

the **Banner** *of Truth*

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of Thankfulness**

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Find

"And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field..." JEREMIAH 48:33a



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Meditation

The Chief Part of Thankfulness

Rev. A.H. Verhoef, St. Catharines, ON

“Seek the LORD, and His strength: seek His face evermore” (Psalm 105:4).

“O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people.” As soon as the Lord opened the heart of the poet, his mouth began to overflow. He desired to acknowledge God for His great goodness, and he wished others to join in with him. He especially stirs up God’s people to praise and magnify the Almighty. Why? For what reason? His deeds must be made known far and wide. Therefore, “Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works.” Oh, children of God, declare the Lord’s benefits.

*Make known His doings far and near
That peoples all His name may fear,
And tell, in many joyful lay,
Of all His wonders day by day.*

Are there some readers whose heart is stirred up? Who are given to look forward to Thanksgiving Day? The psalmist exhorts, “Glory ye in His holy name.” It is such a good portion to thank the Lord. Look back at the season past, observe the blessings received outwardly and, we hope, inwardly. From where did they come? Is it not from the Lord, from the Fountain of all good? Moreover, is it not all undeserved? Has that ever become a wonder for us?

If you read this Psalm from verse 5 onwards, you notice that the prophet relates an account of God’s dealings with His people Israel. He delivered them from Egypt’s bondage with a mighty hand, led them faithfully through the wilderness, and gave them the promised land. He remembered His covenant.

However, between the opening verses and the testimony of history, the poet paused. Before he reminded the people of what the Lord had done in former days, he desired to exhort them: “Seek the LORD, and His strength: seek His face ever more.” Is He not worthy to be served? Should not His goodness lead us to repentance? Ought we not to call upon His name? Our catechism teaches so truly that prayer is “the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us.”

Is that so impossible for you? Do you look up against Thanksgiving Day as a mountain too high? Can you not come where the poet was brought? He could sing in truth: “Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.” Your condition is described in Psalm 80 (Psalter 221:2):

*O haste, Lord, to hear us and pity our woes,
Affliction our portion, despised by our foes.*

Listen to our poet: “Let the *heart* of them that rejoice seek the LORD.” It is a personal case between the Lord and your soul. Oh, He is able to change your heart, to soften it, to make it contrite and humble, to come over and break the bonds, to pour balm into your wounds, to comfort all that mourn, to gladden all the sorrowful. Does not your heart cry out unto God? Do no sighs escape your bosom? Are you not panting after the living God? Have you not been trying to beg, “When shall I come Thy gracious face to see”? Then you are also seeking the Lord, and that is surely not a portion you wish to exchange with those whose corn and wine increased. In seeking of God’s countenance and in yearning after Him lies an inner sweetness and joy which is so blessed, even while at times your tears multiply. That is also Thanksgiving Day.

Seeking the LORD is such a good thing. The psalmist encourages it; he tells us this should be our aim, but who shall do it? Who only is made a true seeker? None but those who are shown what they miss. Do not think this our portion by nature. We say with the Laodiceans: “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” That we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, we know not. Instead, we vie with the rich young ruler for the highest place: “What lack I yet?” Then we do not pray, and we do not give thanks. It is a great blessing to have our poverty uncovered unto us by God’s Spirit, to be made a lost sinner, for then immediately the sighs and groanings are wrought in our soul as well. As soon as Saul was struck down on the way to Damascus, he uttered his first prayer and sought the Lord in truth. “Behold, he prayeth.” Is that not a good thing?

“Seek the LORD, and His strength.” This admonishment is stronger than the one in verse 3. It speaks of a very earnest and very early seeking. However, there is a remnant who experiences times that when their needs become greater, their seeking does not become more diligent. When the troubles of their heart are enlarged, when the floods are about to overwhelm their soul, then their strength is failing, their seeking falters, their cries become so feeble. They bow their head in shame, they are so unworthy, they cannot pray, they dare not seek. Are you such a one? Listen then to the poet: “Seek the LORD, and His strength.” He is the faithful Covenant-God. He will never forsake the works of His own hands. He is the almighty and the only wise God. Nothing is too wonderful for Him. Yes, He has laid up help with One that is mighty, and He is strong to save. His name is *Mighty God*. Seek not yourself nor your own strength.

Take refuge unto the LORD. Is there no room under the shadow of His wings? Is He not the Strong Tower and the only Hiding Place? "Seek the LORD, and His strength."

In the text the poet says one more thing, but what blessed instruction he gives. "Seek His *face* evermore." That is now a wonder for those perishing creepers, who do not know the way, who cannot find the way, who wander here below in this waste howling wilderness. What did this same God say to David in Psalm 32? "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Then you may see His face. A denying Simon Peter is drawn by secret cords of love, and his eye is caught by the suffering Saviour, for "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." His kindly face gives happiness and grace, for that face testifies of His unfailing love and mercy.

Do you hear it, troubled souls? The Lord Himself comes by His Word and Spirit to stir you up, for He desires to have communion with you. "Seek His face evermore." Do seek Him in the inner chamber, but also seek Him in His house; seek Him in His temple where He is pleased to dwell and manifests His grace. Who can tell what wonder might happen in the preaching or reading of His Word? "Seek His face evermore."

Is that not a privilege? A great privilege? The psalmist exhorts us to seek the LORD's face "*evermore*." Let then God's house not only be opened on the Lord's Day but also on Thanksgiving Day, and even as there was a morning sacrifice and an evening sacrifice, let that also be done on this day. Come, the Lord is so worthy to be praised. People of God, can we ever do this enough? Testify now, has it already become the desire of your heart to seek the LORD's face *evermore*?

*Seek ye Jehovah and His power,
Seek ye His presence every hour.*

"Seek the LORD, and His strength: seek His face evermore." A time shall come, waiting people, that you will not have to seek anymore. One time you shall find Him because you shall be found of Him, and then you shall not have to *seek* His face evermore, but you shall *see* His face evermore. Then we shall give thanks unto Him for ever and for ever. "As for me," sings David, "I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." □



Bible Study

The Life of Isaac (8)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

Based on Genesis 26:19-24

The beginning of the wilderness journey of Isaac is an evidence that the land of rest is not here below. There is evidence also in Isaac's life that, by the grace of God, there is a bond with the past, and although he has a different character from that of his father, Abraham, the Lord leads him to walk in the same way. When Israel was before the Red Sea, the Lord commanded Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Also, Isaac has to continue his travel. There he will meet with the hostility of the Philistines again. However, the Lord will provide, and the God of the past who cared for father Abraham will do the same in the life of Isaac, his son.

The well Esek

We read in verse 19, "And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water." What a joy it is to find wells with springing water in the wilderness. Such places are precious.

- a) By wells they sang as we read in Numbers 21:17, "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it."
- b) By wells they built cities. Near Jacob's well was Samaria. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were also near to wells.
- c) By wells they had their meetings. There, people came together.

Christ is the fountain of living water. It is only through Him that pilgrims can live, can sing and rejoice, and may speak of what they saw in Him. So it was in the life of the Samaritan woman who had just tasted a little of the living water that Christ gave to her.

When Isaac proceeded to dig this well, it caused strife as we read in verse 20, "And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, the water is ours." In other words, you have no right to this place. You are stealing it from us. Therefore, they called this well Esek, which means contention or dispute. Is this not also an illustration of what happens during a pilgrim's journey? As soon as they begin to travel on the narrow way and the Lord at His time

gives them a promise, an encouragement from His Word, then the enemy, the devil, tries to confuse, to discourage them. He may say, "This word is not for you. You have no right to it. You are stealing what belongs to God's true people." The strife especially begins when people may see something of the well with springing water and when something of Christ's work and all-sufficiency is revealed. Then there is much contention; there are many disputes and attacks of the enemy to bring them into fear and darkness.

What will Isaac do? We will see here a lovely moral trait in Isaac's character. He is a peace-loving man. Instead of standing up for his rights, contending for the wells which he has dug, he quietly removes to another place. It is a beautiful picture of the path which a true child of God should follow as we read in 1 Peter 2:19&20, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." We read of Christ that He said in Matthew 11:29, "And learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Of Him it is said that when He was reviled, He reviled not again. So, Isaac moves to another area.

The well Sitnah

Isaac's herdmen dug another well, but then we read in verse 21 that the herdmen of Gerar "strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah." This means accusation, enmity, hatred, or opposition. It is a word related to Satan, the one who resists the work of God as much as he is able in the hearts of God's people.

As we see in verse 20&21 an increase of hostility and hatred, thus it also is in the life of a spiritual pilgrim. As soon as the Lord begins to work, there will be strife, just like in verse 20 with the well Esek there was strife. However, in verse 21, it is as if the enemy wants to destroy what has been found. Also, in the life of God's children, the warfare may increase, the accuser (Sitnah is accusation) points them to their filthy garments, to their heart with so much sin and corruption, and they feel powerless and unable to answer those accusations. It becomes impossible to them that such unworthy ones will be saved. How heavy the strife can be! They experience with Jehoshaphat that in them there is no might against the great company that comes against them.

