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United States and Canada

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A Father's Lamentation
Torn in Half

For our young readers...

Avoiding Evil Company
Cares

*"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear,
after that the full corn in the ear." MARK 4:28*



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Meditation

God's Unfathomable Mercy

Rev. P. Blok (1920-2019)

(Rev. P. Blok passed away in early July at the very advanced and blessed age of ninety-nine years. He was installed in the sacred ministry by his brother Rev. M. Blok in 1959 and served the congregations for almost sixty years. He came from a family whose passion was music and entertainment—a family who had no connection with any church. Of the thirteen children, he and his brother Martinus were chosen by God's electing love from all eternity, not only as objects of His mercy, but also to be His servants and to bring others to conversion. Another notable fact is that their mother made Confession of Faith and was baptized at the age of seventy-six. When he was serving the congregation of Kootwijkerbroek in the Netherlands, at a time when health problems made him consider going emeritus, the Lord promised him length of days, and the Lord is not lax concerning His promises. He has now entered the rest which remains for the people of God, receiving the reward of a faithful servant. The memory of the just is blessed.)

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:4&5).

Ephesus was the capital city of Asia Minor. It was a city which had a rich, commercial history, but the citizens of the city were blind heathens. They served the goddess Diana, believing she was the goddess of light and life. Paul arrived in Ephesus on his second missionary journey, and he established a congregation there.

In the year 58 AD Paul wrote an epistle to this congregation, and in this epistle Paul extols the sovereign grace of God over against the doctrine of those who still claim to find some good in man. In the text he speaks of the attribute of God's mercy. God's mercy reveals itself as the fruit of the love of God. This is not a temporal love, but it is a godly love. The Triune God adores Himself above all else. God's Testimony speaks of that very clearly. The Father loves the Son and has given Him all things in His hand. In His high priestly prayer Christ speaks, “Thou hast loved Me from before the foundation of the world.”

This love becomes visible

It is godly and perfect. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” Because of God's mercy He bears with us in a general sense. He has with much patience borne with the vessels prepared for His wrath. It is often an incomprehensible

matter that the Lord bears with a murmuring and hostile person, but it is only to remove all excuses in the day of days, especially from those who have known the way and not walked therein.

Carried and upheld

The mercy of God becomes especially visible in the lives of His children. The Lord upholds them. He did that already before their conversion. Think only of a godless Manasseh, a vexing Lot in Sodom, a David on the roof, and a Peter in the hall of Caiaphas. This mercy also becomes visible in the pity over those that are His. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.”

The incomprehensible wonder to be adored and to experience love becomes especially visible in the rebirth. The Lord has made them alive. They were dead in sins and iniquity. *Dead* means to be subject to the terrible results of the fall which we all carry upon us. The fruits of the fall can be seen in the threefold death.

By nature, man has lost God's image; he is removed from God and is without Him. He is without righteousness, knowledge, and holiness; he is spiritually dead, and he no longer has any longings or outgoings toward the living God. Man has thought out for himself an image of God and he serves Him with a self-learned knowledge and a self-made godliness—a God to whom he still ascribes grace and glory but whom he serves with a self-willed religion. He does not know that he pardons himself and deceives himself for the great eternity. He has never entered through the gate of rebirth into spiritual life.

Not passively but actively

“Dead in sins and trespasses,” the apostle writes. Death is not a passive state but an active one. Man has a will to do evil, but he no longer has a will to do good. That is taught to those who are truly reborn by the Holy Spirit. They are corrupt people, doing the will of the flesh; they are by nature children of wrath, as all other men. Their enmity in their state of death reveals itself in a brute enmity against the doctrine of free grace, but where the Lord begins the wonder of the rebirth, this is experienced with deep sorrow. By the grace of God, they are picked up from the open field and reborn to a living hope; this can be seen in their walk of life. There comes an inward sorrow over sin. The holy law of the Lord is used in their soul by the Holy Spirit. In this manner they learn to know themselves as a transgressor of all of God's commandments.

At the same time, the Lord shows His people that death beckons and eternity is before them. It is a calling, "today if ye will hear His voice." Then, how bitter and shameful sin becomes. It becomes impossible to see any avenue of escape. They must bow before God. There the soul begins to experience and bemoan his sin. How will he ever be converted to God? Such totally prostrate souls for whom from their side is nothing else other than death, are now instructed by the administration of the Word.

It is for that reason that there comes such a strong bond to the pure unadulterated truth and also to God's servants. The senses renewed by the Holy Spirit teach them to understand the difference between life and death.

The knowledge of Jesus

Paul immediately leaves his senders from Jerusalem and seeks communion with the disciples of Christ. Such souls

learn that God is righteous, and they are cursed. What a wonder it becomes when the Holy Spirit opens their eyes to the way of free grace and the soul is led to the knowledge of Jesus. Then He becomes the only hope of their life, and their soul longs to possess Him. Even though it is true that the times and the circumstances may differ, yet it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give the soul no rest before one has a solution and is found in Him. Oh, how true Zion can long for that. "Ah, that I might know Him."

*Jehovah will not chide with us forever
Nor always keep His anger, but deliver
His people from their sorrow and distress.
He has not crushed the flock of His possession,
Nor dealt with us according to transgression;
He chastens, but with love and tenderness.*

— Psalter 444:4 ◻



Bible Study

The Life of Isaac (6)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

Based on Genesis 25:21-23

The Lord has used the servant of Abraham to bring Rebekah to her bridegroom. He has been praying in the field that the Lord might prosper the journey of Eliezer and out of His hand he might receive his wife. We read in Genesis 24:67, "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent and took Rebekah, and she became his wife." What gladness there was in the heart of this couple. We read, "He loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

In Genesis 25:19 we read the beginning of another portion of the life of Isaac. He was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife. After the death of Abraham, the history of God's chosen people is continued in his son Isaac. It is true that the life of Isaac was not as eventful as the life of Abraham and Jacob. Isaac is the quiet one. He is not the father of all believers as Abraham was. We do not see in him such severe and manifold wrestling of faith as those of Jacob. However, we see in Genesis 24 the submission of faith. Isaac was also a true believer, and faith is a grace that is tried. This we also see in the happy marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac's pleading

What had happened in the life of Abraham and Sarah appears to be repeated here in Isaac and Rebekah's life.

Isaac himself was born in a way of impossibilities. He was the child of a divine miracle. God had promised to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. From him and his posterity would be born the promised seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not like a man who would forget what He has promised or change what He has expressed. Did not Balaam say, "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the Son of Man that He should repent? Has he said and shall He not do it or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" However, this does not mean that Isaac's faith would not be tested, for Rebekah was barren. This brought Isaac in need of a refuge. Often God's people experience riddles in their life. They believe that God has spoken to them, that a precious promise was given, but nothing happens that indicates that God will fulfill it. Then the mockers inside will not be quiet and they will say, "Where is now thy God? These were all imaginations or emotions without ground, otherwise what you thought the Lord promised to you would have happened."

Where else can they go then? They may go the throne of grace to lay all their fears and concerns before the Lord. This we also read of Isaac in verse 21, "And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife." The word "entreated" implies urgency. It was an earnest supplication, a pleading with the God of the Covenant, the LORD for and in the presence of his wife. No, Isaac did not do what Abraham had done. He tried to

help the Lord in fulfilling his word and used Hagar as a means for that. It was with him like with Jacob later, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." What a precious harmony in this marriage. There was family worship. Together, they stormed the throne of grace, and Isaac, as the husband and priest in the family, led in prayer and sought the help of God for whom nothing is impossible. He hears the needy when they cry. Thus, it was with Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac's prayer heard by the Lord

We read, "And the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." What an encouragement this must have been; they did not call upon the Lord in vain. Did the poet not say, "Call upon the Lord in trouble, and He will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me"? However, this encouragement does not mean that it is an end to the strife and warfare in the life of

these two pilgrims. Something remarkable happened; the young mother appeared to carry twins in her womb. They were very active because we read that the children struggled together within her. This greatly troubled Rebekah. She said, "If it be so, why am I thus?" It made her cry to the Lord for help. He alone could tell her what it meant. "She went to inquire of the LORD." She seemed to say,

"Why does this happen to me? What does this mean?" This question, "Why am I thus," is not strange in the life of God's children. They experience a struggle within their heart which they cannot explain. They may be a riddle to themselves. On the one hand, they are sorry about their sin and have an earnest desire to be delivered from it. They have a love for the Lord's Word and for His Law and seek to live according to it. "Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes." They would be glad if they could live a holy life to the honor of God who is so worthy to be served, but there is a riddle in their life that they cannot explain.

They also find another principle within, that is, inward corruption. When the Lord sheds light within, they find with Paul in Romans 7, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." There is a warfare going on within them between the old nature and the renewed nature. "The flesh lusted against

the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." What strife this can cause inside. The upright ones can be so weary of themselves, so weighed down with the plague of their own heart, with the workings of inward corruptions that they wonder, "Is it possible that such a one as I possess grace?"

Rebekah turned to the Lord, and because God's true children do not want to deceive themselves, they do as Rebekah and ask the Lord for His instruction. The Lord gives this to Rebekah. He speaks of two nations in her womb, two manner of people. The one nation would be stronger than the other. There will be strife within those people and the one would overcome the other. The Lord told her before the children were born, "The elder shall serve the younger." This is a remarkable instruction. Isaac was the child of promise, and now the one who was to become the child

of promise in the next generation would not be the older but the younger of Isaac's two sons. How clearly appears here the sovereignty of God. It would not be because Jacob was better or more worthy than Esau. We read in Romans 9:11, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." But it was written

What a precious harmony in this marriage. There was family worship. Together, they stormed the throne of grace, and Isaac, as the husband and priest in the family, led in prayer and sought the help of God for whom nothing is impossible. He hears the needy when they cry. Thus, it was with Isaac and Rebekah.

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Soon the two children are born. "The first came out red all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau." Then Jacob was born, "And his hand took hold on Esau's heel." Isaac was sixty years old, so it was after twenty years of marriage that Isaac and Rebekah became parents. We read of them in verse 28, "And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob." This is a little disappointing about Isaac, and it disturbed the harmony in their marriage. There will be tragic consequences of this favoritism. We see that Isaac's faith seems to lose its vigor and his flesh seems to have the upper hand, yet the Lord will fulfill His counsel and will not forsake the work of His own hands. His promise will stand, and He will do all His pleasure; there is nothing of man, but it is God's work alone in which He will be glorified. ◻

(To be continued)

Trials are medicines which our gracious and wise Physician prescribes because we need them. He proportions the frequency and weight of them to what our case requires. Let us trust in His skill and thank Him for His prescription.

