Eritrean government highly regulates religious practice to the extent that there is "little to no freedom of religion or belief for people outside the four officially recognized faith communities": Orthodox Christianity, Sunni Islami, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea, and the Catholic Church. Yet, even these officially recognized religious bodies have suffered from government interference as it demands full control of religious organizations and their entities which include schools, clinics, and orphanages. According to one report, about one out of twelve Eritreans has fled the country and gone to other African nations or to Italy.

—ChristianPost.com



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

Spiritual Counsel to the Young

J.K. Popham (1847-1937)

My dear young friends,

Our meditation this month shall be on the important words, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psalm 1:1). Here is a gradation, a movement from a state of mind to an act, to a continuance of the set, a satisfaction in it. Sin is not in all its forms and degrees, generated and completed at once. From its conception to its finish it is one in its *nature*, but its degrees and developments may be distinctly marked, definitely distinguished (James 1:14&15)—“Blessed” some translate. “Oh, the blessedness or happiness of the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” Counsel is advice, direction, suggestion. All that is *intended* is not on the surface. “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water” (Proverbs 20:5). One who entices to sin will not open at once all his purpose to the simple one who is heeding his wicked counsel. By degrees the purpose is made known.

It is like the “wine that is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.” The intoxication contained in the enticing cup is not suspected or feared. The lurking danger lies hidden in the glistening sparkle. So the counsel of the ungodly is to gain consent of the will, and the attention given, the “walking” in the counsel is the destroying result. It leads to “standing in the way of sinners.” The evil communication has corrupted good manners. The fear of sinning, if not entirely destroyed, is very greatly weakened. Conscience has lost its authority; if it murmur a protest, it is not heeded. The man “stands in the counsel” of evil men; he is past the counsel of the tempter, he is in the way the counselor pointed out. He consents to sin, he commits it in the company of sinners, in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. The next step in the terrible gradation indicates a continuance and a satisfaction in sin. The man “sits with scorners,”

and he will not heed rebuke; he stretches out his hand with other scorners.

The man who escapes this snare of the devil is a blessed man. It is only “the abhorred of the Lord” who shall be taken in it and never escape, to whom sin shall not appear exceeding sinful. As the forbidden fruit was made pleasant to Eve, and a food to be desired, by the counsel of the serpent, she quickly stood in the way of the chief sinner. It is so today. Evil communications corrupt good manners. They first corrupt the stream of thought; then that appears good which is deadly evil. the seductive is powerful, action follows.

What is the blessedness of not being found in the three-fold evil of our verse?

1. It lies in the possession of eternal life, the fear of the Lord, and the gracious teaching and prompting of the Holy Ghost. The great evil of the counsel of the ungodly is seen. “So did not I because of the fear of God.” The awful counsel of the ungodly critic of today may come to the reflective mind of a true child of God, but the authority, the life, light and power of the Word in the hand of the Spirit will preserve him from walking, standing, and sitting in so evil and deadly a thing.
2. It consists in the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplications. “Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” “And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested” (1 Chron. 4:10).
3. It is in the faith of God’s elect, of His operation, which brings the needy soul, sensible of its exposedness, its hourly danger, to cast itself on the death, burial, resurrection, and intercession

of Christ, for “safety on the earthy, and afterwards the plenitude of heaven.”

4. It is the blessed unction from the Holy Ghost who brings and fixes in the heart the truth which “dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever.”
5. It is in the love of God from which nothing can separate, and when that precious love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, light, life, peace, and strength are within and make the heart strong. Thus, a young man cleanses his way by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word (Psalm 119:9).

This being a brief meditation on the blessedness of a true Christian man, I would fain hope and desire that that inestimable good might be sovereignly designed, the invincibly gracious gift of God to my young friends. It has no parallel in time as time has no parallel in eternity. Oh, the terribleness of being accursed of God for our sins, the fearfulness of being abhorred of the Lord for our sins. Oh, the blessedness of possessing His freely given eternal life, eternal redemption, and eternal Spirit. Thus favored and thus only, can any sinner escape the snare of the fowler, and thus may my readers be “blessed.”



Bible Stories for Little Ones

The Story of Moses (2)

(Based on Exodus 2:1-10)

When a baby is born in a family, everyone is happy. Even when the baby cries, we all want to hold and cuddle the baby because we love it.