After encouraging experiences, they have no rest and may feel outside of that blessed people of God. However, the Lord not only cares for Isaac but also for all that follow in Isaac's path. We read in verse 22, "And he removed from thence." This is the third time that they moved and dug a

well, and then there was no hostility anymore on the part of the Philistines. They probably recognized the fact that Isaac now had moved beyond the area that they could rightfully claim as their territory.

The well Rehoboth

There will be a place of pleasant rest where there is a spacious place, where the enemy at the time cannot attack them. Rehoboth means room. Isaac acknowledges that the gracious hand of God is providing him room for his family and flocks. A marked difference with the two former wells is experienced.

There are indeed places in the life of a spiritual traveler through the desert where the enemy cannot come close to them, where something of Rehoboth may be experienced. Oh, what room there is in the well with living water, the Lord Jesus Christ, when they may drink of that well and Christ may be so clearly revealed to them that they will never forget the time and place where this happened. Oh, how they see His preciousness; He is the chiefest among ten thousand, He is altogether lovely. How suitable He is for all that they need. There is nothing that they are lacking which is not found in Him. He is Immanuel, God with us. In His human nature, He is the near kinsman who was tempted in all points like unto them except He was without sin. He made Himself of no reputation. He fully understands and knows how weak and frail they are. He is the Almighty God who with His power will sustain and protect in the midst of all the dangers of the wilderness. How willing He is to save wretches like they. Then it is no wonder that the poet said, "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

From there, that is Rehoboth, the company continues to travel to Beersheba. There the Lord appears unto Isaac and speaks, "Fear not." How often God's children need such an encouragement and confirmation. Moses needed that, as we read in Numbers 21:34, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand." To a fearful people is spoken in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The Lord speaks by the prophet in Isaiah 43:1, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee." It is as if God says, "Isaac, I will be with you as I was with your father." It is His approval upon Isaac's following in the old paths in obedience to His will, in meekness and submission to God's leading. However, it is not for Isaac's sake but only for God's name sake, for the covenant which He had made in days of old. That covenant will stand forever; blessed are those who may trust in Him. □

(To be continued)

We must not judge of Christ's love by providences but by promises.

— Augustus Toplady



From Our Inheritance

Pure Gratitude

Rev. M. Heerschap (1911-1993)

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Many are the reasons to be thankful, the more so where the sins of land and people reach unto the heavens. In the words of the apostle in the above text, he says, “In every thing give thanks,” and then he wants this to take place, as it is required, in the proper manner, in the proper place, and with the proper intentions—thus, not in a legal manner but in an evangelical one.

Because man by nature is incapable of true spiritual good, no true gratitude can be found in him. With the benefits granted by the Lord, we, without God, cannot end in God because we are blind to the fact that because of sin we have forfeited everything. Therefore, the fact that all things do remain as they still are is no cause for astonishment. It also remains a deep mystery for the spiritually blind person that God does with His own as it pleases Him. He can make the warmth of the sun a judgment in times of drought. He can, by giving too much rain, destroy that which He had first permitted to grow. He can bestow blessings in all things but also punishments. It is sad that man by nature has so little realization of his total dependence upon the Lord. The apostle, therefore, does not intend to bring true and pure gratitude upon a legal ground with virtue and duties.

What, then, is true and pure gratitude? It is humiliation. As a fruit of grace, it is the exercise of those who fear the Lord. Through the enlightening of the understanding, they not only perceive the gift of God in all things but also that these gifts are bestowed upon them by a benevolent God who is not obligated to them for anything. Through the enlightening of the understanding and the renewing of the heart, there is a hearty desire to end in Him with all things. The humble confession of those people is, “Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought us hitherto?” (2 Samuel 7:18). There is not only a readiness and a willingness to being an offering to the Lord according to the prosperity each has received from Him, but especially that the Lord might be glorified in all His benefits toward them.

The Lord, according to this text, wills to be served. He observes narrowly as to whether He is served in spirit and in truth. The Lord does not want to be served with a self-willed religion nor with a few virtues and duties with which man thinks to please God, not with lip service wherein we use the word gratitude while our hearts are

far from honoring Him. No, the Lord is angry with those who, under the semblance of godliness, live in sin and by so doing despise, dishonor, and revile His great name.

The true gratitude which is according to the will of God in Christ Jesus comes from the Lord as a blessing in the covenant of grace. It is a work of the Triune God. It is the fruit of faith in a holy conversation, worked through the Holy Spirit. There can also be a natural gratitude for benefits such as being delivered from troubles, sickness, and other circumstances of life, but this gratitude is a fruit of common grace, not of special grace. It has an earthly and temporal character, and though we continue in these gifts and benefits, we do not end in the Benefactor.

True gratitude has a heavenly character. It causes the soul to be inwardly broken and filled with humility so that in true gratitude one may exercise secret communion with God. It is the fruit of the Spirit which, in submission and in unity with God’s will, bows before the Lord in true confession of guilt, acknowledging the deeds of the Lord. There is a fleeing from and a hating of sin, and a loosening of the bands of wickedness. Instead of hard thoughts, there are good thoughts of the Lord. Then the smallest gift in nature and in grace is great; prosperity and adversity are beheld in an entirely different light.

Is it, then, not a precious benefit when the heart is filled with true spiritual gratitude? Is there not a great difference between natural and spiritual gratitude? Natural man can only have himself in view, but the spiritual man has God’s honor in view. The first is from beneath; the other is from above. The first cannot make itself loose from the earth; the other comes from above, and returns to above. The first is only an outward impression, but the other is spiritual which is worked in the heart. With the first we remain strangers of Christ and the covenant of grace, but the other is the fruit of the seeking love of God in Christ Jesus.

If we would search out our own heart with the truth, how will matters stand with us? What has the Lord been for us in the seasons of the year which now lie behind us? Has He not brought His Word unto us from Sabbath to Sabbath? What have we done with these benefits? Have we lacked anything for this time state? Is it therefore not necessary to consider and acknowledge the Lord in humility for all the good received from His hand? Whether there has been prosperity or adversity, it has all come from His hand. How difficult it is even for a child of God to be thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity—how much truer is this of a person still in his natural state.

Our Thanksgiving Days have become formal and dry because there is no desire for true gratitude and for pardoning grace so that guilt and sin might be blotted out and the sinner reconciled with God by God. A spirit of deep sleep lies over us, and who mourns because of this? Satan keeps us busy with anything and everything so that we will not become aware of the spiritlessness of the times. What is now our condition if we continue living in a false rest without grace? Oh, what a great responsibility we have to bear when we have been blessed with the outward benefits, and we have also received so many callings in our life. The Lord has made Himself free from us, and what a great disappointment it will be if we must fall into the hands of a holy and righteous God without being a

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partaker of that renewing grace. Therefore, make haste and fall at His feet before it becomes eternity. May the Lord bless the truth of Thanksgiving Day to our heart so that we may labor at the throne of grace. “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Those of you who are bowed down in the dust and as sinners must acknowledge that you have forfeited everything, may you observe the good of His hand. You who are unworthy in self, exalt your King and praise His name. Make mention of His wonders with humility and reverence both night and day. Your King is so worthy. For you, who in yourselves are nothing, the words of our text are especially applicable, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ concerning you.” □

Miracles Not Ceased

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

(A portion of a sermon based on Matthew 11:4-6 taken from the September-October 2019 issue of *Zion's Witness*)

“...and the lame walk” (Matthew 11:4b).

“**T**he lame walk.” The word *lame* here means a *cripple*—one unable to move his limbs—unable, however feebly, to use any motion whatever of the body. Now, does this not set forth the state and condition of Adam’s fallen progeny and of the elect as springing from the loins of this sinful parent? Has not Adam’s fall crippled every faculty of our soul? Has it not blinded our eyes? Has it not withered our arms? Has it not maimed our legs? Has it not dried up our hearts? Has it not affected our memory and our imaginations? In a word, has it not crippled every faculty of our souls so that they are altogether dead Godward?

Now, when the Lord begins a work of grace upon the heart, God’s people are made sensible that they are in a crippled state—not merely lame, for that might imply that they could shamle a little forward, that they could get hold of a crutch or a strong staff, and by that means manage a walk in the straight and narrow road but that they are more than lame, that they have lost the use of more than one limb, that they are crippled, paralytic, bedridden, unable to lift up a leg or a finger. This is what exercises and tries many of God’s people. We know the fall in theory better than we do in practice. We know the fall better in our head than we know it in our heart. We say that man is dead in sin, that his faculties are all crippled, that he is utterly helpless in the things of God. That is our creed, but

when we come to carry this out, we are exercised, perplexed, troubled, often distressed, because our creed is so true. We believe with our judgment perfectly that we are altogether crippled, but when we feel how unable we are to move forward and how thoroughly we are what we say we are, when the light in our judgment transcends into our heart to become life there, how it shackles the mind—crippled in prayer so as to be unable to pour forth the heart; crippled in reading so as scarcely to understand or feel a single portion of Scripture, crippled in hearing, crippled in speaking, crippled in thinking, and crippled in acting—all blighted, all withered, all torpid, all unable to move forward. When a feeling of our helplessness thus lies upon our conscience, how deep it cuts, but the promise is—and there is a sweet fulfillment of it sometimes—that “the lame walk.” How? In their own strength? No, not in their own strength but in the strength of the Lord. We read, “They shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord,” that is, in the strength of the Lord. “My strength,” said Christ to Paul, “is made perfect in weakness.” “From Me,” says the Lord to His Church, “is thy fruit found.”