— John Newton



From Our Inheritance

A Prayer for Restoration (2)

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
in the south”*** (Psalm 126:4).

God’s people begin their way in the light, but they do not consider that they must live out their life in darkness. When the disciples had left all to follow Jesus, they had not thought of a Gethsemane or a Golgotha. God converts His people so that they will become more and more unconverted so that at the end of their life their sigh will be, “Lord turn Thou me, and I shall be turned.”

The Sanballats and the Tobiahs will rise up against them, and what will happen then? Should they travel on courageously and unafraid? Just believe and accept? Oh, my friends, hypocrites and Pharisees are not so quickly stopped in their tracks when they are faced with conflicts. Paul states that they would even give themselves to be burned.

It is so completely different with the children of the Lord. They frequently become dejected, sorrowful, and doubting. God’s true people go from the one jail to the other. The times that they are without shackles and move freely about the earth are just short moments.

I once heard a child of God who had spoken of the freedom which lies in God’s work to a troubled soul, say to one who was standing from afar that now he again had to enter into prison. Indeed, that is the experience of all those who learn to know of the deliverance which is in Christ Jesus.

Not only did those who returned immediately face opposition and misery but new persecutions stood at the door. Among others, Antiochus Epiphanes oppressed them and caused their blood to flow. They would not receive a peaceful kingdom; on the contrary, they would be persecuted throughout the ages until God sent help to His Zion (Psalm 69:36). Therefore, there remained enough reason to continue to pray, not only for the Jewish nation but also for the Church of all times and ages. Here below bands and imprisonment will always continue.

It is unspeakably great, my beloved, to here receive a portion of deliverance by the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace—deliverance from the power of Satan, the servitude of the law, and the rule of sin. Time and time again those people need to be delivered. Time and again the eternal King must break through and come before their countenance. Even in the hour of death, the Master of Joshua must bring them through the Jordan of death as the great victor over death. For Him the closed heavens are opened, and He shall bring all those who have been given Him of the Father into that eternal felicity and freedom.

“Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams to the south.” The brooks and the rivers dried up in the southern portion of the land in the summer; in the rainy season, however, it became quite different. That picture just used here is therefore so true because the unpopulated land was empty and barren.

Jerusalem lay forsaken; there was a great need for forces to rebuild the city and to cause Zion to arise again. Well, He who fills the dry land with brooks of water is also able to work in the heart of those who have remained behind and those who willingly return. Our marginal notes therefore say, “Continue the work of deliverance, bring forth those who are still in prison.” When God intervenes, everything changes.

Even though we live in freedom, the Church remains in bondage, also outwardly. Oh, how many also in our nation have forsaken God, have broken with everything. What deadness there is among those who confess the truth. How few conversions there are; how little we see of “breaking through” among God’s children. In general, God’s people are shut in, and they cannot break through. The following song is no longer heard from day to day:

*Let all exalt Jehovah’s goodness
For most compassionate is He.
His mercy, excellent in fullness,
Endureth to eternity.*

Oh, how much bondage and imprisonment there is, both realized and unrealized. May the eternal Jehovah still have compassion in these dark days over our land and churches. May we be privileged to remember His past wonders according to His sovereign good pleasure. Christ may go out victorious, and because He was the Victor, may the Holy Spirit commence and perpetuate His work so that power and a sweet savor might emanate from Zion. May God place His people as praise upon the earth and cause them to taste the freedom of the glory of God to His children.

People of the Lord, soon God will bring you out of prison, to come and remain home eternally. Here we are often brought into prison, and much more often we bring ourselves there, but that will then end eternally. Unconverted, may God open your eyes, and the Angel of His countenance lead you out of your servitude. Concerned and troubled ones, may it be to your comfort that the faithful Jehovah has promised and confirmed, “For lo, Jehovah hears the poor and makes His pris-’ners glad.” ◻

(This installment marks the end of this series.)

A Father's Lamentation

Rev. J. van Haaren (1933-1983)

(Translated from *Offers die des avonds branden*, Gebr. Koster, Barneveld, ISBN 905551343)

“Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not...

I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the LORD my God...

Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

(Jeremiah 31:15,18&20)

Jeremiah may justly call himself the man who has seen affliction. Jeremiah lived both before and during the exile of the Jewish nation to Babylon. He has prophesied of the fall of the nation and has also personally experienced it. Approximately one hundred fifty years earlier the ten tribes had been led away to Babylon. This should have been a valuable and worthwhile lesson for Judah. They could see herein what would happen to a people that forgot the Lord. Yet, Judah did not take this lesson to heart. They sped forth upon the path of sin, heading towards its destruction, but they who will not hear must feel the rod. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city. Although a bloody battle ensued, Judah suffered a decisive defeat, and the city and the temple were destroyed. The people were gathered together in Ramah, and from there they were transported to Babylon. Jeremiah has heard the cries and the mourning of the people, and that will have touched him in the depths of his being.

Their mourning made him think of Rachel, and whoever thinks of Rachel, must think of the tears which she shed. Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife wept a great deal, for she had Jacob's love but not his children. That is why she envied Leah. While wringing her hands in anguish, she once stood before Jacob and said, "Give me children, or else I die." Finally, her wish was granted, and she received a son, but that is not enough for her; she wants more. That is why she called the son which she received Joseph and said, "The Lord will add to me another son." With her children she wished to triumph over Leah, and again she sees her wish fulfilled, for she is again with child. The birth of the second son, however, also becomes her death. Also, at this time, her sorrow is heartrending and she refuses to be comforted. It does not matter that the midwife calls out,

*Finally, Ephraim came to repentance.
No, that was not caused by the exile,
but the Lord broke Ephraim's heart.
Ah, how much labor of love is necessary
before a person will agree with the Lord?*

"Fear not, thou shalt have this son also." Ah, what will it benefit her to have sons, now that she must die? She calls out with all her sorrow in a dying cry, "Ben-oni," that is, son of my sorrow. Jeremiah thinks about the crying of Rachel when he hears the cries of the people as they are transported to Babylon. It is as if Rachel is crying again, not for children, but about her children "because they were not." Joseph, signified by the ten tribes, has already been exiled to Babylon, and now also Benjamin, signified by the two tribes, is taken away. It is as if the sorrow of her deathbed is relived. Ben-oni, all of my suffering and striving has been in vain. Tell me; shall there be any expectation for Rachel's descendants?

Jeremiah may offer comfort to those sorrowing and weeping people, "Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping...thy children shall come again to their own border." Therefore, the children of Joseph and Benjamin shall return. No, not all of them, but the Lord shall take care that a remnant of them shall be saved. He shall convert them and bring them again to the land of their forefathers. Ephraim is a son of Joseph and a grandchild of Rachel. At the same time, Ephraim is a collective name for the nation of the ten tribes. The Lord has had many concerns

with Ephraim. He had given them His Word and His statutes, and had revealed Himself as the God of the covenant, but Ephraim had no desire to walk according to the ways of the Lord. Immediately after the division of the kingdom, they departed from

God's law and ordinances when Jeroboam instituted the worshipping of calves, and later also added idol worship.

The Lord seriously admonished them by means of His faithful prophets. Think only of Elijah, Hosea, Amos and Isaiah. The people, however, refused to listen. The Lord sought them and punished them with the rod and with bitter setbacks, but that did not help either. Then followed the greatest punishment—the exile. Finally, Ephraim came to repentance. No, that was not caused by the exile, but the Lord broke Ephraim's heart. Ah, how much labor of love is necessary before a person will agree with the Lord? Look back upon your own life. How many warnings have already come your way? How often has the Lord allured you? How often has He knocked on the door of your heart by means of His Word or by exceptional occurrences in your life? A person will never give up the strife unless the Lord Himself brings him upon his knees. That is how it ensued with Ephraim. We read, "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." It is as if the Lord says, "Did I hear that correctly, is Ephraim really bemoaning himself? Has

he finally come to himself?" The Lord rejoices in that change. Yea, the Lord has a pleasure in His own work.

No, Ephraim does not complain about someone else. Neither does he mention the cruel barbarianism of the oppressor which is a wonder because we are so inclined to do that. Someone else has always done it. Ephraim does not complain about the Lord; he does not accuse the Lord of injustice. That is so often the first thing we do when the Lord visits us with adversity. Oh, how much rebellion can then live in our heart. Ephraim does not feel sorry for himself; Ephraim bemoans himself before God. Have you ever bemoaned yourself because of your sinful behavior?

In former days, men used oxen, among other things, to pull the plow. Such an animal, however, had to learn to walk in a harness. The animal was trained while it was still a calf. Such a calf did not want to walk in a harness, for it was not used to that. It would then kick backwards. The owner, however, knew how to handle it. He would hold a board with sharp prongs behind the animal's legs. If the animal would then kick backwards, it would injure itself. "Well," says Ephraim, "I have behaved like an untrained calf. I did not wish to walk in the harness. I was not willing to serve

Thee even though Thy service is such a blessed service. That is why it was necessary for Thee to chastise me. It is mine own fault." Ephraim confesses that he has deserved the chastisement. He may kiss the rod and taste of the honey which cleaves to it. That is why he speaks of chastisements.

Something of the love of God is contained therein. For we do not beat our children, but we chastise them for their welfare. Ephraim wished to say, "How good Thou hast been to me, that Thou didst not let me go my own way, that Thou wast willing to come and lead me in a right way." No, he does not utter a dead complaint but a living complaint which is apparent in his prayer.

He does not ask that the Lord will deliver him from captivity but that the Lord will deliver him from his sins. Ephraim prays for conversion because his sins are troubling him. He is then confronted with God's command, "Turn ye," and that command has brought him upon his knees. He does not say, "I cannot convert myself," but on the contrary, it is because he has learned that he cannot convert himself that he prays so earnestly for it. When God converts a person, then he tries to convert himself. There comes a total reformation, but he also comes to the realization that it is to no avail. Does he then give up? Oh no, because he must be converted to God; he can no longer be without God.