In the Bible we can also read about a family where a baby boy was born. In that family they were very afraid when the baby cried. Was that because the baby was sick? No, it was because someone had threatened to kill all the baby boys. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt had said that all the boy babies born to the Israelites had to be killed. This meant that this baby had to be hidden because someone might tell the king about this little boy.

As the baby became older, it was more difficult to keep the secret. The parents became very worried and wondered what they should do. The parents of the baby feared the Lord, and they prayed to God, asking Him what they should do.

The parents of the baby decided to make a little boat out of the bulrushes which were growing along the river side. They wove them into a little boat which was called an ark, and sealed it with mud and clay. The mother then put the baby in the little boat, and placed it in the river. Then she had Miriam, the baby’s older sister, stand at the river side to see what would happen. We can be sure that the parents spent much time on their knees praying to the Lord to ask Him to look after their child.

After a while, Miriam saw some women coming down to the river. In those days, people washed themselves in streams and rivers because they did

not have water in their homes. When she looked closely, she saw that it was the daughter of Pharaoh. As Pharaoh’s daughter washed herself at the river-side, suddenly she saw the little ark. She asked one of her maids to go and get it. When she looked inside, she saw the baby boy.

“This must be one of the Israelites’ children,” she said. She felt sorry for the baby and wondered what to do. Suddenly, Miriam ran up to the princess and said, “Should I find a nurse for you?” The princess agreed, and asked Miriam to go and get her.

Whom, do you think, would Miriam get to take care of the baby? Miriam ran to get the baby’s mother. I think that the mother was very happy to be able to do this, don’t you? The princess offered to pay the mother to care for the baby until he was old enough to come and live in the palace and be her “son.”

When the baby was old enough, he was brought to the palace. The princess named him Moses, for, she said, I took him out of the water. Moses lived as a prince in the palace and learned all the ways of the people of that country. He was educated by the best teachers.

We may think that this is an interesting story, but always remember that God rules over all things, and in this manner, He provided for Moses to lead the children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt. We hope to tell you more about that in the coming months.



Bible Quiz

Sharing

Dear Boys and Girls,

Sierra slipped quietly through the hallway and bolted up the stairs to the room she shared with her two sisters. Yanking a small bag from her pocket, she stuffed it hastily under the blankets of the bottom bunk where she slept at night. Hearing footsteps, she hurriedly turned and sat on the bed, smoothed her skirt, and tried to put an innocent expression on her face.

Janine bolted into the room, followed by little Macey. “What did you do at Jennifer’s birthday, Sierra? Did you play games?” Janine bounced onto the bed next to her sister, but Sierra gave her an impatient shove.

“Don’t sit on my bed; sit on your own!” she griped, hoping Janine had not heard the crinkling sounds under the blanket when she sat down.

Janine looked surprised, then shrugged. Macey was watching solemnly. “Did you eat cake?” she asked longingly. “And candy?” Her eyes wandered over the room, and you could see that she was thinking deeply. Didn’t birthdays usually come with candy?

However, Sierra was not about to spill her secret. She could hear her three little brothers racing each other in the hallway. She was not about to share her goody bag of candy. Not this time. Why, if she shared, she would probably only have one or two candies left for herself.

Her sisters left the room, disappointed, but Sierra did not enjoy her bag of candy as much as she thought she would. She had an uneasy feeling in the pit of her stomach, and she kept thinking of how much Janine, Macey, and her three brothers would have liked to eat just one piece.

It is good to share. It means you care about others. Think of Solomon. When the queen of Sheba came, he shared with her his wisdom and gave her anything she wished from his riches. King Solomon was very rich, so he could give much. However, someone who is poor can also share. The widow of Zarephath only had a handful of flour left. She really only had enough to make a cake of bread for herself and her son, but the prophet Elisha asked her for something to eat, and she made him a cake of bread first. After that, the Lord performed a miracle and made sure that there was enough each day for cakes for

all three of them—the widow, her son, and the prophet. She was very poor, but she must have been very happy in those days when she was sharing with Elisha, and she was obeying God’s commandment when she did so.

There are different things we can share. We can share the things we have and the food we eat, but we can also share in other ways. If your grandma is weak or your grandpa cannot think clearly, you can share your strong body and healthy brain by helping your grandma walk to the car and taking her garbage can to the road and shoveling her walkway. You can keep your grandpa company and tell him the things he cannot remember. You can play the piano so your family can sing psalters on Sunday, draw a picture for someone who is sick, or play a game with your little brother to keep him from whining and hanging on your mom. This is sharing your talents and your time. Abigail shared in a good way when she sent food to David and his men. She was being caring, realizing they were hungry and trying to make up for her husband’s selfish churlishness.