Sometimes, then, the Lord enables the soul to walk on in His paths. The cripple’s state is for a time removed. Prayer is sweet—the Word of God is precious—the heart is enlarged—the soul is enabled to move cheerfully on in God’s ways, “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart”; religion and the things

of God are no longer a burden—the heart and the conscience, the memory and the feelings are no longer paralyzed and crippled, but sweet life is poured into the soul—the vigorous sap that flows out of the stem penetrates and reached to the remotest twig of the branch. As the mighty sap penetrates every branch, and as the life blood from the Head pervades every limb in the body, there is power to walk cheerfully in the Lord’s ordinances, to walk in sweet communion with a Three-one God, to walk in light, life, and liberty, in the enjoyment of gospel means, and in the shinings of God’s uplifted countenance. When this is fulfilled, when we leave our bed where we have lain, perhaps bedridden for months—when the limbs are

supernaturally strengthened and we move cheerfully forward; when the Lord Himself lays the everlasting arms underneath—then like the cripple at the beautiful gate of the temple when his ankle bones received strength, there is a leaping, praising, and blessing the Lord. Have you not felt this? You are not always crippled and lame if you are a child of God. It may be your experience, you say, nine times out of ten, but the tenth time is there not some feeling in your heart, some life in your soul, some sweet enlargement, some heavenly love, some divine sensation? This is walking, and where this is felt in the heart there is fulfillment of the miracle that “the lame walk.” □

Prayer for God’s Servants

(Taken from *Morning Thoughts* by Octavius Winslow)

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me”
(Romans 15:30).

There are many weighty and solemn considerations which powerfully plead for the church of God on behalf of her ministers and pastors. The first that may be adduced is *the magnitude of their work*. A greater work than theirs was never entrusted to mortal hands. No angel employed in the celestial embassy bears a commission of higher authority or wings his way to discharge a duty of such extraordinary greatness and responsibility. He is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, an ambassador from the court of heaven, a preacher of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom. Properly to fill this high office, giving to the household their portion of meat in due season; going down into the mine of God’s Word, and bringing forth to the view of every understanding its hidden treasures; to set forth the glory of Immanuel, the fitness of His work, and the fullness of His grace; to be a scribe well instructed, rightly dividing the word of truth; to be wise and skillful to win souls, the grand end of the Christian ministry—oh, who so much needs the sustaining prayers of the church as the minister of Christ?

Secondly, *the painful sense of their insufficiency* supplies another affecting plea. Who are ministers of Christ? Are they angels? Are they superhuman beings? Are they inspired? Nay, they are men in all respects like others. They partake of like infirmities, are the subjects of like assaults, and are estranged from nothing that is human. As the heart knoweth its own bitterness, so they only are truly aware of the existence and incessant operation of those many and clinging weaknesses of which they partake in sympathy with others. Yet, God

has placed upon them a work which would crush an angel’s powers if left to his self-sustaining energy.

Thirdly, the many and peculiar *trials of the ministry and the pastorate* ask this favor at our hands. These are peculiar to, and inseparable from, the office that he fills. In addition to those of which he partakes alike with other Christians—personal, domestic, and relative—there are trials to which they must necessarily be utter strangers. And as they are unknown, so are they unrelievable by the people of their charge. With all the sweetness of affection, tenderness of sympathy, and delicacy of attention which you tender to your pastor, there is yet a lack which *only* Jesus can supply, and which, through the channel of your prayers, He *will* supply. In addition to his own, he bears the burdens of others. How impossible for an affectionate, sympathizing pastor to separate himself from the circumstances of his flock, be those circumstances what they may. So close and so sympathetic is the bond of union! If they suffer, he mourns; if they are afflicted, he weeps; if they are dishonored, he is reproached; if they rejoice, he is glad. He is one with his church. How feelingly the apostle expresses this: “Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” (2 Corinthians 11:28&29). To see a Christian pastor, in addition to his own personal grief borne often in uncomplaining loneliness and silence, yet bowed down under accumulated sorrows not his own, with others looking to him for sympathy, for comfort, and for counsel, is a spectacle which might well arouse the slumbering spirit of prayer on behalf of every Christian minister. We marvel not to hear the chief of the apostles thus pleading, “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25).



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Kalamazoo, MI

Can you explain, especially for children, what is meant by a new heart?

Here is a question consisting of a matter *so* often quoted and, perhaps, *so* often contemplated, but when one sits down to answer this question especially for *children*, it can prove to be a mountain! Before I attempt to write a few lines, my thoughts go out especially to parents and teachers ...what an important task and responsibility lies upon your shoulders. I sincerely hope that this question still receives attention in all our homes and schools and that the answer given is biblical. The reason I write it this way is out of fear that when simple answers must be given, it is sometimes done at the expense of the *whole* truth. Proof of this concern is the enormous supply of written material available in today's world that seeks to explain Bible history and doctrine in such a way that foundational truths are actually missing. Bible characters are pictured and painted in such a way—I say it hesitantly—as you find them in newspaper comics. May I remind parents and others responsible for teaching our children to use restraint and prudence in how we acquaint our children with biblical history and doctrines. Just because the kingdom of heaven must be received as a child, the matter itself is not childish.

It fills me with great concern today that even telling children they *need* a new heart is sometimes viewed as old-fashioned or incomplete. Some children are plainly told they must believe in Jesus. Others go even farther and view their children as children of the Lord because, they say, Jesus loves little children. Let us not underestimate the influence of spiritual songs which quickly and readily and without due discernment are taken over and taught to little ones. Let us remember that the first liquid poured in an earthen vessel is what stays in that vessel for life. Is it the sincere milk of the Word of God or is it the vinegar of false and questionable doctrines?

Dear children, what is meant by your *heart*? Each of us has a heart. It is one of the most, if not the most, important organ of one's body. It is the first organ which *lives* and beats in a human being and the last organ which *dies*. A surgeon can amputate a leg and an arm, remove a kidney or the gall-bladder, cut out a piece of the stomach, but to remove the heart would immediately lead to death. Look at your heart as a most important treasure where the most important things of your life are kept. We read of Samson that he told Delilah "all his heart"; that means everything! When children step on their parent's heart, it means they *really hurt* their dad or mom. When the Lord says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thine heart...*" it means *totally*. David said in his *heart*, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." His fears for death bothered him very deeply.

Children, you see that the heart means more than just that important organ in your body. It has more meaning, a deeper meaning. Spiritually, the heart refers to the place in your life where all your desires, emotions, thoughts, and even your will lives. It is the place where your feelings are formed and your decisions are made. It is the place where all that is of you is bundled; it is your heart. The Bible tells us, though, that this secret place of yours is no longer a good place. Neither is it a safe place. This is because in Paradise we gave our heart not to the Lord but to Satan. This is why the Bible often speaks about the heart of man in a negative way. Look up in your Bible the following texts: Mark 7:21-23, Jeremiah 17:9&10 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. I know these texts may be difficult for you in some ways, but you will notice that they speak about two things: how bad the heart is and that the Lord can change that heart. Will you ask the Lord daily for this? You need it, and the Lord is able and willing to give it. David prays in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Dear children, a new heart is necessary, but I do not tell you only that it is *necessary*. It is also *possible*, from God's side. A new heart, given and worked by God's Holy Spirit brings forth good things. It is pleasing to the Lord because He works it. His work is always to His honor and glory.

In the Canons of Dort we read that the Lord works a new heart in us but without our aid. Usually this takes place under the use of the means such as the faithful reading and preaching of the Word. This is God's common way to work and give it. You and I are unable to give ourselves such a heart, but use the means diligently and faithfully. Remember also, where this is worked by the Lord, all the things mentioned earlier about your evil heart will change. You will receive new desires, new thoughts, and even a new will. Then you learn to strive against all that is wrong with that old heart. You will be sad about all the wrong you do and have done. You will ask for forgiveness of your sins and long for more knowledge of that new heart. You will learn to hate what the Lord hates and love what the Lord loves. Ask your parents or teacher to explain article 12 of the Chapters 3 and 4 of the Canons of Dort to you.

Dear parents and teachers, when speaking about a new heart to our children, do it in such a way as John Flavel did when he wrote: "The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and after conversion to keep it with Him." We can never speak too evil of our natural heart and never speak too well about God who works His grace in such hearts. What is impossible with man is possible with God. □

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



For Young and Old

God's Free Grace Glorified (2)

Edited by Marinus Nijse

(Uitgeverij Pieters, Oostburg, the Netherlands)

Slowly, she recovered, but there was something that was difficult to heal, and that was the great anxiety; that anxiety remained. The great shock was not mediated sufficiently. To what would this lead?

From the time of this accident, Mina remained afraid of an unexpected death. How close had been her brush with eternity! How terrible it would be to have to die without having Christ as Surety for one's guilt. How could she possibly meet God without the imputed righteousness of the Mediator?

When thunderstorms were heard, she shuddered and with a loud voice would pray to the Lord for grace. She read a great deal and was frequently found in prayer. She was again able to attend the church services. At such times she listened with complete attention to the preaching of her father. She was frequently emotionally moved under the hearing of the Word.