That is why he falls down upon his knees and begs, "Lord do Thou convert me." Ephraim has no expectation of himself. He does not pray as we find it in the new Bible translation, "Convert me and then I shall convert myself," but he prays, 'Convert me, and then I shall be truly converted, "for Thou art the LORD my God." Herein is revealed the

choice of his soul. Lord, art Thou not a confirmer of Thy Word? for that is how Thou hast revealed Thyself in Thy name: LORD. Oh Lord, convert me that I may live. Observe here, the Lord Himself draws him with cords of loving kindness; that is why Ephraim comes with weeping and supplication. The Lord, therefore, shall certainly have mercy upon them, for His name is LORD.

Ephraim comes to himself, not all of Ephraim, but the remnant according to the election of God's grace. Ephraim is filled with a sorrow after God, which works repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. He bemoans himself before the Lord because of his wicked conduct. He bows deeply under God's punishing hand while he must confess that God's sentence is fully righteous. Ephraim confesses his sin uprightly and mourns with shame over his unrighteousness. He is not worthy that the Lord would look upon him; the Lord would be righteous if He would cast him away, but he can no longer miss the Lord. There Ephraim lies at the feet of the Lord as a hell-worthy one. What will the Lord now do? In our text we may cast a glance into the loving heart of God, and what we become aware of is inexpressibly great. We hear the Lord as it were, thinking

Ephraim confesses that he has deserved the chastisement. He may kiss the rod and taste of the honey which cleaves to it. That is why he speaks of chastisements. Something of the love of God is contained therein.

aloud, and He does that so that Ephraim may know His thoughts of peace toward him. We can hear the Lord say, "Is not Ephraim my dear son? is he not a pleasant child?" They are two questions which do not need an answer, for the answer is already contained in the questions.

The questions confirm more particularly the truth of what is said. The Lord confirms with these words, in a very positive manner, that Ephraim is, indeed, His dear son, His pleasant child; that He loves Ephraim with a heartfelt love. That was totally unexpected. Ephraim had to confess to be worthy of death and of the judgment. He was worthy that the Lord would cast him away. Yet, beyond expectation, in place of an angry Judge, he may meet a loving Father. The Lord does not just call Ephraim a son, He calls him a dear son. We are very attached to something which is dear or precious unto us. What an inexpressible wonder of grace that the Lord says this wicked, disobedient Ephraim is a dear son unto Him; He is very attached to him. Just observe, it extends from the one wonder to the other. In our text it is also written that Ephraim is a pleasant child. A pleasant child is one who is exceptionally loving, one we gladly press to our heart. Joseph was Jacob's "pleasant" child. He loved him above all his other children. What an incomprehensible wonder of grace that the Lord called Ephraim a dear son and His pleasant child. The Lord is so astonishingly good for those who fall at his feet as lost ones. Have you ever experienced that?

The Lord had already spoken to Ephraim a long time ago. Ephraim had been warned and admonished by the mouth of the prophets. The Lord had called unto him to be con-

verted, but Ephraim had refused to listen. He did not wish to have anything to do with the Lord. Oh, how much sorrow had Ephraim caused the Lord. Yet, the Lord could not forget him. Then the Lord said, "Ephraim must be a dear son unto Me, for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still." Actually, in the original text we read, "thinking, I think of him." Ephraim was not out of the Lord's thoughts for a minute. When Ephraim set out on the path of sin, the Lord thought on him. When Ephraim kicked under the chastisements of the Lord as a calf unused to the harness, the Lord did not think of him in wrath but in love. It truly would not have been a wonder if the Lord had thought of him in anger and had said unto him, "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

Why is it that the love of the Lord goes out toward Ephraim? It is not because Ephraim was such a good child.

Neither is it because Ephraim finally confesses his guilt. The Lord does not begin to think of Ephraim when he returns, for that returning is a result of God's drawing power. God has had thoughts of peace toward Ephraim since eternity, and that is why Ephraim now lies at His feet. He has loved him with an eternal love. He wished to delight in him according to His sovereign good pleasure. Truly, any praise of self is totally excluded. The love wherewith the Lord wished to cherish Ephraim was so great that He did not spare His own dear Son but gave Him up to die on the cross. Who will ever be able to fathom that love? He was willing to cast away His Son so that Ephraim could again be adopted as a child. Really, when we try to understand this wonder, we must stand still with holy reverence. How can we fathom that Christ, in His time, was willing to die for sinners. Who will be able to state in words what is experienced when the Lord, for Jesus' sake, speaks of peace and seals it unto the heart, "Since I spake against thee, I do earnestly remember thee still." They have fallen out of the communion with God, but not out of His heart; that is why He cannot forget them and He will never forget them. David ventured to show this when he said, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

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When we experience something unusual, it may be that we are shocked in our "bowels." That means that it touches us in the depths of our being. That it also what these words mean. Obviously, it is a metaphor or imagery. God does not have a body: God is a Spirit. We read that when Christ looked upon the multitude, He was moved with compassion over them. That was a compassion which welled up out of the depths of His mediatorial heart. Zacharias speaks in his song of praise, "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us." The entire Being of God is therefore moved in its depths over Ephraim to do well unto him.

We also read that the Lord says, "I will surely have mercy upon him." Why would the Lord do that? Because He loves him. But why does He love him? Because of His free good pleasure. The Lord will have compassion; He can have compassion in Christ; therefore, He shall have compassion. It is literally written in the original text, "Pitying them I will have compassion on them." That means that He will surely and certainly do it. No one or anything can hinder it. There is no one else who can awaken this love. He loves them freely; that is the reason no one can abolish this love. God's people may daily stumble and fall, but they cannot fall away. They are engraved in the palms of His hands.

How rich has been the Lord's compassion over Ephraim. Even out of Ephraim there have been those who returned to the land of their forefathers. Think only of Anna, a prophetess, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. The Lord had confirmed His Word unto her in a very special manner. In this way the Lord still confirms Himself over His entire Church. They may already taste of His wonderful love here below, and soon they will live with the Lord eternally. No one can hinder that. No matter how much they may be assaulted, God will fulfill His good pleasure. How blessed are those who may share in God's compassion.

Our text ends with the significant and meaningful words, "saith the LORD." He is the faithful, the unchangeable One. What comes forth from His lips remains firm and unbroken. How great and rich is God's grace. It is bestowed undeservedly. Yea, it is all out of Him, through Him, and unto Him. He is worthy to receive all the glory and honor to all eternity. □

Labor to grow better under all your afflictions lest your afflictions grow worse, lest God mingle them with more darkness, bitterness, and terror.

— John Owen



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Kalamazoo, MI

I have heard ministers pray for other ministers that they may be used as “robbers of the hell.” I think I am missing something here because we have been instructed that it is the Lord’s work that saves a sinner and He alone has the keys of heaven and hell. Is it not more honorable to pray that ministers may be used as servants of the Lord to do His will? I acknowledge this is old fashioned, but I think it is more honorable to the Lord and respectful of the minister, student, or elder.

I don’t think the answer to this question refers to something that should be more “old fashioned” than the saying itself. It simply means to be instrumental, and with all due respect, I consider any further inference a bit far-fetched. Let me try to explain why I feel this way. A few months ago, I was sitting in a small office in a funeral home, only a few minutes before entering the chapel where I was to conduct a funeral. As I sat down, I noticed a poem hanging on the wall with a description of a pastor’s calling and duty. One line struck me: “and bring the lost to Christ...” Now, I did not know the majority of the guests who had come. Often such occasions are accompanied by high mountains of impossibilities and deep sighs of inability to know what and how to say the right words. “Lord, grant me now the words, help me to speak Thy Word, and use it for the conversion of sinners.” Two things were simultaneously pressed upon me: first, I cannot bring a single soul to Christ, but I am called to do so, and secondly, the emphasis on those lost. One had passed away and was about to be buried, but save them that are ready to die (Revelation 3:1&2). There is no time to lose, no opportunity to neglect, no case too hopeless.

To be a “robber of the hell” is then impressed upon the heart. May the goods of the house of the strong man armed be spoiled; may firebrands be plucked from the fire. Perhaps many in the audience would never say they were lost, let alone feel something of what it means, but it was the statement that made an impression upon me because I was about to address them. Dear reader, at such moments the emphasis is not on what *man* can or cannot do but on the dire need of the soul of fellow travelers to eternity. While it could be *more* proper and *more* honorable to the Lord to state that only God brings the lost to Christ, it would not be the point here. Granted, expressions are expressions and often leave something to be desired, but let us not go *overboard* in making sure there is no loophole left for a possible misinterpretation thereby losing the force of the statement. In other words, misinterpretation of a statement or saying is *always* possible. Remember that we can say something totally right while it may produce the wrong effect.

I would be more concerned about a **Bible text** quoted out of context than an above-mentioned statement being

misinterpreted. The point is that if we go down this road, we might as well not consider ministers anymore as “*workers together with Him (God)*” (2 Corinthians 6:1) because it may convey that salvation is a work of God *and* man... According to the same reasoning the statement from the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord’s Day 32 answer 86, “that by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ” could imply that not only the grace of God and the blood of Christ saves a sinner but also our very words. Perhaps the Form for the Ordination of Ministers of God’s Word should then leave out the reference that the Lord Jesus Christ gave apostles and prophets, evangelists and ministers for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ because is this not the work of God alone? We read in Luke 10:16, “*He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*” The very answer to the question asked and the justification of the correctness of the expression in question we perhaps find in Proverbs 24:11&12: “*If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and He that keepeth thy soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?*”

The explanation of this text by Charles Bridges is as touching as it is sobering. Permit me to share just a paragraph for preachers and hearers alike. “The Lord preserve us from an indictment in the court of heaven for the murder of our brother’s soul, by forbearing to deliver! And does not this ring a solemn peal of warning to those whose special office it is to deliver them that are drawn unto death? ‘*We knew it not*’ but ought we not to have been ‘watching for souls, as those that must give account?’ (Hebrews 13:17) and what will be the tremendous reckoning for those who perish by the neglect of their pledged and divinely-appointed guardians! ‘While thy servant was busy here and there’—upon his own pleasure—the soul ‘was gone!’ But his blood will be required at the watchman’s hand.” In light of what Bridges states, I would like to answer that the expression “robber of the hell” is not only **allowed**, but implicitly **commanded**. Ministers are called to be robbers of the hell AND bring the lost to Christ. The command of the parable of the great supper in Luke 14 confirms it: “*and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind...and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*” □

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



Reflections

A Discourse for the Lord's Day Evening

Augustus Toplady (1740-1778)

(Taken from *A Course of Prayer Suitable for Every Day of the Week*)

Never do the mercy and goodness of God appear in a more striking view than contrasted with our own unworthiness and ingratitude. Every favor calls for thankfulness, but increasing favors ever heaped on the ill and hell-deserving exceed all power of acknowledgement, especially in the astonishing riches of divine grace as manifested in the election, redemption, and effectual vocation of the people of God.