Eve, though, also shared, and her sharing was not good. It was not caring. She did it more because she did not want to be alone in her wrongdoing. She shared the forbidden fruit with Adam, and the result of this great sin was just more sin and sadness—Adam blamed her, and then she blamed the serpent. We can share good, and we can share evil. Perhaps you have taken candy from the cabinet that you know is only for church, and you give some to your younger brother, or instead of climbing up to sneak it out of the cabinet yourself, you tell your little sister to grab it and share it with you. Maybe you want to turn on a dangerous tool or jump and swing from a frayed rope in your backyard, and you tell your brother to do it first. You are not really sharing fun, are you? You are sharing danger and disobedience, making sure you will not receive the blame. Sharing in this way is wrong.

The Lord Jesus Christ shares something much greater than any of us can ever give or share. He obtained eternal life. He suffered, died, and arose again in order to make salvation possible. He earned salvation, and now He shares it with those who are

His. He conquered hell so that those with whom He shares His finished work will not have to go there. He gives this salvation, and He gives grace to all those who come to know that they are sinners before God and deserve eternal punishment. He leaves the door open for them, and He calls to them to come so that He may give from His own stores. His storehouse is always full, and from this He gives them all that they need for time and for eternity.

* * * * *

The words that are missing from each text share a letter with each other. Fill the missing words into the boxes, sharing the last letter of the first word with the first letter of the second word.

1. "Let him that stole _____ no more: but rather let him _____, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4).

2. "And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the _____ which Joseph had sent to carry him, the _____ of Jacob their father revived" (Genesis 45).

3. "Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five _____ ready dressed, and five measures of _____ corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses (1 Samuel 25).

4. "And when the woman saw that the tree was _____ for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be _____ to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3).

5. "And Abraham ran unto the _____, and fetcht a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to _____ it" (Genesis 18).

6. "And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and _____, and women servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him _____ his wife" (Genesis 20).

7. "And she said, Drink, my lord: and she _____, and let _____ her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink" (Genesis 24).

8. "And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave _____ and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were _____ him" (Genesis 28).

9. "And _____ Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon _____ her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants" (1 Kings 10).

10. "Give, and it shall be given _____ you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running _____, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6).

11. Use the letters from the bold boxes to complete this verse. "He ___ ill swallow up __ eath in victory; and the ___ ord ___ ___ ___ ill ___ ipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his ___ eople shall he take away from off all the earth: for the ___ ord hath ___ ___ oken it."

For the Older Children

Solomon writes in Proverbs about giving and sharing. Fill in the missing words by unscrambling the letters.

12. "Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come _____ (niaag), and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee."

13. "He that hath pity upon the _____ (orop) lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

14. "He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and _____ (stpaerh) not."

15. "He that hath a _____ (ontfbliuu) eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."

16. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him _____ (dbera) to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:"

For the Younger Children

17. The widow woman shared with Elijah. Who ate of the food which she made? "And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and _____, and _____, and _____, did eat many days" (1 Kings 17).

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Answers to July's "Mire" quiz:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Street | 2 Samuel 22:43 |
| 2. Water | Job 8:11 |
| 3. Cast | Job 30:19 |
| 4. Sharp | Job 41:30 |
| 5. Deep | Psalms 69:2 |
| 6. Hate | Psalms 69:14 |
| 7. Trodden | Micah 7:10 |
| 8. Gold | Zechariah 9:3 |
| 9. Enemies | Zechariah 10:5 |
| 10. Washed | 2 Peter 2:22 |
| 11. Prey | Isaiah 10:6 |
| 12. Clay | John 9:6 |
| 13. "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). | |
| 14. Joseph | |
| 15. Jeremiah | |
| 16. Daniel | |
| 17. They were each delivered from death by God's intervention. | |