Yet...she remained bound to the things of time and state; she remained bound to the world. Did she not have a long life ahead of her? Must she say farewell to all of the pleasures of the world? That she could not do. She stood upon the border between God and the service of sin. She wished to serve both God and the world, but we cannot serve two masters; we will love the one and hate the other. To serve God and mammon is not possible. The Lord wants to be honored alone.

Who could bring her upon the right path? Only the Lord could do that. The accident with the carriage was not sufficient. It was only a knocking upon her heart, but her heart remained closed. Would she then still go lost? Only the Lord knew the answer to that.

Mina Middel was fifteen-years-old when she was so wonderfully spared, but before her sixteenth birthday in 1851 she suffered a severe cough. It was difficult to watch her. The doctor was called, and he gave her some medicine, but it was of no help.

As the child lay there, her body was continuously shocked because of the terrible coughing. It was impossible for her to lie down. When she was lying down, she could not breathe, and she became afraid that she would suffocate. When she was able to lie quietly for a few minutes, then the coughing

fits started again. As soon as she was able to take a drink, she vomited it up with the next fit of coughing. The medicines which she was given did not help. The doctor did not know what to do. He was concerned that she could be developing tuberculosis. He recommended that she move to another area where the different air would benefit her.

The family thought about it and discussed it together in the parsonage. The situation could not remain this way, and the means should be used, so Mina left for Gelderland, a province in the western part of Holland. In that area she would undoubtedly improve.

Quite soon, there came encouraging reports about Mina. The air in Gelderland seemed to be good for her. Her coughing lessened each day, and the hope was that the young girl could return home fully cured.

After a period of time the doctor thought that it would be good for her to return to Middleburg. There was great joy in the parsonage. The members of the congregation were also glad with the return of the minister's daughter. The attempts at healing had been blessed.

Alas, the improvement lasted only a short time. The young girl felt the coughing coming on again. The first episode of coughing was soon followed by a second one, and in this way it again quickly worsened, to the sorrow of everyone, but especially Mina. Would it again become as bad as it had in the past?

The doctor could not judge differently and was of the opinion that she could not tolerate the air in Zeeland. He strongly recommended that the family go live in a different location. He thought her condition would worsen continuously otherwise. What should the parents do?

A letter was delivered to the parsonage from the consistory in Leiden. It was a letter asking Rev. Middel to become their minister. Was that the way in which Rev. Middel had to go? There was much to recommend it, especially when considering the health of his child. The doctor wanted her to leave this area, and now just at this time a call has come from Leiden. Rev. Middel had many friends there. He would be happy to go there. □

(To be continued)

Ever since the Fall, all the comforts of this life have a thorn and a thistle in them (Genesis 3:18).

— *Thomas Watson*



Lessons in Doctrine

Penitent Feet

Rev. Theodore van der Groe (1705-1784)

(Taken from the October 1999 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“And the publican, standing afar off” (Luke 18:13).

The publican had *penitent feet*. This he showed by keeping back his feet from treading freely at large in the temple, the palace of the all-high God. He was unlike the Pharisee who stepped unabashed into the temple right before the altar and perhaps further, turning boldly with his face toward the Holy of Holies where the Lord God dwelt and had erected His throne. He thought he was a very holy man, who could freely appear before God’s eyes without fearing His wrath or indignation, which he thought he surely did not deserve. This, the poor publican, by no means, dared attempt. Rather, he restrained his feet as he came into God’s house. He dared not come one footstep further, but made for some remote corner, where he stood still.

He stood *afar off*. What was the reason for this? We must give careful attention, for his humble and diffident deportment is recorded to teach us an important and essential aspect of true penitence. There are three things to notice here:

1. He stood afar off because of an anxious fear and trembling before the tremendous majesty of God, against whom he had so deeply sinned. He was frightened by His severe and almighty anger which he had kindled, the weight of which he now felt in his conscience. He feared that everlasting wrath might easily break out against him and cast forth such flames as would consume and devour him in a moment. He dared not place himself closer to that consuming fire, but he stood trembling afar off like a guilty evil-doer who must now appear before the face of his tremendous Judge. He stood as a condemned sinner before the tribunal of the holy and almighty God. Never had he viewed the majesty of God with such fear and terror. Ah, thought he, with one glance of His eye He can destroy me in a moment.

Such impressions of God’s indignation are fit means to humble the puffed-up and hardened hearts of sinners before God and make them melt as wax. None shall ever be able to savor God’s grace and mercy who has not first, with the publican, tasted something of His awful wrath on account of the deserts of sin. Blind professors of religion

and almost-Christians may make themselves joyful with their gospel conversion, at which they have arrived with such ease but this is the true gospel conversion, when the pressing burden of sin and wrath through the Holy Spirit thoroughly prepares a man’s heart to taste a thousand times more of gospel mercy than professors are capable of enjoying with all their joyfulness. Let God first cause the sinful soul to know pain, then shall that soul well know what He is about when He once comes to heal and to bind up.

2. The publican stood afar off because he was in a state of separation and estrangement from God. As dry stubble before a flaming fire, so is a condemned sinner before a high and holy God. Sin separates God and men completely and causes an immeasurable distance and a gulf of enmity to come between. No sooner had Adam sinned in Paradise than he fled far from God’s face, hid himself among the shady trees, and trembled with fear and anxiety as he thought upon God. The prodigal son, having once begun to rebel against his father, not merely left his home so as not to place himself and to maintain himself in the neighborhood, but he took his journey into a far country, where he would be completely beyond the reach of his father (Luke 15).

The publican was now conscious that he had wickedly forsaken the all-high God, that his wickedness and repeated sins had wholly separated him from the Lord, and that he had now laden his soul with everlasting death and damnation. He stood afar off as though he would say, “Oh, how could I dare penetrate further into this holy place, into this tremendous house, the dwelling of the MOST HIGH; seeing I am an unholy and unpardoned sinner, separated from God, and an abominable rebel; forsaking the Lord and forgetting the mountain of His holiness. Ah, I am outside of God and estranged from His sacred communion. I am a slave of Satan, a condemned and hell-bound wretch.”

How different it is to believe this truth, in general, from believing it when applied to oneself. The publican stood here with a lively sense of the power of this truth in his heart; he was deeply wounded and affected by it. This sad separation from God was for him harder to bear than

How different it is to believe this truth, in general, from believing it when applied to oneself. The publican stood here with a lively sense of the power of this truth in his heart; he was deeply wounded and affected by it. This sad separation from God was for him harder to bear than anything else in the whole world could be, and that will also be the soul experience of every sinner who is savingly convinced by God’s Holy Spirit.

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3. Then, also, the publican stood afar off to confess thereby his deep unworthiness; how he merited nothing other than to be eternally separated from God and from blessed intercourse with Him, and to flee like Cain as an exile from God's face. Oh, he would say, "Justly might the Lord cast me off and thrust me, a base and abominable sinner, into hell for ever. Justly might His wrath consume me here and say unto me, "Depart from Me, thou cursed sinner, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." It will only be through grace and mercy if He accepts me and has compassion upon me.

See, it is his dejected heart, his sorrowful, wounded soul, and the insupportable burden and fearful anxiety of his mind which drive him hither to God's house and to the instituted means, and make him look about and search after God with the greatest seriousness and attention.

He dared approach only from afar off. He said to himself as soon as he had but entered the outer court of the temple, "Stop here and no further, for you are a condemned sinner; you are under God's wrath; you have greatly insulted and provoked His high Majesty with your base sins. He might destroy and consume you here in wrath; fear lest He thrust you away with one blow to that place whence a great ransom will not rescue you. Oh, that His mercy might come nigh unto me, though I am unworthy ever to come nigh unto Him."

These, then, were his *penitent feet*, with which he stood afar off—with such feet poor, truly converted sinners step tremblingly into God's kingdom. He who has never had these penitent feet has never come to God but walks yet along the ruinous path of sin and vain delusion, though he have the clean, well-washed feet of a Pharisee. With Pharisee's feet men step out for hell; with publican's feet men go to heaven. □

Be a Blessing

Wulfert Floor (1818-1876)

(Translated from *Waakt en Bidt*)

"Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you..." (Genesis 35:2) ***"...and thou shalt be a blessing"*** (Genesis 12:2).

As fathers and mothers we must be a blessing to our children. We read in Genesis 18 that Abraham knew the Lord. He could, thereby, teach his children and his household to also follow the ways of the Lord. God-fearing Jacob was a blessing to his family. He commanded his family and all who were with them to put away the strange gods from among them. Then they gave all the strange gods to Jacob (verse 4).

It is the duty of God-fearing parents to be a blessing to their children. Parents should have God's law in their heart and also feel a need to instill it in their children. Fathers, mothers—do you do this? Are you a blessing for your children? Do you pray for them, and would you be happiest if your children are prepared for eternity? Or do you hardly ever think about their eternal welfare? Are you only comfortable if they float along in the stream of our time and have a good position in this life? Will your children be able to say after your death: "Our dear father and mother were a blessing; they tearfully sought the Lord for our welfare"?