Let us never then lose sight of a grand scriptural truth: that in consequence of redemption, the eternal Son did, by virtue of His Father's will and of His own, stand forth as the avowed and the allowed paymaster of His elect Israel; that He sustained and represented, and to this very hour, represents their persons at the tribunal of divine justice; that their sins were so imputed to Him as to render Him in their stead the real debtor unto God; that He actually and totally paid the last of their dreadful debt when He bowed His sacred head in death; that He received His visible discharge from all His faithful engagements when He quitted the tomb on the third day; that the whole body of God's elect for whom His humiliation was endured were then summarily and virtually justified in Him, and their debts openly canceled; that He ascended into heaven as their Forerunner and ever lives to make intercession for them until their whole number is completely gathered home to glory. This is not a chain of abstract speculations and metaphysical truths but realities of the highest importance. Strike them from the Christian creed, and the whole gospel evaporates into little more than an empty sound.

The merits of Christ are like the veil of the temple that screened the outer parts thereof from the holy of holies, and faith draws the veil that lays hold on the Redeemer's merits and makes them our own. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our union with the Lord Jesus.

It is a remarkable portion of Holy Writ that Christ was "made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Observe the words, our righteousness is in Him, not in ourselves. The imputed righteousness of the Son of God is ours, not only imputed but imparted. Could we have been perfect without Him,

He might have been spared His labor of love and need not have died. The righteousness which renders us acceptable in the sight of God is not our own but His. Neither root nor fruit is ours, neither inward nor outward holiness. It is all His, and He who has begun a good work in us will finish it and preserve us till He appears the second time and we appear with Him without sin to salvation. The believer on his road to the heavenly Canaan has the witness within himself, having redemption in the blood of Christ even the forgiveness of sins, and is acquitted of God.

The Spirit of God ascertains our adoption and regeneration by His gracious leadings and by His witnessing presence. The former is common to all the saints, and the latter is peculiar to those only who are blest with the assurance of

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faith. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," proved to be so. He leads us to the blood of Christ for pardon, to the righteousness of Christ for justification, to the promises for comfort, and to God and Christ for holiness and eternal life. For as the apostle says, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The Spirit acts as a spirit of fear

when He convinces the soul of sin, of its natural bondage to iniquity, and to the threatenings of the law. Then, He acts as the Spirit of adoption, testifying of our sonship and causing us to look upon God as our Father in Christ. This is what our church means by the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

There is still a higher degree of spiritual rejoicing to which some believers are exalted, namely, the unclouded evidence of sonship arising from the full, clear, immediate witness of the Spirit. If we enjoy the sweet assurance of His presence within, let us rejoice in His holy comfort, but if we have not this assurance, let us not be discouraged. God has a numerous family; His sons and daughters are innumerable, for who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel. In so large a family some are weak and some are strong. Nevertheless, covet earnestly the best gifts and walk as it becomes the heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and receivers of the Spirit. □



For Young and Old

Torn in Half

(Taken from an old issue of The Banner of Truth)

Many years ago in France, a peddler greeted a woman living in a cottage in the forest and offered her a New Testament for sale. Jeanne, for that was the woman's name, hesitated. Would the priest approve? That was the question. She wistfully eyed the neat, little Book and at last produced the money. She took the Book saying, "I cannot refuse, but may I be pardoned if it be sin."

Soon Jacques, her husband, came in, and Jeanne timidly showed him her Book. As she had feared, he was tired and cross and upbraided her for spending his money in this fashion. She answered, "The money is not all yours Jacques. When we married I brought my dowry." Jacques said, "The money was half yours and half mine you said. Very well, the Book is the same." Roughly opening the Book, he tore it into two pieces and, keeping one piece, threw the other part to Jeanne.

Several days later Jacques was sitting in the forest and suddenly remembered the torn Book. He thought he would investigate it and began reading it. His rough fingers had divided the Book in the Gospel of Luke, and he began to read in the fifteenth chapter—"And will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." These were the first words he read, and spellbound he read to the end of the story. When he came to the end, there were a lot of questions which rose up in his mind. What had the poor lost son done? Where had he been? What caused him to return? The questions bothered him, but the answers were to be found in the first part of the Book, and this part his wife had. Pride prevented him from asking her for the first part of the Book.

Meanwhile, Jeanne occasionally read her part of the Testament. When she reached the end of her part, her interest was especially aroused. That younger son—his waywardness, his journey, his sin, his misery, the wonderful change in his thoughts—"I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." There the story stopped, but what happened? Did the father welcome him or not? These questions tortured her mind, and her tender heart longed for the answers. She even cried over the story, but she could not get up the courage to ask Jacques.

One day when it was raining very hard, Jacques came home early feeling very weary. After he ate his soup and bread for supper, he blurted out, "Jeanne, do you remember the Book which I tore in two? My part had a wonderful story in it but only the end of it. I cannot rest until I know the beginning. Please bring me your piece of the Book."

"Oh, Jacques," replied his wife, "the same story is constantly on my mind, but I do not have the ending. Did the father receive the willful son?"

"He did," answered Jacques, "but what was the sin that separated them?"

She brought her piece of the Book and knelt next to his chair. Together they read the whole beautiful parable, and the Spirit of God, who had been working in both of their hearts, caused its hidden meaning to dawn upon them. That was the first of many Bible readings by the firelight after they finished their supper. In time, by means of the working of the Holy Spirit both husband and wife were enabled to put their hope and confidence in the Lord Jesus. □

God's Providence

We find a multitude of providences so timed to a minute, that had they occurred just a little sooner or later, they had mattered little in comparison with what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be chance, but counsel, that so exactly works in time. Contingencies keep to no rules... The angel calls to Abraham and shows him another sacrifice just when his hand was giving the fatal stroke to Isaac (Genesis 22:10&11). A well of water is shown to Hagar just when she had left the child, as not able to see its death (Genesis 21:16&19). Rabshakeh meets with a blasting providence, hears a rumor that frustrated his design, just when ready to make an assault upon Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:8).

— *John Flavel*



Current Events

A recent shakeup in Planned Parenthood leadership reveals its core mission is still abortion. Its former president, Leana Wen, was forced to depart after only eight months on the job due to board dissatisfaction with her efforts to broaden and expand Planned Parenthood's resources to other programs as well as her failure to "double down on abortion rights advocacy".

— *Family Policy Alliance*

The number of people in Britain identifying as Christians is in dramatic decline. The number stands at 38% of the population, down two thirds since 1983. At the same time, there has been a continued rise in the percentage of Brits who identify as Muslims—from 1% in 1983 to 6% in 2018. There has also been a substantial increase in those who do not identify with any religion—from 31% in 1983 to 52% in 2018. As the National Center for Social Research noted, it is compelling evidence that the process of secularization continues unabated.

— *Christianity Today*

As evangelicals increasingly are becoming the target of Russia's severe anti-evangelism laws, a German court ruled this month in favor of a Russian Baptist family who fled the attacks, insults, and threats in their homeland, by granting them asylum. Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees initially rejected the application because it did not consider their persecution to be the result of government interference. An Appellate Court, however, ruled that in view of the Russian government crackdown on Jehovah Witnesses, it is likely that members of other evangelistic faiths would also suffer persecution.

— *Christianity Today*

Is the Fourth of July a religious holiday? A prominent historian writes, "Today, the idea of freedom remains as central as ever to American culture and politics... One thing seems certain. The story of American freedom is forever unfinished." Among the freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, the First Amendment's protection of freedom of religion is contested everywhere. American culture is trending against religious freedom, and it will take far more than political will and legal savvy to change course. In the United States, people of all faiths are under-trained and under-mobilized, despite increased religious freedom abuses. To begin to address the religious liberty literacy gap in the U.S., we must promote three key defining values: 1) Religious freedom is a fundamental right that must be actively guarded; 2) People of faith deserve protection from government-promoted social views; 3) Advocacy for religious freedom must allow for competing views with civility, respect, and protection for people of all religious beliefs or none.

— *The Christian Post*

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark religious liberty decision Thursday (June 20) and let stand a 94-year-old cross-shaped war memorial that was at the center of a dispute between an atheist group and a veteran's organization. "The cross is undoubtedly a Christian symbol, but that fact should not blind us to everything else that the Bladensburg Cross has come to represent... Tearing down the cross could be viewed as an unconstitutional hostile act toward religion," a justice wrote. The justices did not overturn the Lemon Test, which has been used since 1971 to determine the constitutionality of a law that deals with religion. However, they limited the Lemon Test's reach in future cases by listing reasons why historic monuments usually are constitutional.

— *Christian Headlines*

A resolution bill, ACR99 of the California legislature, would ask Christians and churches to stop attempting to change homosexuals and to accept the LGBTQ agenda as not sinful instead. A committee vote in July ran 9-2 to forward the ACR99 bill, advancing it to a vote in the full chamber. What the California legislators believe regarding the politically powerful "LGBTQ" movement is spelled out in the text of ACR99. This measure would call upon all Californians to embrace the individual and social benefits of family and community acceptance and call upon religious leaders to counsel on LGBTQ matters from a place of love, compassion, and knowledge. ACR99 is aimed at what the text notes as, "religious leaders," directly, asking that they alter biblical teaching to be in conformity to the views of the text of the bill instead.

— *Christian Action Network*

With little fanfare, the U.S. Senate in June confirmed the 125th federal court nominee of President Trump, continuing a brisk pace that is dramatically reshaping the judiciary into a more conservative bent. The federal judiciary is comprised of three levels: the district court, the court of appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court. Although Trump's confirmation pace for all judges is similar to previous presidents for their first two years, he is far ahead of recent presidents for appeals court confirmations. Appeals court confirmations are very important because, in most cases, their opinion ends up being the final opinion, as only a small percentage of appeal cases are heard by the Supreme Court.