Answers to previous quizzes were received in May from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Alaina Baum (2) 2 | Alec Post 2 |
| Alicia Baum (2) 2 | Hunter Post 2 |
| Jonah Beekman 1 | Nicolas Post 2 |
| Jenina Blom 2 | Andrew Remijn 2 |
| Marissa Blom 1 | Logan Rozeboom 1 |
| Riley Blom 1 | Mindy Rozeboom 1 |
| Hayley Bosch 3 | Aaliyah Timmer 2 |
| Derek Brouwer 1 | Arianna Timmer 1 |
| Thomas Brouwer 1 | Drake Timmer 2 |
| Elijah Cutajar 2 | Harley Timmer 1 |
| Emily Cutajar 2 | Hunter Timmer 1 |
| Noah Cutajar 2 | Kadin Timmer 1 |
| Sarina Den Bok 3 | Sierra Timmer 1 |
| Thomas Den Bok 3 | Skye Timmer 1 |
| Weston Ekema 1 | Wyatt Timmer 1 |
| Geralyn Engelen 2 | Maurice Van Garderen 2 |
| Kariena Engelen 2 | Thirza Van Garderen 2 |
| Shawn Engelen 2 | Emmalyn Van Garderen 2 |
| Trevor Engelen 2 | Lydia Van Manen 2 |
| Ailene Groenendyk 4 | Rosalee Van Manen 2 |
| Ruben Groenendyk 4 | Kairen Van Middendorp 2 |
| Derik Keurhorst 1 | Konner Van Middendorp 2 |
| Dwayne Keurhorst 1 | Lindsay Vande Hoef 1 |
| Stephanie Keurhorst 2 2 | Esther Vanden Broek 2 |
| Brennan Knibbe 3 | Gerit Vanden Broek 2 |
| Caylea Knibbe 2 | Ian Vanden Broek 2 |
| Donovan Knibbe 2 | Treana Vanden Broek 2 |
| Jarynne Knibbe 3 | Rachel Veldhuizen 1 |
| Quinton Knibbe 2 | Sharon Veldhuizen 1 |
| Sienna Knibbe 1 | Alisha Wessels (2) 2 |
| Rebecca Krygsman (2) 2 | Johanna Wessels (3) 3 |
| Sarah Krygsman (2) 2 | Bethany Ymker (3) 3 |
| Lydia Mol 2 | Jacalyn Ymker (3) 3 |
| Rachel Mol 2 | Nicholas Ymker (3) 3 |
| Teddy Mol 2 | |



News & Announcements

Church News

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Accepted:

By Rev. A.T. Vergunst of Waupun, Wisconsin, to the congregation of Carterton, New Zealand.

Declined:

By Rev. A.T. Vergunst of Waupun, Wisconsin, to the congregations of Houten and Vlissingen, the Netherlands.

Obituaries

HOOGMOED, Evelyn K. (nee Koster) – Age 91, June 25, 2019; North Haledon, New Jersey; Husband – Walter (deceased); Children – Evelyn & Michael Florit, Marie Douma & David Ten Kate, Walter Hoogmoed, Jr., Richard & Nancy Hoogmoed, Arthur & Patricia Hoogmoed; 12 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren; Brother – Jasper & Mary (deceased) Koster; predeceased by her sister Jennie & John Boer.

JANSEN, Dirk (Dick) — Age 80, July 5, 2019; Norwich, Ontario; Wife – Tina (Van Manen); Children – Reynold & Tina Jansen, Dorothy & Andy Stubbe, Evelyn & Dick Ariesen; 13 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Dorothy & Arend Van Lagen, Maastje (deceased) & Kees Van Manen, John & Ria Jansen, and Reynold & Hennie Jansen; predeceased by granddaughter Emily. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Deuteronomy 33:27a.)

VAN HUIGENBOS, Jason Hendrick – Age 3, June 18, 2019; Fort Macleod, Alberta; Parents – Martin & Marieta van Huigenbos; Siblings – Logan, Curtis, and Liam; Grandparents – Gerrit & Hennie van Huigenbos, Joop & Janneke Oskam; Great-grandparents – Mrs. E. van Huigenbos, Mr. & Mrs. H. Oskam, Mr. & Mrs. M.H. Van Westerveld, and Mrs. J. Verduyn. (Rev. H.D. den Hollander, 2 Samuel 12:13.)

In Memoriam

Mr. Dirk Jansen

On July 5, 2019, it pleased the Lord to take from the midst of his family and our congregation former Deacon Dirk Jansen at the age of eighty years. Mr. Jansen served our congregation of Norwich faithfully for sixteen years as a deacon with all the love of his heart and the gifts the Lord had given him. There is an empty place not only in the midst of the family circle but also in the midst of the congregation. May the Lord graciously remember the mourning family and sanctify this calling to each of us.