Not only can parents be a blessing for their children, but God-fearing sons and daughters can also be a blessing for their parents. Seth was a blessing to Adam, Shem and Japheth were a blessing to Noah, Isaac was a blessing to Abraham, Joseph for Jacob, Samuel to his God-fearing mother Hannah, and Ruth to her poor, sad mother-in-law Naomi. We can read in God's Word of many more who were a blessing to their parents.

What happiness there is if someone can say to a little child what Paul said of young Timothy: ***"I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice..."*** (2 Timothy 1:5). Joseph, a converted boy, was a blessing to his father Jacob. Likewise, Jacob was a blessing to his father Isaac, and Isaac to Abraham; they all feared the Lord. What a privilege if grace may be found from one generation to the next in the same family. It is a great blessing if parents have children who fear the Lord. To such children it may be said, ***"Be a blessing."***



Current Events

Hong Kong Christians fear freedom of religion may be “gone forever” despite the withdrawal of a controversial extradition bill. Christians and pro-democracy supporters are worried the Chinese government could make another attempt to ramrod legislation in Hong Kong that would specifically target the faith community and strip basic human rights.

—Fox News (9/17/2019)

The Arizona Supreme Court struck a powerful blow to progressives attempting to censor free speech and religious freedom. Last month the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Christian wedding photographers could not be compelled to use their artistic talents to help celebrate same sex weddings. Today the Arizona Supreme Court reached a similar holding, this time on behalf of Christian calligraphers.

—National Review (9/16/2019)

The U.S. abortion rate is continuing a long-term downward trend according to data released by the Guttmacher Institute, an organization which supports abortion rights. It found that the overall abortion rate dropped 7% from 2014 to 2017. Elizabeth Nash, senior state issues manager for the Institute, stated, “I don’t think there is a clear pattern around why rates are falling. They are going down across the country in nearly every state.” (This is encouraging, but we should also keep in mind that 862,320 abortions were performed in 2017).

—NPR (9/18/2019)

More Iranians have come to the Christian faith in the last twenty years than during the 1,300 years combined since Islam swept through Persia. The movement is being called “the Iranian awakening.” It owns no property, no buildings, no central leadership, and is predominantly led by women. People in Iran, a Muslim-majority nation, are fleeing Islam in droves and are becoming aggressively pro-Israel. The ayatollahs brought the true face of Islam to light and people discovered it was a lie.... After forty years under Islamic law—a utopia according to the ayatollahs—the people have experienced the worst devastation in the 5,000-year history of Iran. The new believers in the Islamic Republic, however, face great risks. “We know that if they get us, the first thing they will do to us as a woman is torture us and, ultimately, they will kill us,” one believer said. “This is the decision we have made.... I have this thought when I wake up, that when I leave my door I might not come back.” A leader of the Iranian underground church explains that their goal is not planting churches but rather making disciples, the majority of whom are women.

—FoxNews.com

During the United Nations General Assembly in September, President Trump announced new initiatives as part of a global call for protecting religious freedom. Sadly, he is only the first US president to host such a religious freedom event. He called the issue of religious freedom one of his “highest priorities.” The president also announced that the US would dedicate “\$25 million to protect religious freedom, religious sites, and relics.” In addition, the US will be forming a coalition of US businesses for the protection of religious freedom. “Today, with one clear voice, the United States of America calls upon the nations of the world to end religious persecution. Stop the crimes against people of faith,” Trump said. Additionally, he asked “the governments of the world to honor the eternal right of every person to follow his conscience,

live by his faith, and give glory to God.” The US ambassador at large for international religious freedom reported religious persecution is in 80% of the global population. In addition to China, he named Iran, Venezuela, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt as places where there are “difficulties” with religious freedom.

—CNN.com (9/23/19)

A human rights magazine has revealed that churches across China’s central province have been forced to replace the Ten Commandments with quotes from President Xi Jinping amid pressure from the government. Reports show that the Ten Commandments have been removed from nearly every Three-Self church and meeting venue in a county and replaced with the president’s socialist quotes as part of the Chinese Communist Party’s efforts to “sinicize” Christianity. Some Three-Self churches have been shut down for not implementing the rule, while other congregations have been threatened being blacklisted by the government. A pastor said the government has started to implement the ‘four requirements’: 1) prohibit religious couplets; 2) order the national flag and ‘core socialist values’ to be placed in churches; 3) install surveillance cameras to monitor believers and religious activities; and 4) the Ten Commandments are replaced with Xi Jinping’s speeches.

—ChristianPost.com

President Trump’s political opponents were talking impeachment even before he was sworn into office. Now they appear to be very close to making an impeachment trial happen. Two sitting U.S. presidents, Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton, have been impeached. Richard Nixon resigned in order to avoid impeachment over the Watergate scandal. In 1998 and 1999, Chuck Colson (guilty in the Watergate scandal) brought his up-close, intimate, and personal experience with Watergate to bear, along with his biblical worldview, on the Clinton impeachment proceedings. He notes three things: 1) many people didn’t understand what impeachment is and how it works and this is just as true today; 2) with Watergate, congressmen seemed genuinely concerned about upholding the law, but those days are over and have been replaced by a culture in which political leaders are unwilling to put national interest above political ideology; 3) regardless of how we view this process, let us remind ourselves that we serve a God who rules over the affairs of men—whether they know it or not.

—ChristianPost.com

On a Monday in August, a church in Algeria was almost closed by officers of the civil military. The building was filled with about 200 Christians from different churches united in prayer and worship as protest banners hung from the walls: “NO to the unjust closing of the churches,” and, “Abrogation of Law 03/06.” When the officers arrived, one of the church’s elders and a religious attorney met them and asked to see their closure order. The order was signed by the provincial chief, but closure of a church requires a court order which the officers did not have. Consequently, the pastor of the church told the officers he would not comply with the closure order nor the order for all present to disperse. The chief telephoned a superior who returned ten minutes later saying they were not going to close the church. “What has just happened is a feat for the Algerian church,” said one of the church leaders. “We remain confident in the Lord.”

—ChristianHeadlines.com



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Written Word of God (2)

Rev. A.M. den Boer (1929-2004)

In the previous article we have noticed how the Lord has taken care of His Word, not only in that it was spoken but also that it was kept pure during the first centuries of the world. Why is that situation different now, and why is the Word now a written Word? Is the Lord not Almighty and thus able take care of His Word? Yes, He is the Lord, and for Him nothing is too wonderful...but He is also wise. We know that after the time of Noah the people did not become as old as they did before the flood, and therefore the necessity that the Word be written became greater. A number of reasons can be given why the Lord decreed that this was necessary, and we will list a few of them:

1. That the divine revelation should not be forgotten.
2. That God's Word might remain pure. The snares of Satan became more severe, but also our corrupt nature was a danger to the purity of the Word.
3. That the written Word might be more easily spread throughout the world.
4. That God's special care for our salvation might be shown. Without God's Word we cannot be saved as it is used by the Holy Spirit to teach us.
5. That the people through the written Word might know exactly the will of God as revealed in His Word.
6. That the sinner might be warned of the punishment that will come, but also a poor sinner might find encouragement that the Lord is faithful to His children.

We find these reasons written in the third article of the Confession of Faith—"And that afterwards God, from a special care which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the apostles and the prophets, to commit His revealed Word in writing"

The first writer of God's Word was Moses, who lived about twenty-five years after the creation; the last writer was John on the Isle of Patmos, who died about ninety-six years after Christ. There is a space of about sixteen hundred years between Moses and John. During this period of time the Lord enabled

some of His servants to write His Word, which He wanted to use in the following centuries for the benefit of His Church. During the Old Testament times those servants were the prophets, and in the New Testament times they were the apostles and evangelists. You must understand that not every word which was spoken by God's servants was written in the Bible. Many things had value only for that moment when they were spoken to a special person or group of people, and not for the church in general. Thus, it is in the wisdom of the Lord that those things are written in the Bible, and other things were left out by Him. We know that the Bible contains sixty-six books, each quite different from the others; yet it is the Word of God from the beginning to the end. In them is not only spoken of God and His worship but also of worldly and natural things. The Bible is written in such a way as to set it apart from all other books, verifying that it has a higher origin.

What is this higher origin? It is written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but it is not written without God the Father, nor without God the Son, who is also called the Word. The Apostle Peter speaks of this inspiration, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21b). How can we explain this inspiration? Some think that this has been a mechanical inspiration, that these men have been as a machine, a willless instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Our Reformed forefathers have always denied this; instead they spoke of an organic inspiration, meaning that the Holy Spirit made use of men—holy men—but as rational and moral beings. The thoughts of God were inspired in their minds, but this did not wipe out their human nature. The Holy Spirit made use of their natures and minds, but it was under the leading of the Spirit. These holy men themselves searched out, thought, spoke, and wrote the Word, but the Holy Spirit led them in all truth so that they could not err in their writings. At the beginning of Luke 1 we find it clearly stated that the human mind was used: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding

of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.”