— *The Christian Mail*

A Warning

(Warnings given by Legh Richmond, author of the *Dairyman's Daughter*, to his children)

Beware of the critical hearing of sermons preached by godly men. It is an awful thing to be balancing the merits of a preacher instead of the demerits of yourself. Consider every opportunity of hearing as a message sent to you from heaven. For all the sermons you have heard, you will have to render an account at the last day.



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

Avoiding Evil Company

(Taken from *Spiritual Counsel to the Young* by J.K. Popham)

My dear young Friends,

The holy Word of God says, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Proverbs 1:10). Read the whole chapter. The counsel is most pure and wholesome and much to be regarded and pondered over. “If sinners entice thee,” does not mean that the enticed one is not a sinner, for all are sinners. It means that openly wicked men and women come to draw one who is moral and of good behaviour and seek to draw him into some sin or sins, into conduct contrary to the instruction of his father and the law of his mother (verse 8). They had doubtless warned him against open sin, laid him under parental authority, and pointed out to him the commandment of God with regard to loving and obeying them (Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4). The son was thus, as we would say today, “Well brought up.” Jewish law with regard to the subjection of children and obedience to their parents was very strict (Deuteronomy 21:21).

Today we have run to the mad extreme. Parental authority is very largely unknown. The commandment of God to children in regard to their parents is ignored. May God keep you tender, loving and obedient to your parents, and help you to regard the precept: “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” “If thy brother... entice thee secretly” (Deuteronomy 13:6), such would be the case with you if enticed. Sinners would take care not to endeavor to persuade you to commit an open sin in the presence of your parents; the persuasion would be in secret. They would meet you in the street and walk with you from school or your place of business. You attend a place of worship on Lord’s days with your parents, and the bondage of it, the pleasure of a country walk with good companions might be an early counsel, working in you a dislike to the keeping of the Lord’s day. Oh, consent not!

The cinema would be another enticement—so lively, exciting, full of fun—perhaps an offer of paying for you the first visit to such a way to hell. Oh, consent not! Police Court reports tell of the evil influences of

such terribly wicked places. Bad company, nightly walks, encouraging you to disobey your fathers rule that you should be home by such an hour, infusing a defiant spirit of rebellion against him and making home an unpleasant place, exciting in your depraved nature much evil. Oh, consent not! You have a depraved nature, latent lusts. May God keep you from the match which would set them ablaze: “If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” The enticement might be to taste strong drink. “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder” (Proverbs 23:31&32).

The enticer may be a novel reader. He may offer to lend you a book which he says is very interesting, not very exciting, but it is enough to beget in you a desire to read another and another. You cannot allow your parents to see the pernicious stuff, so you with deceit smuggle it in and hide it in some place from their eyes. You read novels till the desire becomes a passion, a fire in your heart. Oh, consent not! The beginning of sins, this among them, is like the letting out of water. Who can bound the issues thereof? (Proverbs 17:14). A tempter may be a gambler, a card player. No stakes at the first, lest you should be shocked and the hook should not take. Later on, a small stake and you are allowed to win. The success you have draws to further ventures: you lose, you get into debt, opportunity to steal (temporarily you think), and thus you sink; moral feeling is killed or at least wounded, stunned, and scarcely able to breathe a regret. Oh, consent not my dear young friends, if you are enticed! You have the same fallen nature as the enticers. Go not in the way with them.

May the God of all grace look on you and save you from sinning, and from sin; give you grace to fear His great and holy name and to walk in His ways.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

The Story of Moses (3)

(Based on Exodus 2:11-25)

Many years went by, and Moses was no longer a baby; he had grown up just like us. Because He had grown up in the king's palace, people thought that he was an Egyptian like the king. However, Moses was not nor wanted to be one of them. If he had continued to live as an Egyptian, he could have been rich; he could have done many sinful and worldly things, but Moses did not want to be one of the king's people. He wanted to be with the people of the Lord. The Bible tells us, "By faith Moses...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ (the hatred he would experience because he served God) greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Are we like Moses? Can we say "no" to the fun of the world—TV, worldly books, movies, and more—wishing rather to spend our time seeking the Lord?

One day Moses was walking among his people, the children of Israel. He saw how hard they had to work. He saw how mean the Egyptians were to the Israelites who were helping to build their cities. How sad he was to hear the cries of his people. Suddenly, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his own people, an Israelite. Maybe the Egyptian was whipping the Israelite for not working hard enough. Moses became very angry. He looked around and when he did not see anyone nearby, he did something dreadful. He killed the Egyptian and quickly buried his body in the sand.

What a terrible thing to do. Moses had looked right and left, but he had not looked up. God sees everything we do. Whatever we do, our sins will always be found out. The next day Moses was again walking among his people. This time he saw one of the Israelites beating another Israelite. Moses hurried over to the men.

"Why are you beating your brother?" he asked angrily.

"Who are you to tell me what to do?" the man shouted to Moses. "Are you a judge or a prince over us? Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian the other day?"

Moses became frightened when he heard that. He thought that no one had seen him commit murder. No, Moses, you forgot about God, God who sees all things. It was not long before the king heard that Moses had killed one of his people, and the king said that Moses had to die. Moses ran away to another country to be safe, to live there.

One day Moses was sitting by a well. Remember that people in those days did not have faucets in their homes like we have, they had to get their water from a well. As Moses was sitting there, seven girls came to fetch water for their father's flock. They were all sisters. When Moses saw that some shepherds were pushing the girls out of the way so that they could not draw water from the well, he quickly hurried over to help the girls draw water. When the girls came home, their father was surprised that they were home so soon. He asked, "Why are you home so much sooner than at other times?"

They told their father about the man who had helped them, who had pushed the other shepherds out of the way, and had drawn water for their flocks.

"Where is he?" asked their father, "Why did you not bring him home with you so that he can have a meal with us?"

The girls went to get Moses and brought him to their home. They treated him to a good meal, and the father, who was a priest (something like a minister), asked Moses to live with them. In this home Moses would be safe from the king of Egypt. Soon after, the priest gave Moses his daughter Zipporah to be his wife. Moses then worked for his father-in-law, taking care of the flocks.

The people of Israel were treated very cruelly by the Egyptians. They were forced to make a large amount of bricks and also had to find the straw which was used to make the bricks. They were beaten when they did not make enough bricks in a day. The people then prayed and cried unto the Lord that He would deliver them from their cruel task masters. God heard their cries, and He had pity on them. We read in the Bible that God hears the needy when they cry unto Him. In our next story we will learn what the Lord told Moses to do.



Bible Quiz

Cares

Dear Boys and Girls,

During the winter, I would often go outside in the morning after a fresh snowfall and find various kinds of animal tracks that circled around the outside of the fence that encloses the barnyard. I studied some of those tracks closely and could tell that coyotes, foxes, rabbits, deer, and a bobcat had visited during the dark hours of the night. I had already encountered many raccoons, opossums, owls, and hawks, and the larger paw prints worried me. Were my chickens safe? One night in early spring, my husband awoke from the noise of the entire flock of chickens cackling loudly in full alarm. By the light of the moon, he could see a fox sitting on its haunches next to the chicken coop, watching the hens as they roosted in long rows. My husband opened the door. “Bella,” he ordered, pushing one of the dogs out, “Go chase it away. Go, get it!”

Bella stood on the steps and looked around sleepily. Tail wagging mildly, she sniffed the air and gazed from side to side. “Come on,” my husband urged, but Bella just stood there, a mellow look on her face. Clearly, she was not interested in chasing anything. My husband told me about it the next morning.

“Oh,” I said, looking at the three dogs curled up, side by side. “You just sent the wrong one out. If you had sent Tucker out, that fox would have been gone in an instant.”

The chickens had been in trouble and needed help; there was “help” that did not help at all, and there was the right help. If the right help were not sent, the trouble would not be resolved. In the same way, we often look in the wrong place for help when we have cares or troubles. We mean well, and we try hard...but we forget the most important thing of all.

Perhaps you often fail your tests in history. It is so hard for you to remember the dates and the names. Or maybe you are very worried—worried about something big because you heard that your dad has many troubles at his job and cannot pay the bills—or worried about something small because you lost your brother’s favorite ball and do not know how to tell him. Maybe your friend is no longer being kind to you or is moving away, and you are sad. You do not know how to change or fix any of these things, and you become quiet and moody.

Here is a poor girl who wakes up in the morning thinking about where she will search for something to eat to fill the gnawing stomachs of her and her little sisters, and there is a mother who rises wearily from her bed wondering how she will be able to convince an older child who does not want to listen to her. The poor girl spends the whole day scouring the area surrounding her ramshackle home, and she sends her little sisters in every direction to help. At the end of the day, they are even hungrier than before. The tired mother talks to her husband, and in a roundabout way she mentions her trouble to her own mother; she looks for direction in an article she reads and determines to try both patience and firmness. At the end of the day, she lies down with a sigh, her worry having grown and preventing sleep.

David also had a time when he did not look in the right place for help. He, the young boy who once so courageously said that God would help him defeat a giant, is now so afraid that he decides to lie. He pretends to be a madman so that he will not be captured by King Achish. He forgets all about calling upon the Lord in his trouble. Do we also not do this many times? Did you know that nothing is too big or too small for you to pray about to the Lord? Why do we usually forget that?

The Lord is the only right help. He is the only one who can truly cause the distress, danger, or care to go away. He is the one who can be with us in our cares, help us to bear them, and give us a quiet spirit under them. He is able to help us know the best way to deal with our cares. Do you not think that He knows and cares when you see your father and mother are upset about something? They often forget to ask for help in the right place; we forget to first tell the Lord about it. He should be first, but most of the time, we remember to pray only after we have tried everything else.

You are much younger than your father and mother, and your worries and cares are quite different. However, in the Bible, we read that Christ once said, “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me.” You are not too young or too small to bring your cares to Him.

What happens if you never pray about your problems? Usually, you will struggle on and on without a solution, and you try all the wrong things so that your problem only becomes worse. You decide to lie to your brother and tell him a neighbor boy took his ball, but weeks later, the truth comes out. You peek at another student's answers on a test, but you are both wrong, so you have an even worse final grade, and your conscience keeps bothering you. You are nasty to your friend who is not being kind, and now it seems as though your friendship will never be renewed. Your friend moved away and your favorite cousin is very sick, and you sit alone at lunch time, mulling it over and becoming more and more unhappy. You worry that your dad cannot pay the bills, but it is because you want to be able to have everything you want, not because you feel bad for him; the worry becomes heavier, and you have not even asked the Lord to help.