— *The Norwich NRC Consistory*

Ordination and Installation of Candidate H. de Leeuw

The consistory and congregation of Franklin Lakes, being humbled and gladdened that the Lord has inclined the heart of Candidate H. de Leeuw to accept our call, wish to announce that, the Lord willing and pending the satisfactory completion of the Classical examination, the ordination and inaugural services will be held on Wednesday, August 28, 2019, in the sanctuary of the Ebenezer Netherlands Reformed Congregation, 875 Ewing Ave., Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. The ordination service to be conducted by Rev. G.M. de Leeuw will commence at 1:30 P.M., and the inaugural service will commence at 7:30 P.M. May the Lord add His indispensable blessing and give evidence of His favor and approbation.

Opportunity to Increase Theological Knowledge

For those of our readers who are conversant in the Dutch language, there is an opportunity to follow an online program to increase your

theological knowledge. The CGO (Cursus Godsdiens Onderwijs) which is under the auspices of the Gereformeerde Gemeenten and its Curatorium can be contacted directly by email for further information. Please contact the director, W.M. van der Wilt, at wmvanderwilt@cgothbo.nl, or the adjunct director, Drs. J. van Mourik, at jvm@cgothbo.nl

Education

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COALHURST, ALBERTA, anticipates several vacancies for the 2019-2020 school year and welcomes applications from qualified teachers interested in any position, including:

- Elementary teachers
- Secondary teachers (especially in high school English language arts and social studies/history, though other specialties are also invited).

We would be grateful to welcome applications from competent, versatile, and dedicated teachers of any grade/age level who also have a love for the truth which is according to godliness and who are members of the NRC or a closely related denomination. All applicants must be eligible for Alberta certification. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter with your résumé or CV to office@ccschool.ca. For more information about the vacancies, available immigration supports, or the application process, please contact the principal, Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or marc.slingerland@ccschool.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2019-2020 school year. We have a very small multigrade classroom school. Certification is not required for this position, although it would be helpful. Currently the school board acts as principal with oversight by the consistory. May this position and our need be remembered in prayer, and be bound upon someone's heart to come over and help us. Any questions

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. For consistency, size is limited. Please send your request to the managing editor, Dr. E. Nieuwenhuis, whose address is shown inside the front cover. Requests for placement should be made **by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.**

The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles which appear in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3 files are produced by a committee in Norwich, Ontario, with the support of the Norwich consistory, and they make the MP3 files available to the consistories of the end user. The consistories then distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost to the end user.

To arrange for a free subscription, contact Mrs. Leona den Dekker at 519-403-5178 or ldendekker@rcsnorwich.com.

regarding this position or any interested applicants, please contact Randall Teunissen at 920-894-3395 or by e-mail at rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA—*As school board and administrators of Mount Cheam Christian School, Chilliwack, BC, we are always called to plan ahead although we certainly must always keep in mind what the Lord says through James: "If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (4:15). We ask those who are interested in a teaching or educational assistant position to consider MCCS.*

Applicants must hold or be eligible for BC certification and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCS Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America, which is based on the KJV and the Three Forms of Unity. Wages vary depending upon experience and post-secondary education. Inquiries should be addressed to Mr. Jan Neels, principal, jneels@mccs.ca.

Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels, principal, email: jneels@mccs.ca and to Mr. Eric Van Maren, school board secretary, email: ericv@vanmarengroup.com, or mail to Mount Cheam Christian School, 48988 Yale Road East, Chilliwack, BC V4Z 0B2.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY, is interested in receiving applications from individuals to be employed or transition into the administrator role of our school for the 2020-2021 school year. Qualified applicants would be those with educational administrative experience or experienced teachers with administrative aspirations. A suitable transition plan will be instituted based on the applicant's experience and background. The applicant should be a male in good standing from the Netherlands Reformed Congregations who has a burden and a desire for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the students. To apply or request more information, please contact the education chairman, Tim Mol, at 973-204-5677 or the administrator, Mr. John Van Der Brink, at 973-628-7400.

To All Candidates for Teacher Positions

Please visit advertising.nrcea.education for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools as well as links to the school websites for more information about the positions and the schools. When accessing the job bank on the NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

User Name:

advertising@nrcea.education

Password:

Schooljobs!