The best proof of the organic inspiration is the different styles of the writers, according to character, understanding, talent, education, etc. By this we see that the whole personality, with its gifts and talents, is useful in this work. Although there were many differences among the writers, it was the same Spirit that urged them to write and gave them His leading. This writing was not accidental nor against their will, as the Lord inclined their heart for it. Sometimes the Lord gave them an express command to do so, as with Moses and John, but probably not always in the same way. Not all the words in the Bible are spoken by God, but some are spoken by men and some even by Satan. Sometimes very wicked things are described in order to warn us from doing the same, for the Lord will surely punish us if we do so.

In the article it is mentioned that a part of the Bible was written by the Lord Himself, namely, the Holy Law on Mount Sinai. The Lord had first spoken these words unto Israel and afterwards wrote them upon two tables of stone. Why did the Lord write this with His own finger?

1. To teach that the Law is of higher authority than all human writings.

2. To make it very clear that we must hearken to the Law of God.

3. To show that it is an eternal Law which shall never end, just as stone endures forever (from a human viewpoint).

4. To signify that it is the Lord who writes the Law in the hearts of the elect, which can never be destroyed by Satan.

You will perhaps ask why the tables of stone were written upon both sides. It was to prevent the possibility of something being added or erased from the Law. It is our duty to hearken especially to these words of God, but also to the entire Bible as it is God’s Word, and is valid until the end of the world. We all know that the Bible is old—almost twenty-five hundred years old—but it is not old-fashioned. The Bible can make us wise for eternity.

The Bible is not only meant for Israel but for all nations. It does not begin with the history of Israel but with the history of Creation. It does not end when Israel is no longer a theocracy, but it ends with the new heaven and the new earth. This shows its international character. Its main content is Christ, both in the Old and New Testament. When we see the sun, then we must acknowledge its existence and glory; likewise, when we read the Bible, we see its divine origin and holiness. As it is the only means which is used by the Lord to our salvation, it is worthy to be searched by young and old, with the prayer in our heart and on our lips that the Lord may use it for that purpose even though we have forfeited all blessings for time and eternity.

(to be continued.)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

The Ten Plagues (1)

(Based on Exodus 5&6)

Now the time had come—the time for Moses and Aaron to go to the King to ask him to let the children of Israel go home to their own land.

I think Moses was afraid to go to the king, don’t you? He knew that he could not change the king’s heart. He could talk and beg, but only God could make the king let the people go back home. I am sure he prayed a great deal to God for His help. He knew that the Lord had told him that the king would not let the people go. God had told Moses that the king would say no for a long time.

Moses and Aaron bowed before the king who was called *Pharaoh* just like we call our rulers *President*

or *Prime Minister*. They addressed him and said, “The Lord God of Israel wants you to let His people go so that they may worship Him.”

Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him? I know not the Lord, neither will I obey Him.”

Is it possible that there are people who have not heard of the Lord, the God of heaven and earth? It is sad to say, but there are people who have never heard of the Lord. Pharaoh had never heard of the Lord because he had his own gods. What kind of gods were they? Well, some people thought of fire as a god or a god of thunder. Still others prayed to a god of love or gods of animals. It was a sin to worship

such gods, for the Lord has commanded us to serve Him only.

The king said that he had never heard of the God of the children of Israel. Soon, however, he would find out that Israel's God is mightier than all of his gods.

Pharaoh told Moses he would not let the people go. Moses tried one more time to have Pharaoh let the people go. Pharaoh again said no, and he became angry. He said to Moses, "You just want to take the people away from their work. They must have too much free time."

Moses and Aaron had to leave, but before they left, Pharaoh ordered the Egyptian bosses to make the children of Israel work harder. From now on they had to find the straw to make the bricks themselves, and they still had to continue to make the same amount of bricks each day.

The Egyptian bosses were very mean to the children of Israel and treated them very badly. After a while the children of Israel went to Pharaoh and complained to him about the bad treatment which they were receiving. Pharaoh told them, "You do not have enough to do; that is why you want to go and worship your God."

The children of Israel then went to Moses and Aaron and complained to them. "Why did you ever

go to Pharaoh?" they asked. "Since you went to him, we have to work harder and harder."

Moses felt bad for the children of Israel. He decided to go to the Lord; He laid his needs before the Lord. Moses asked, "Oh, Lord, why did you send me to the king? He won't listen to me, and the people are angry because they have to work harder than ever."

The Lord then told Moses what was going to happen. Pharaoh will indeed listen to you. He reminded Moses that He was the God of his forefathers, and He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he

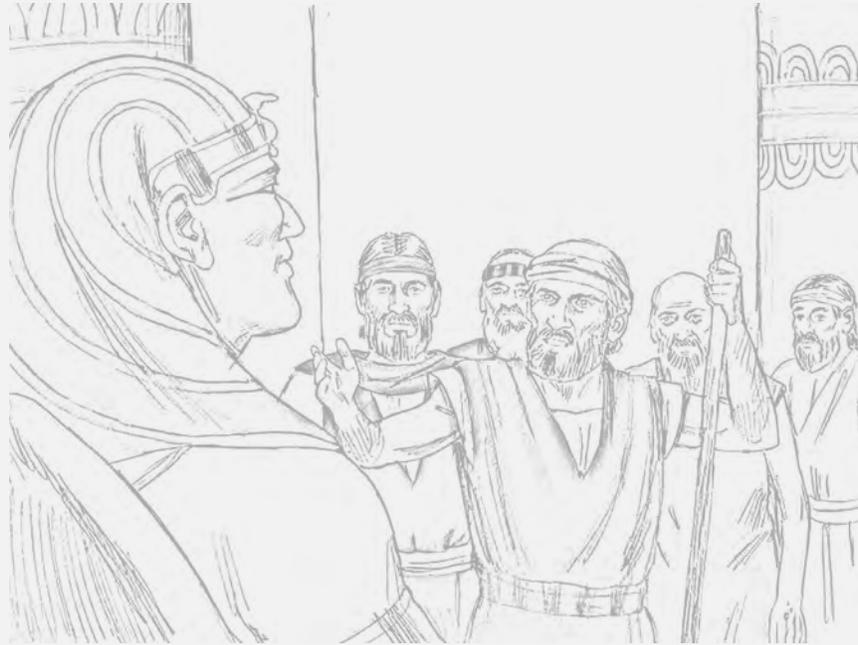
would give the land of Canaan to their children and that He would certainly bring them to that land.

"I have heard the cry of the children of Israel, and I will help them. Tell the people of Israel that I will surely bring them to the promised land."

When Moses went to tell the people of what the Lord had promised, they would not listen to him. They did not believe that Pharaoh would ever let them go.

Moses again went to the Lord, and the Lord told him to go and speak to Pharaoh again. Moses complained to the Lord, "If the people will not even listen to me, then how will the king listen to me? Lord, why hast Thou sent me?"

We will see in our next story what the Lord told Moses to do.



Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh

The flower of youth never appears more beautiful than when it bends toward the sun of righteousness.

—Matthew Henry



Bible Quiz

Find

Dear Boys and Girls,

Mom sighed. “Davey,” she tried to explain once more, rubbing the little boy’s curly hair, “we’ve already looked everywhere twice. We can’t find your squeaky toy. I think we lost it somewhere, buddy.” She wiped away the tears rolling down Davey’s face with her thumb and kissed his chubby cheek. “Don’t cry anymore, honey. Why don’t you take one of your other toys to play with in the tub today?”

Davey shook his head till his curls bounced. “No, no,” he sobbed, rubbing his fists into his eyes, “I want my fishy!”

Mom looked helplessly over the top of his head at Davey’s seven-year-old brother. Davey had been crying non-stop for the past two hours. It was such a small toy, but she couldn’t convince him that it didn’t matter. “Mike, can you look one more time? What did we do with it after he took it from the treasure box at the dentist? It must be somewhere!”

It reminded Mom of the time she picked up her Aunt Gerda at the airport. The elderly woman’s luggage had stayed behind at the airport in Holland, and poor Aunt Gerda was beside herself with worry. Mom had hardly been able to convince her to leave the airport. While they had been waiting and discussing the situation, a father nearby was talking on the phone, gesturing and questioning and arguing. His family’s luggage stood spread around them, but one suitcase was apparently missing. Finally, the father left the little group and walked across the entire airport terminal to obtain the lost suitcase. How happy the family looked when he came back with the missing bag, and how sad Aunt Gerda looked when she left the terminal without hers.

That father had put a lot of effort into finding what he wanted. How hard we look for things when they are lost. How happy we are when they are found. We are happy because the item is so important to us, even if it is very small, and we use every means we can think of to find it.

Have you ever lost something? Have you ever spent hours, days, or even weeks using every effort to find something? Perhaps you lost a library book and will have to pay for it unless you find it. It could be your favorite soccer ball or stuffed animal, or just some stickers that you need to make cards but can’t

find anywhere. Maybe you received a bracelet from your older brother before he left to serve in the army or a necklace from your grandma before she became very sick, and it fell off when you didn’t notice. It doesn’t matter if someone tells you, “I will buy you a new one.” No, that item is so important to you that you don’t want to replace it—you just want to find it. For whatever reason, it is very important to you, and that is why you want to find it. If the object we are missing is not important to us, we will just forget about it.

There is something which we have all lost. To some, it is so important that they look and look and look for it. It is so important that they use every effort and every means to find it. When they find it, they are so happy that nothing else matters as much as the joy of finding what they have lost. However, how strange...to most people, it doesn’t matter that they have lost it. It has always been lost, and they feel just fine without it. What is it?