What does God Himself tell us in His Word? "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." That is not as an afterthought, but *first* of all, and *before* anything else. Most importantly of all, we should show Him our heart and pray, "Lord, it is so hard and dead and cold. I cannot do anything to make it different, but Thou art able to. Wilt Thou be merciful to me, and help me...for time, and for eternity?"

* * * * *

Across

2. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your _____ be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21).

3. "For _____ shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10).

7. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my _____ is from Him" (Psalms).

9. "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name _____: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis).

10. "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall _____ me" (Psalm 55).

12. "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and _____ of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke).

Down

1. "Casting all your _____ upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Peter).

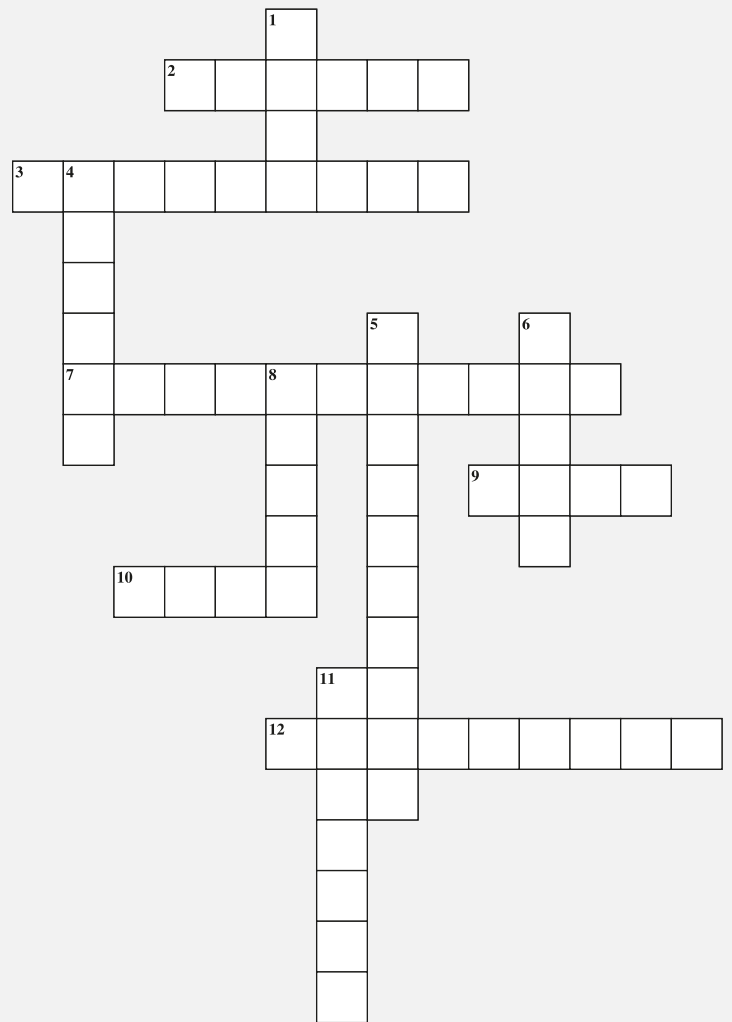
4. "And he was in the _____ part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4).

5. "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these _____ be overpast" (Psalms).

6. "Seek ye the LORD while He may be _____, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55).

8. "And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, _____ the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4).

11. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt _____ Me" (Psalm 50).



For the Younger Children

13. To whom did Pharaoh go in his trouble?
_____ (Genesis 41:8)
14. To whom did Nebuchadnezzar go in his trouble?
_____ (Daniel 2:2).
15. Did any of these help save him out of their trouble? _____
16. To whom did Israel turn in their trouble?
(2 Chronicles 15:4) _____
17. Did this help them? _____

For the Older Children

Complete the verses by using the phrases in the box.

Like a broken tooth, In the day of trouble,
For trouble is near, In six troubles

18. "He shall deliver thee _____"
19. "The Lord hear thee _____"
20. "Be not far from me: _____"
21. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is _____"

* * * * *

Answers to August's "Sharing" quiz:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Steal | Ephesians 4:28 |
| 2. Wagon | Genesis 45:27 |
| 3. Sheep | 1 Samuel 25:18 |
| 4. Good | Genesis 3:6 |
| 5. Herd | Genesis 18:7 |
| 6. Men | Genesis 20:14 |
| 7. Haste | Genesis 24:18 |
| 8. Straw | Genesis 28:32 |
| 9. King | 1 Kings 10:13 |
| 10. Unto | Luke 6:38 |
| 11. Isaiah 25:8 | |
| 12. Again | Proverbs 3:28 |
| 13. Poor | Proverbs 19:17 |
| 14. Spare | Proverbs 21:26 |
| 15. Bountiful | Proverbs 22:9 |
| 16. Bread | Proverbs 25:21 |
| 17. She, he, her house | |

Answers to previous quizzes were received in June from:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Anabelle Berkenbush 3 | Sifra Rotich 1 |
| William Berkenbush 3 | Ale Rus 4 |
| Jenina Blom 3 | Jessa Rus 4 |
| Marissa Blom 2 | Mya Schelling 1 |
| Riley Blom 2 | Laura Scherpenzeel 2 |
| Gary Boon 2 | Carmyn Stubbe 1 |
| Jenny Boon 2 | Marla Stubbe 1 |
| Levi Boon 1 | Colin Ten Hove 2 |
| Paul Boon 2 | Arianna Timmer (2) 3 |
| Derek Brouwer 2 | Harley Timmer (2) 3 |
| Elijah Cutajar (2) 4 | Laurencia Timmer 1 |
| Emily Cutajar (2) 4 | Sierra Timmer 2 |
| Noah Cutajar (2) 4 | Skye Timmer (2) 3 |
| Felicia DeVisser (3) 3 | Wyatt Timmer 2 |
| Sarina Den Bok 4 | Lucas Van Bodegraven 1 |
| Thomas Den Bok 4 | Aart Vander Waal 1 |
| Sawyer Dob 2 | Elaina Vander Waal 1 |
| Kaylynn Ekema 2 | Ross Vander Waal 1 |
| Geralyn Engelen 3 | Hendrick Van Deuveren 1 |
| Shawn Engelen 3 | Ayla Van Grouw 1 |
| Trevor Engelen 3 | Brayden Van Grouw 1 |
| Adrienne Engelsma (4) 4 | Sophia Van Lagen 1 |
| Bereket Engelsma (4) 4 | Carter Van Liere (2) 3 |
| Tizita Engelsma 1 | Lydia Van Manen 3 |
| Abigail Grinich 1 | Rosalee Van Manen 3 |
| Kari Groen 1 | Jozias Van Ravenswaay 2 |
| Kurtis Groen 1 | Naomi Van Ravenswaay 2 |
| Ailene Groenendyk 5 | Dawson Van Velthuisen 1 |
| Adrian Groenendyk (3) 6 | Ellie Van't Zelfde 1 |
| Benjamin Groenendyk (3) 6 | Levi Van't Zelfde 1 |
| John Groenendyk (3) 6 | Jennifer VandeBruinhorst (2) 5 |
| Ruben Groenendyk 5 | Alivia Vande Hoef 5 |
| Aubree Joosse (6) 6 | Joshua Vande Lagemaat 2 |
| Myrah Joosse (6) 6 | Jake Vande Stouwe 1 |
| Natalya Joosse (6) 6 | Jonah Vande Stouwe 1 |
| Seth Joosse (6) 6 | Heidi Vandenberg 1 |
| Olivia Kaat (6) 5 | Renae Vandenberg (2) 3 |
| Stephanie Keurhorst 3 | Austin Van Den Top 1 |
| Jason Kleyn 1 | Caleb Van Den Top 1 |
| Ashley Knibbe (2) 4 | Collin Van Den Top 1 |
| Brennan Knibbe (2) 5 | Arianna Verhoef (2) 4 |
| Caylea Knibbe (2) 4 | Mariette Verhoef (2) 2 |
| Courtney Knibbe (2) 4 | Johanna Wessels 4 |
| Donovan Knibbe (3) 5 | Arthur Wisse 3 |
| Jarynne Knibbe (2) 5 | Joanna Wisse 3 |
| Lindsey Knibbe (2) 4 | Lane Wisse 3 |
| Lydia Knibbe 3 | Tonia Wisse 3 |
| Nathan Knibbe 3 | Heidi Ymker 2 |
| Quinton Knibbe (2) 4 | Marcail Ymker (2) 3 |
| Sienna Knibbe 2 | Pa ton Ymker 2 |
| Whitney Knibbe (2) 4 | Quentin Ymker 2 |
| Rebecca Krygsman (2) 4 | Shauntae Ymker (2) 3 |
| Sarah Krygsman (2) 4 | No Name |
| Lydia Mol 3 | |
| Olivia Mol (2) 3 | |
| Rachel Mol 3 | |
| Teddy Mol 3 | |

7 Bibles were saved up this month to be sent to needy boys and girls in Bolivia. The total is 8. Thank you!

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

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



Letters to My Young Readers

Welcome to our new members:
 Brayden Van Grouw, Abigail Grisnich, Jake & Jonah
 Vande Stouwe, Jason Kleyn, Hendrick Van Deuveren,
 Mya Schelling, Levi Boon, Lucas Van Bodegraven,
 Natalya, Seth, Myrah, and Aubree Joose, Laurencia
 Timmer, Mariette Verhoef, and Sifra Rotich.

Love,
 Aunt LenaBeth

Hayley Bosch

Congratulations on your birthday, Hayley. The Lord is certainly good to each one of us when He spares us for a whole year and we may continue on and begin another year. Ask the Lord often, not only to spare you in the coming year, and help and guide you, but also to teach you what is needful for time and for eternity. I heard your news, and I am certain you are very glad. When he comes, ask the Lord if He will bless the work of your new minister to many hearts, young and old.

Johanna Wessels

It is summer here, Johanna. That is opposite of your season, right? I hope you enjoyed both weeks of your vacation. It sounds like each day you had plenty to do. The children are off from school for the summer here, also. Today, we are keeping an eye on a coyote that is acting strangely. It keeps sneaking right into the yard to try to get my chickens and does not leave when we yell. It will retreat into the woods a little way and then lie down like a dog and watch. Our chickens are quite alarmed. Your description of the Bible is good, Johanna. It certainly can give instruction, and it does hold all the necessary instruction needed for time and, above all, for eternity.