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is a Pre-K through 12th grade school serving 435 students from the NRC of Rock Valley, Sioux Center, and Sioux Falls. For the 2019-2020 school year we are seeking a secondary math teacher and are interested in inquiries regarding a secondary science teacher. We are also seeking a music teacher to begin at any time. The focus of that position would be instrumental (5-12 band/orchestra) along with other opportunities in K-12 music. In addition, we encourage inquiries for elementary teaching positions. Please contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at 712-476-2821 or dbreuer@nrscia.org for further information.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN is accepting teaching applications for openings in the elementary school and possible openings in the high school for the 2019-2020 school year. Interested K-6 applicants should send or email their resumes and/or questions to Mr. Nathan Bleeker (nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us). Interested 7-12 applicants should send or email their resumes and/or questions to Mr. James Bazen at (jbazen@plymouthchristian.us).

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is a kindergarten through grade 12 school located in small-town Norwich, Ontario. We have an enrollment of almost nine hundred students. We offer academic, vocational, and special education programs to meet the diverse needs of a large, supporting Reformed community. As continued growth is expected, we anticipate a range of unique teaching and employment opportunities well into the future. We are currently accepting applications to fill teacher and paraeducator openings at various levels for the 2019-2020 school year. We welcome those interested in joining our committed and supportive team to contact Mr. John Heikoop, the director of school operations, to discuss employment opportunities or to submit a cover letter and resume. He can be reached by phone at 519-863-2403, ext. 223, or by email at director@rcsnorwich.com.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK BRITISH COLUMBIA, has the following ongoing need—secondary/middle school teachers who are excited about teaching and have a particular love for the hearts of young people. If you are such a teacher, please apply to join our team. Applicants need to be certifiable to teach in British Columbia. For certification requirements and more information regarding the above positions and/or an application form please do not hesitate to contact either the principal, Mr. Doug Stam, at 604-794-7114 or dstam@timothychristian.ca or the school board president, Mr. Wim Neels, at 604-858-8834 or wimneels@timothychristian.ca.

The Preached Word

What is the blessing that you want to rest upon the preached word? I will tell you: to have the work of grace begun, carried on, or strengthened; to be humbled in the dust of self-abasement; to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; to have manifestations of God's mercy and love; to see the beauty, blessedness, grace, and glory that is in Christ Jesus; to have a sweet persuasion of our interest in the blood and obedience of Immanuel; to be separated in heart, spirit and affection from the world; to mourn over the evils of nature; to be kept from every evil way, work, and word; to have a tender conscience, and a watchful, prayerful spirit; and to have affections in heaven where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Besides these inward fruits you want to live the gospel, to be Christians not merely in lip and tongue, and hearing the truth, but in every department of life as masters and servants, husbands and wives, children and parents—to manifest the grace of God in your trade, business, occupation or profession however situated or placed, to show forth the grace of God, and to yield Him those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to His praise and glory. I believe that solid blessings will always produce these solid fruits, and will bring forth a crop in heart, lip, and life. Where this crop is not in some measure brought forth, well may we say that such a religion is vain.

—J.C. Philpot

Erratum

The author and source provided for the article, "A Kingly Command", which appeared on page 158 of the July 2019 *Banner of Truth* was incorrect. The article appeared in the bulletin of the Bethel NRC in Chilliwack, British Columbia, and was written by the deceased Rev. P. Melis. We regret having published this misinformation.

The Lord's Call to His Children

Let us adore the grace that seeks
To draw our hearts above!
Attend, 'tis God the Saviour speaks,
And ev'ry word is love.

Though fill'd with awe, before His throne
Each angel veils his face;
He claims a people for His own
Among our sinful race.

Careless, awhile they live in sin,
Enslav'd to Satan's power;
But they obey the call divine,
In His appointed hour.

"Come forth," He says, "no more pursue
The paths that lead to death;
Look up, a bleeding Saviour view,
Look, and be sav'd by faith.

"My sons and daughters you shall be
Through the atoning blood;
And you shall claim, and find, in Me,
A Father, and a God."

Lord, speak these words to ev'ry heart,
By Thine all-powerful voice;
That we may now from sin depart,
And make Thy love our choice.

If now, we learn to seek Thy face
By Christ the living way;
We'll praise Thee for this hour of grace,
Through an eternal day.

— *John Newton*