Boys and girls, we have all lost the most precious thing there is. We were born sinful people who do not have God’s favor and love in our heart. We lost it. Adam and Eve, before they fell into sin, DID have God’s love and favor and communion. They could talk with God as they walked in the garden, and all was happy and beautiful. They never had to do without Him; the Lord was never angry with them, and they loved to serve and obey Him...until they sinned. Then everything became different, and now, we are all born without belonging to God. We are so used to it that we don’t even realize how important it is. What an awful thing it is that we don’t spend one little bit of effort to find it. It is not Adam and Eve’s fault that we are so hard and cold inside—it is our own sin.

“But the Lord needs to find us,” you might say. “There isn’t anything I can do to come back to God myself.” Yes, that is true. We are dead in sin, so we cannot even stretch out a hand to find that happiness again, but we don’t WANT to either. That is why we have to ask the Lord to change us. He is able to give us a heart that wants nothing more than to find the Lord.

Is He not able to give us a desire to become a little sheep of the Good Shepherd? Yes! Then why don’t you

ask Him? Is it not important? Is it not MORE important, MUCH more, than anything else in the world? It is so important that we cannot die without it.

The Lord says in His Word, "Seek, and ye shall find." Always pray for a new heart, boys and girls, and always listen in church and in other places where you hear God's Word. The Lord is able to bless it. He is able to make you such a seeker, a seeker who can never be convinced anymore that it doesn't matter. A seeker knows that nothing else is as important and cannot rest until he may hear the Lord say in his heart, "I am your God." Then he will say, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

* * * * *

Unscramble the words to find a familiar Bible verse.

1. kese, dan ey hlasl idnf _____

2. shoet ttah eske em layre lahls dfni em _____

3. Cross off all the "p's." Copy what is left into the blank to form a verse.

Oph tphapt I kpnewp pwhepre I pmight ffind
Hpim! tpmat I mpigppht compe evenp top
Hips speat!

4. Cross off all the letters that go with odd numbers. Copy what is left into the blank to form a verse.

4I 3r 2r 5n 4e 6j 7m 8o 7y 2i 3b 4c 6e 8a
5k 2t 4t 8h 2y 9i 6w 2o 5n 3r 4r 2d, 4a 9j
6s 8o 8n 1c 3d 6e 6t 2h 2a 4t 6f 1v 2i 4n
6d 2e 9a 1g 8t 6h 6g 6r 1w 2e 2a 7t 4t 9a
4s 8p 1e 4o 2i 5g 2l.

5. Fill the missing words into the blanks.

Babe sign manger find swaddling

"And this shall be a _____ unto you; Ye shall _____ the _____ wrapped in _____ clothes, lying in a _____."

6. Where in Jeremiah is this text to be found? "And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." _____

7. Copy down Matthew 7:14 here. What does this verse mean?

For the Younger Children

8. Fill in the correct word from the box.

silver sheep fig door fishes colt

- And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a _____ tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.
- And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that _____, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.
- And seeing a _____ tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves;
- And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of _____.
- I am the _____: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.
- Either what woman having ten pieces of _____, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

For the Older Children

Fill in the blanks.

9. Matthew 22 – "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the _____."

10. Matthew 10 – "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My _____ shall find it."

11. Matthew 11 – "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find _____ unto your souls."

12. Jeremiah 6 – "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the _____ way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

13. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of _____, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

14. Acts 17 – “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might _____ after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.”

15. Proverbs 8 – “For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall _____ favour of the LORD.”

* * * * *

Answers to October’s “Cares” quiz:

1. Legion
2. Andrew
3. Knowing
4. Egypt
5. Lake
6. Land Luke 5:3
7. Jeopardy Luke 8:23
8. Choked Luke 8:33
9. Fishers Matthew 4:18
10. Marvelled Matthew 8:27
11. Night Matthew 14:25
12. Hook Matthew 17:27
13. Multitude Mark 3:7
14. Wise John 21:1
15. Sea of Tiberias, Lake Gennesaret,
Sea of Chinnereth
16. Former Sea, Sea of the Plain, Salt Sea



Answers to previous quizzes were received in August from:

- Jonah Beekman (2) 3
Anabelle Berkenbush 5
William Berkenbush 5
Eryn Bisschop 1
Sara Bisschop 1
Britni Blom 2
Jenina Blom 4
Lawrence Blom 1
Marissa Blom 4
Riley Blom 4
Jenny Boon 4
Hayley Bosch 5
Derek Brouwer 3
Thomas Brouwer 2
Elijah Cutajar 6
Emily Cutajar 6
Noah Cutajar 6
Felicia DeVisser (3) 7
Nicholas DeVries 3
Cody Driesen (2) 5
Kacie Driesen (2) 5
Sam Driesen (2) 5
Toby Driesen (2) 5
Kaylynn Ekema (2) 5
Kari Groen 3
Kurtis Groen 3
Ailene Groenendyk (2) 8
Adrian Groenendyk (2) 8
Benjamin Groenendyk (2) 8
John Groenendyk (2) 8
Ruben Groenendyk (2) 8
Derek Hup 1
Justin Hup 1
Olivia Kaat 7
Christa Kerkhoff 3
Jason Kleyn 2
Ashley Knibbe 6
Brennan Knibbe 7
Caylea Knibbe 6
Courtney Knibbe 6
Donovan Knibbe 7
Jarynne Knibbe 7
Lindsey Knibbe 6
Lydia Knibbe 4
Nathan Knibbe 4
Quinton Knibbe 6
Sienna Knibbe 3
Whitney Knibbe 6
Marlisa Korevaar 1
Rebekah Korevaar 1
Lydia Mol 5
Teddy Mol 5
Marielle Neels 2
Jayden Overbeek (4) 4
Mark Post 2
Andrew Remijn (2) 4
Lauren Remijn 1
Jessa Rus 6
Laura Scherpenzeel 3
Colin Ten Hove 5
Esther Teunissen 5
Aaliyah Timmer 4
Arianna Timmer 4
Drake Timmer 4
Harley Timmer 5
Hunter Timmer 3
Kadin Timmer 3
Laurencia Timmer 2
Sierra Timmer 4
Skye Timmer 5
Hendrick Van Deuveren (2) 3
Maurice Van Garderen (2) 5
Thirza Van Garderen 4
Emmalyn Van Garderen (2) 5
Ayla Van Grouw (2) 3
Brayden Van Grouw (2) 3
Sophia Van Lagen 3
Carter Van Liere (2) 6
Shantel Van Liere (3) 6
Lydia Van Manen 5
Rosalee Van Manen 5
Jozias Van Ravenswaay (2) 4
Naomi Van Ravenswaay (2) 4
Jace Van Voorst (2) 2
Taya Van Voorst 1
Jennifer VandeBruinhorst (2) 7
Alivia Vande Hoef 6
Micah Vande Hoef 4
Jake Vande Stouwe 3
Jonah Vande Stouwe 3
Elyssa VanDeVrede 2
Heidi Vandenberg (2) 3
Esther Vanden Broek 3
Ian Vanden Broek 3
Treena Vanden Broek 3
Brandon Vrieselaar (2) 6
Brianna Vrieselaar (2) 6
Kyra Vrieselaar (2) 6
Noah Vrieselaar (2) 6
Arthur Wisse 4
Joanna Wisse 4
Lane Wisse 4
Tonia Wisse 4
Cameron Ymker 5
Hannah Ymker (7) 7
Heidi Ymker (2) 6

**21 Bibles will be sent this month!
The total Bibles we have saved up for
in the past months is 40. Great work!**

News & Announcements

Church News

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Extended:

To Rev. E. Hakvoort of Norwich, Ontario, by the congregation of Urk, the Netherlands.

To Rev. H. Hofman of Kalamazoo, Michigan, by the congregation of 's-Gravenpolder, the Netherlands.

Declined:

By Rev. H. Hofman of Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the congregations of Lethbridge, Alberta, and 's-Gravenpolder, the Netherlands.

Obituaries

BAKKER, Reindert – Age 88, September 4, 2019; Lethbridge, Alberta; Wife – Jacomina (deceased); Children – Gretha & Dirk Bakker, Rita van den Berg, Gerrit & Wendy Bakker, Evert Bakker, Henry & Arlene Bakker; 17 grandchildren and numerous great-grandchildren. (Rev. E.C. Adams, Hebrews 9:27&28.)

BYERS, Adriana “Jane” (nee Van Wijk) – Age 84, October 10, 2019; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Elmer (deceased); Children – Dirk & June Byers, Murray Byers; 7 grandchildren; Sisters – Dina Vos and Atonia (Toos) Van Esch; predeceased by sister Nellie, brothers Adrian, Bertus, Hans, Arnold, and granddaughter Kathleen. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Job 7:1.)