Lucas Van Bodegraven

I really like how you colored the picture, Lucas; it is bright and colorful. I am glad you joined us; thank you for your answers. I lived in Ontario like you when I was a little girl, but that is a long time ago. I hope you will enjoy the quizzes and that they are not too difficult. I hope the Lord will bless His Word to all of our hearts. Seek the Lord for the one thing needful, a new heart.



Privilege of a Believer

Here, then, is the privilege of a believer—to be at peace with God, to be one with Him. This indeed is life eternal, to be united unto the Fountain of Life in whose favor is life and whose lovingkindness is better than life. Is not this a blessed estate? Whatever a man hath done against God is all forgiven and forgotten; it shall never come into remembrance. Are not angels blessed who are friends with God? Such is the soul whose sins are pardoned through Christ. Its sins are as if they never had been. The soul has not only escaped that terrible wrath of God, but being at peace with God it shall partake of all the goodness that is communicable to creatures. “That they all may be one; as Thou Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21a). For this Christ prayed, and this was the end of his death—to make of two, one. So then, the glory that Christ is partaker of with the Father, we must be partakers of with Him, and all this by virtue of that peace with God by Him.

Oh, if ye knew what enmity with God is, how would it endear and make precious peace with Him. The one engageth all that is in God to be against a man; the other engageth all that is in Him to be for a man. Is not He then a great One, whether He be a friend or an enemy? Is He not the best friend and worst enemy who hath most power, yea, all power to employ for whom He will and against whom He will? What a blessed change is it to have God, a consuming fire, made a sun with healing and consolation. That the righteous, holy, and just God, before whom no flesh can stand, should accept such rebellious sinners and dwell among them. He had not only power to destroy but law against us also. What a perfect peace is it, then, that the Judge becometh a merciful Father, and the law of ordinances is cancelled, and that power employed to keep salvation to us, and us to salvation. Ye who have made peace and atonement through Christ’s blood, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. There wants nothing to make you completely blessed but the clear and perfect sight and knowledge of your estate before God.

— Hugh Binning

News & Announcements

■ Obituaries

JOHNSON, Henrietta Adrianna (nee Westra) – Age 93, July 23, 2019; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Children – Jack & Leslie Johnson, Louise & Lowell Miller, Linda Buiskool, Kathy & Ken Doezema; 13 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren; 5 great-great-grandchildren; predeceased by daughter Carolyn, son Lambert, 3 brothers, 2 sisters, and 2 sons-in-law, Fred De Vries, and John Buiskool. (Rev. H. Hofman, Isaiah 66:13.)

ROZENDAAL, Jeannette Elizabeth (nee Klijn) – Age 68, July 18, 2019; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Jacobus Anthony; Children – Joanne & Derrick Paul, Brian & Christina Rozendaal, Lawrence & Christie Rozendaal, Amy & Gerry Van Beek, Jan & Jennifer Rozendaal, Wilbert & Theresa Rozendaal, Elly & Joe DeKorne; 35 grandchildren; also survived by mother-in-law, sisters, brothers, sisters- and brothers-in-law. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Psalm 89:15.)

■ Dedication and Institution of New Church and Congregation in Nobleford, Alberta

The Lord willing, the dedication and institution of the new congregation of Nobleford, Alberta, will be held on Wednesday, October 9, 2019. The dedication service will be held at 1:30 P.M. with the institution service held later the same day at 7:00 P.M. Both services will be conducted by Rev. E.C. Adams of Picture Butte. All are invited to attend the services on this special day. Anyone in need of accommodations may contact either Deacon Gerard de Leeuw at 403-824-3434, e-mail gerarddl0034@gmail.com, or Deacon Marco de Wilde at 403-824-3034, e-mail dewildemarco@outlook.com.

■ Farewell Service of Rev. E.C. Adams, Corsica NRC

On Tuesday evening, July 9, 2019, Rev. E.C. Adams preached his farewell sermon to the Corsica, South Dakota, congregation who he had faithfully served as minister for nearly fourteen years. Rev. Adams in a tender word of farewell wished to use the words of the Apostle to the Philippians. The text for this service was taken from Philippians 4:8&9. The theme was “The Apostle Paul’s concluding word to the congregation of Philippi” with four points: 1) A word of tender affection; 2) A word of deep contemplation; 3) A word of careful examination; 4) A word of rich consolation.

“Finally, Brethren” was a word of affection for a congregation so dear to Paul, and not to compare himself with Paul, it was evident that also in Corsica, many bonds were laid in the past years. Yet in these words was emphasized, Finally... Everything on earth has an end, and for events in this time, much preparation is made, but how stands it with our souls for that never-ending eternity is most important, for then it shall be eternally well or woe.

It was evident also in Philippi that it was a congregation outside of Paradise. There were difficulties and differences which Paul has referred to in this Epistle. Nevertheless, the Apostle described the manifold, diverse blessings which the Lord, in His great mercy and compassion, had still left in the midst of the church in Philippi. Congregation, the Lord has left many good and precious things among us and therefore, “Think on these things.”

In the Parable of the Sower, the sower’s name was not mentioned, but the seed was good. It was God’s Holy Word. At a time like this, a careful examination is necessary. What has the fruit been upon the Word? Where is the seed lying? What have we done with the seed of God’s Word which has been so liberally sown among us?

The Apostle had a word of rich consolation to the congregation of Philippi in his fervent desire for them, “and the God of peace shall be with you.” With these words, he pointed the congregation to the Prince of Peace, who has come upon this earth to reconcile a guilty Church with a just and merciful God. Paul was given to point his congregation to a God so rich in verse 19, “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all,” Amen.

Rev. Adams was addressed by Rev. J. Witvoet of Rock Valley as moderator of Corsica, by Rev. A.T. Vergunst of Waupun on behalf of Classis Midwest, and Elder Ed Hup on behalf of the Corsica consistory and congregation. Rev. Adams then thanked the speakers, acknowledged the congregation for the many tokens of love, and wished the consistory and congregation the Lord’s blessing and help.

After the closing prayer, Psalter 247 was sung, and Rev. Adams laid the benediction on the congregation for the last time as their shepherd and teacher.

■ Installation and Inaugural of Rev. E.C. Adams in Picture Butte, Alberta

July 19, 2019, was a memorable day for the congregation of Picture Butte, Alberta, when they could again see their own under shepherd after being vacant for approximately three years. The congregation was gladdened with the coming of Rev. E.C. Adams, formerly of Corsica, South Dakota, USA. The installation service was conducted by Rev. H.D. den Hollander of Fort Macleod. He used as his text, Song of Solomon 3:3, “The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?”

Rev. den Hollander divided the text as follows:

1. The bride’s encounter with the city’s watchmen;
2. She is found by the city’s watchmen;
3. She inquires of the city’s watchmen.

At the conclusion of the service, Rev. den Hollander read the Form for the Ordination of Ministers, whereupon Rev. Adams answered the questions posed to him by saying “Yes truly, with all my heart”.

In the evening of the same day, Rev. Adams preached his inaugural sermon using as his text Revelation 1:17&18: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Rev. Adams’ theme was, “A resurrected Christ speaks words of comfort to His servant John on Patmos” illustrated by the following points:

1. A word of consolation needed;
2. A word of everlasting faith;
3. A word of complete salvation;
4. A word of complete authority.

At the conclusion of the service, Rev. Adams thanked Rev. den Hollander for the fitting words expressed in the installation service. Rev. den Hollander then welcomed Rev. Adams into Classis Far West. Rev. Adams was also addressed by Rev. G.M. de Leeuw on behalf of Classis Midwest and Rev. A.H. Verhoef on behalf of Classis East. Elder John Vanden Broek then addressed him and also read a letter from Rev. C. Vogelaar. He asked the congregation to stand and sing Psalter 373:1&2, after which the service was closed in the customary manner.

■■■ Report of Classis East Meeting to Examine Candidate H. de Leeuw

July 31, 2019

Dear Reader,

With joy and gladness, we forward a short report from our Classis regarding the meeting that was held on Wednesday, July 31, 2019, at the ENRC of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. The meeting resulted in the acceptance of Candidate H. de Leeuw into the ministry of our denomination as well as approval to proceed with his ordination at the Franklin Lakes congregation.

Candidate H. de Leeuw was examined by two of his instructors on Exegesis, Dogmatics, Church History, and Church Order, after which a trial sermon took place. The text for this was Acts 16:14&15: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."

A discussion took place among the delegates. According to Article 49, advice was sought from the Deputies who also gave a good report. Following this a vote took place resulting in a wholehearted decision to accept Candidate H. de Leeuw to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

Brothers, may we not say, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126:3)? May each be granted a place in the inner room to bow before the Lord in humility and true thankfulness. It is our hope that the Word of the Lord will prosper here in North America so that true conversions will take place to the honor of the Lord and to the gladdening of the hearts of His servants and people. Please remember in prayer Candidate H. de Leeuw, his wife, children, and parents, as they are facing many changes upon the pathway of life.

Receive our greetings on behalf of Classis East,

Rev. C. Vogelaar, *President*
Elder J. VanBrugge, *Clerk*

■■■ New Address for Clerk of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, NRC

Mr. Brent Engelsma
W2822 County Road C
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

■■■ New Address for Rev. E.C. Adams

595 3A Street S., Box 1121
Picture Butte, AB Canada T0K 1V0
Tel: 403-732-5784
Fax: 403-732-5276

■■■ New Address for Rev. H. de Leeuw

49 Verkade Drive
Wayne, NJ 07470
E-mail: h.dl@outlook.com

65th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Dick & Madelyn Spaans

hope to commemorate their
65th wedding anniversary
on September 22, 2019.

*"O gracious God, forsake me not
When I am old and gray,
That unto those that follow me
I may Thy might display"* (Psalter 192:1).

1054 Ball Ave. NE, Apt. 102
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

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

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.

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.

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.

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!

Minutes of Classis East 2019 Meeting

The prayer service for the meeting of Classis East was led by Rev. J. den Hoed on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at 7:30 P.M. at the calling church of Markham, Ontario. The text for this occasion was taken from 1 Peter 2:7, “*Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.*”

The theme for the sermon was “The preciousness of Jesus Christ.” Following a word of introduction, Rev. den Hoed explained three points: 1) For whom Christ is precious—those who are cut-off from the old stock Adam and grafted into the Lord Jesus; 2) For what Christ is precious—the benefits for such ones; and 3) What the preciousness is—the experience in the soul of God’s children; concluding with a word of application.

On behalf of the congregation of Markham, the calling church, Rev. E. Hakvoort opened the meeting with the request to sing Psalter 417:1&3 followed by the reading of Matthew 26:57-68. After prayer, the minister extended a word of welcome to the delegates and visitors present, and then spoke a few edifying words.

The credentials of the delegates were submitted, examined, and approved. The following officers were to serve at the meeting:

<i>President</i>	Rev. A.H. Verhoef (by rotation)
<i>Vice President</i>	Rev. C. Vogelaar (by rotation)
<i>Clerk</i>	Elder W. Verhey (by appointment)
<i>Treasurer</i>	Elder R. Coates (by rotation)

Before proceeding to Article IV, Rev. Verhoef reflected on the past year and mentioned several noteworthy events which had taken place since April 11, 2018:

- Former Elder and Mrs. T. Verhey commemorated their 60th wedding anniversary on May 3, 2018.
- Elder and Mrs. J. Wesdyk commemorated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 9, 2018.
- Mr. A.J. Brouwer passed away on December 14, 2018. He served the congregation of Markham as deacon for three years.
- Former Elder T. Verhey laid down his office in January 2019 after serving for fifty-five years.
- In March 2019, Rev. J. den Hoed accepted the call sent to him from the congregation of Lynden, Washington.

The minutes of the previous Classis meeting, held on April 11, 2018, which were distributed at an earlier date, were approved and signed.

A letter was received from Classis Far West proposing to set a date for a possible Classis meeting with reference to Student H. de Leeuw becoming an eligible candidate for the ministry, and accepting a call to one of the three Classes, D.V. No objections were raised to the proposed date of July 24, 2019.

A letter was read from the consistory of Norwich explaining the results of a questionnaire distributed to their members which revealed a strong majority wished to start holding church services at a second location. Currently, a location south of Norwich is being sought after, one within a reasonable distance to accommodate busing the children to Rehoboth Christian School. An official report will be sent to Classis after the branch location has been operating for some time and has stabilized, D.V.

Church visitation reports were submitted to the clerk from two consistories. These reports were read to the delegates as follows:

- 1) *Clifton, New Jersey*—April 3, 2019
- 2) *Franklin Lakes, New Jersey*—April 1, 2019

It was agreed that as soon as possible Rev. Vogelaar, together with an elder, would arrange and perform church visitation in Norwich in combination with a visit to Ontario.

A report was submitted by the youth committee and shared with the delegates. Approximately seventy-five young people attended the Youth Conference held in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, on June 29&30, 2018. The conference proceeded in an orderly fashion. Rev. den Hoed

presented a topic on “Time Enough,” and Rev. Vogelaar offered a topic on “How May I Know God’s Will in My Life?”

The next Youth Conference is scheduled for June 21&22, 2019, and is to be held in Norwich, Ontario, all the Lord willing.

The current youth committee consists of Elder R. Fallowfield, Elder J. van Vliet, and Deacon C. Vogelaar.

At this time the chairman asked Rev. den Hoed to share something of the call extended to him and how he was given to accept this call. Rev. den Hoed briefly explained the following:

After a period of considerable strife, the Lord was pleased to open the way and spoke from His own Word, “*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness*” (Isaiah 41:10).

On behalf of the Classis, Rev. Verhoef expressed the wish and prayer that the Lord would be pleased to prosper his way and grant His indispensable blessing on the labors that awaited Rev. den Hoed in Lynden, Washington. Furthermore, that it may please the God of all grace to grant him desire and the needed strength together with his wife in the climbing of their years.

On behalf of the committee, the clerk prepared the Certificate of Dismissal from Classis East of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada. After these documents were signed, one copy was given to Rev. den Hoed, one copy for Classis Far West, and one copy kept for the Classis East archive.

The current committee consists of: Rev. E. Hakvoort, Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Rev. C. Vogelaar, and Elder W. Verhey.

* * * * *

Brant County—No points.

Clifton—The consistory of Clifton submitted one point which was an appeal. Before proceeding, the chairman kindly requested the visitors, (non-office bearers), to excuse themselves from the meeting. The visitors were welcomed back to join the meeting when the point was dealt with.

Franklin Lakes—No points.

Markham—The consistory of Markham submitted the following points:

Item I. This point is to clarify the church’s financial responsibility for the preaching engagements of a visiting minister and/or theological student.

- a) What is the current honorarium paid for a single service, and a second or third service held on the same day?
- b) Concerning travel expenses, does a church reimburse the full distance/amount or the portion from one church to the other?
- c) Concerning theological school students from the Netherlands, if they travel to US or Canada, is it reasonable to ask the Theological School Fund to cover some of this expense?
- d) What is the current rate for mileage (per mile/per kilometer)?

After a very brief discussion the following was confirmed:

- a) The current honorarium per service is \$250.00 CA and \$250.00 US—it was noted that some congregations pay \$300.00.
- b) Travel expenses are shared among the congregations served during a visit. The cost of flight tickets is shared equally according to the number of services preached in a congregation. Additional mileage is paid by each congregation respectively.
- c) Travel expenses for students and/or ministers from the Netherlands are dealt with in the same manner as those in Canada and the US.
- d) The current rate for mileage reimbursement is \$0.50 per mile in the US, and likewise, \$0.50 per kilometer in Canada.

Item II. It is understood that the NRC Book and Publishing Committee authorizes the printing of books on behalf of the Synod. There are consistories printing books as well for the support of the school(s).

- a) For the cause of promoting unity, would it not be wiser to channel all publications through the NRC Book and Publishing Committee?
- b) Is there a possibility that the Synod can also authorize content for printing to provide more reading material for our members?

On behalf of the NRC Book and Publishing Committee, the chairman explained the structure of the committee and its mandate received from the Synod. It became self-evident that the ongoing work by the committee is being performed as efficiently as possible, using the available resources to provide sound reading material to the members. Sermon books by our NRC ministers printed, and distributed by a consistory, should not need to be channeled through the NRC Book and Publishing Committee for content approval if it is right. We trust that editing, corrections, proof reading, etc., is also done by the respective consistory.

Items I and II were answered to the satisfaction of the Markham consistory.

Norwich—The Consistory of Norwich submitted the following point:

We are in receipt of a letter from *Israelbode*, stating they are going to be sending 538 copies of their publication to our church. While we support the cause in general, we have not even received a request whether we are interested in receiving this. The Synod held in 2010 (see pages 21&22), declined the request of Classis Midwest that Synod support this cause. It was not supported due to the NRC being a small denomination with many Christian schools being a heavy financial burden, plus we have our own mission to support in Bolivia. Now that *Ezra for Israel* is proceeding to send unrequested quantities of their publication, thereby involving our membership, are we not setting a precedent? Otherwise, we soon will receive unrequested publications from other mission organizations such as Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Timotheus, Bonisa, etc. While each consistory is free to make its decision, would it not be good if we would be consistent and all do the same? Therefore, we are asking the Classis for guidance on how to handle this matter.

It was confirmed that both *Israelbode* and *Ezra for Israel* are not Synod-endorsed. The consensus was to leave this and similar requests to the decision of the local consistories. It was noted that individual members could subscribe personally if they felt so inclined.

St. Catharines—No points.

Since Rev. den Hoed is leaving Classis East, it was agreed to make one revision to the list of moderatorships as follows:

<i>Brant County</i>	Rev. A.H. Verhoef
<i>Clifton</i>	Rev. E. Hakvoort
<i>Franklin Lakes</i>	Rev. C. Vogelaar
<i>Markham</i>	Rev. E. Hakvoort
<i>Norwich</i>	Rev. A.H. Verhoef
<i>St. Catharines</i>	Rev. E. Hakvoort

The total expenses for the Classis meeting amounted to \$3,131.66. A collection of \$1,021.30 was deducted and left a balance of \$2,110.36. This amount is to be prorated and divided among the Classis congregations.

According to alphabetical rotation, the calling church for the next Classis will be Norwich, Ontario. The meeting is scheduled to take place, the Lord willing, in Norwich on October 23, 2019, or on April 22, 2020, if there are no points submitted for the October date.

NOTE: Should Classis East need to convene in connection with Student de Leeuw becoming eligible and accepting a call to Classis East, a tentative date of July 24, 2019, was agreed to by all three Classes.

The prayer service is to be led by Rev. A.H. Verhoef on the prior evening. By rotation, Rev. C. Vogelaar is to be president and Rev. Hakvoort, vice president, all the Lord willing.

At this time Rev. Vogelaar took the opportunity to express a word of thanks to the Chairman for conducting an orderly meeting, using much tact and love in dealing with the sensitive matter(s) which needed to be addressed. Furthermore, Rev. Vogelaar wholeheartedly thanked Rev. den Hoed for all the labors which he was enabled to perform by the grace of God in Classis East during his fifteen years as shepherd and teacher in the congregation of Franklin Lakes. He then requested that we sing together Psalter 345:1&2. As there were no further agenda points, Rev. Verhoef asked Elder Zekveld of the calling church to close with prayer.

The opportunity presented itself to hold an office bearers' conference as there was ample time prior to the departure of the delegates. Rev. Vogelaar presented an informative topic not only about the life of Rev. Alexander Comrie but also his steadfastness in the sound experimental teaching of the Dutch Reformed Churches which he taught.

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.

Penitential Prayers

God be merciful to me,
On Thy grace I rest my plea;
Plenteous in compassion Thou,
Blot out my transgressions now;
Wash me, make me pure within,
Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

My transgressions I confess,
Grief and guilt my soul oppress;
I have sinned against Thy grace
And provoked Thee to Thy face;
I confess Thy judgment just,
Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I am evil, born in sin;
Thou desirest truth within.
Thou alone my Saviour art,
Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;
Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,
Wash me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust
By Thy wrath and judgment just,
Let my contrite heart rejoice
And in gladness hear Thy voice;
From my sins O hide Thy face,
Blot them out in boundless grace.

— *Psalter 140 (Psalm 51)*