POLS, Paul Scott – Age 53, August 10, 2019; Beaverdam, Wisconsin; Wife – Jane; Children – Bradley & Ashley Pols, Rebecca; 2 grandchildren; Parents – Peter & Joyce Pols; Mother-in-law – Nancy DeBoer; Siblings – Robert & Leslie Pols, Peter & Kristi Pols, Mark & Judy Pols, Diane & Rick Stevens, David & Heather Pols; In-laws – Deborah Ankrum, Joseph & Pam DeBoer, Ann Perry, Jim & Lisa DeBoer, Sue & Dana Weber; predeceased by father-in-law Richard DeBoer. (Rev. A.T. Vergunst at graveside, John 11:25&26.)

THIESSEN, Thomas Abel – Age 84, September 10, 2019; North Haledon, New Jersey; Wife – Lucretia; Children – Thomas D. Thiessen & friend Carol Decker, Diane Egan & husband David Graham (deceased); Siblings – Margaret Kuiken, Peter Thiessen, Lorraine Hagedoorn, Gerald Thiessen; predeceased by brothers Abel John Thiessen and Lester Thiessen. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Ecclesiastes 12:7.)

VAN HIERDEN, Tina (van de Hee) – Age 77, October 11, 2019; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Evert (deceased); Children – Hetty & Henk

Ijsselstein, Jannette & Case Den Dekker, Marjanne & Case Scheltema, Martin & Janet Van Hierden, Elske & Steven Van Brugge; 17 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren; 1 sister, 2 sisters-in-law, 3 brothers-in-law; predeceased by 3 sisters and 5 brothers. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Psalm 39:7.)

ZOELLER, Ruth (nee Koedam) — age 78, October 9, 2019; Hawarden, Iowa; Husband – Leonard; Children – Dianne Davis, Jim & Becky Zoeller; Grandchildren – Joseph & Camryn Zoeller; Sister – Lyda Van Otterloo; Brothers – Sam & Reva Koedam, Jim & Kathy Koedam; Sister-in-law – Sally Koedam; Brothers-in-law – Gilbert Hoogendoorn, Wendal & Judy Zoeller; predeceased by brothers William, Herman, John and Andrew Koedam; sisters Hermina Hoogendaarn, Jennie Vonk, and infant sister Martha. (Elder Arlen Post, Romans 6:23.)

MP3 Recordings Available of Rev. H. de Leeuw Installation and Inaugural Services

The Franklin Lakes NRC has made available MP3 recordings of the installation and inaugural services of Rev. H. de Leeuw which were held on August 28, 2019. To obtain a copy please send an e-mail to recordings@okken.com. You will be sent a link to download the recordings.

Rev. E. Hakvoort—Twenty-Five Years in the Ministry

On September 29, it was twenty-five years ago that Rev. E. Hakvoort was ordained into the ministry in Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk (CGK) in Meerkerk, the Netherlands, by Rev. P. Den Butter with the words of Acts 19:8: “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.” That same evening, he did his inaugural sermon about Ephesians 6:19: “And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.”

After eight years in the CGK, in which he served the congregations of Meerkerk and Alphen aan den Rijn, Rev. E. Hakvoort was clearly led to the Gereformeerde Gemeenten. The first congregation he served in our sister denomination was Genemuiden where he was installed on August 10, 2003, by Rev. A. Schot. After four years he accepted the call from the congregation of 's-Gravenpolder, where he was installed on December 5, 2007. On June 13, 2012 he was installed in the NRC Norwich,

Ontario, by Rev. A.H. Verhoef, who spoke about 1 Peter 5:1-4. The same day Rev. E. Hakvoort preached his inaugural sermon, using the text of Colossians 4:3.

On September 29, in commemoration of these twenty-five years in the ministry, our minister reflected upon this event in a sermon in Norwich and its preaching post in Courtland, based on Acts 26:22a: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.” At that time, he spoke about the undeserved but precious help of God and considered the following points: 1) Help obtained in the past; 2) Help continued in the present; 3) Help witnessed in the future.

Rev. E. Hakvoort mentioned that the word *help* in no way means that man cooperates with the Lord in his own salvation, and that the Lord only gives His helping grace as if we do our best and the Lord will do the rest. On the contrary, the word *help* means that an uncovered sinner, who is stripped from his own strength, cannot help himself anymore for time and eternity. Yet, as a totally helpless sinner he may receive help from God. The Lord does this always in the way of our impossibilities and thus in a way of a wonder because it is only and totally His work.

Our minister was given to reflect on several special leadings of the Lord in his personal life from his very youth when he was given to “obtain help of God.” He also spoke about the obtained help of God in his official labours, in which the Lord has not left Himself without witness.

Although God's ways were sometimes higher than Rev. Hakvoort's ways and God's thoughts different from his thoughts, the Lord made true His own Word, spoken unto His servant. Therefore, the Word of God may have been preached until this very day. Even though it was with many shortcomings, yet His Word will not return void but will accomplish that which He pleaseth.

In the past twenty-five years of ministry, many joyful and sad things have taken place. However, on such occasions as this, the purpose is not to end in man; the Lord must receive all the honour for the help He gives to His servants who, as earthen vessels, cannot help themselves. Time and again when they have to speak God's Word, they are so dependent on His help, but He hears the needy when they cry. What a wonder when, at times, it may be experienced that helpless servants in themselves may receive help from the sanctuary for their personal and official life.

The faithful God of all grace still desires that His precious Word be brought unto the congregations, using sinful men as little tools in His hands. More people, chosen from all eternity, still need to be called from darkness to His marvelous light. It does not depend upon a minister; however, the Lord wants to use the weakest means to fulfill His purpose.

When we may be excluded, then the Lord will include us in the way of the wonder and thus receive the honor He is so worthy to receive. We have deserved nothing, but the Almighty God is still converting sinners due to the merits of the only Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That is why there may yet be hope in the serious times in which we live. The Lord has graciously provided not only personal but also official blessings throughout those years. That is humbling!

After the service, Elder W. Pas spoke some fitting words to our minister and asked the congregation to sing Psalter 345. Rev. E. Hakvoort concluded the commemorative service by acknowledging the consistory and congregation of Norwich for all the love and support shown to him and his family in the past years. He expressed the wish that the Lord may continue to bless the sowing of the seed in the midst of congregation and denomination and that He may establish the bonds of love which are experienced.

—Norwich NRC Consistory

■ ■ ■ Dedication and Institution of the Nobleford NRC

After three-and-a-half years of worship in the Nobleford Community Center, the Bible was closed by Rev. H. de Leeuw in the afternoon service of October 6, during the solemn singing of Psalter 298:3:

*God's Word shall surely stand;
His name through every land
Shall be adored;
Lord, who shall lead our host?
Thy aid we covet most,
In thee is all our boast,
Strong in the Lord.*

Dedication Service

On October 9, 2019, the congregation and many visitors gathered together for the first time in the new sanctuary. After a few words the chairman of the building committee, Elder John van Garderen, handed over the keys of the new church to Rev. E.C. Adams. For the first time the Votum and Benediction were pronounced over the congregation in the new sanctuary. While singing Psalter 334:1-3, at the words "Thy Word sheds light upon my path" the pulpit Bible was reverently opened by Rev. E.C. Adams.

Rev. Adams addressed all those who had come from far and near, including Mr. D. McDowell, Mayor of Nobleford, and Miss

Rachael Harder, Member of Parliament. He explained the purpose of coming together, namely, to dedicate this newly-built sanctuary unto the Lord. He read from the Dictionary of Noah Webster the meaning of the word "dedication" which is "to set apart and consecrate to a divine Being, or to a sacred purpose; to devote to a sacred use by a solemn act or by religious ceremonies."

We find these matters in the Bible. Deuteronomy 20:5 speaks of dedicating one's house. The dedication of the first temple is recorded in 1 Kings 8, and the second temple in Ezra 6:16&17. In the time of Nehemiah, the finished walls were also dedicated (Nehemiah 12:27). Finally, we read in the New Testament in John 10:22, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." The desire was expressed that this house of God would be a place where the Lord would dwell and work richly till the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, whereby the Lord is glorified.

The text for the occasion was from Jeremiah 7:2: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD." The following four points were explained:

1) The serious time of the house—

Jeremiah lived in very solemn times during the reign of the last kings of Judah before the city and temple would be burnt by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The Lord in His great faithfulness sent His prophet to warn Judah to repent from their evil ways. The prophet has wept over the hardness of their heart: "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (Jeremiah 9:1).

We live in similar times as we dedicate the church of Nobleford. The judgments of the Lord are hanging very low over us. Sin abounds on every side. The unborn are murdered daily, the Lord's Day is desecrated, and the seventh commandment trampled upon. Yet, there is a church that must and shall be gathered even in these dark and solemn times. Therefore, with God's help, we have been enabled to build Him a sanctuary and to dedicate the same for this purpose today.

2) The necessary gates of the house—

We read of gates in our text two times. Important and royal places always have gates which serve to keep out, to let in, and to protect what is within these places. Thus, the court of the temple and the tabernacle also had gates. These gates point to the sacredness of the place. To that end, when we come to God's house, let it be reflected in our lives and walk. We read in Leviticus 26:2, "Ye shall keep My Sabbaths, and reverence My sanctuary." In 1 Corinthians 11:10 it is implied that the holy angels are present during the worship service.

What a wonder that gates are spoken of here in regards to the house of God. In Genesis 3:24 we read that the entrance to the Garden of Eden had been closed by cherubims with a sword which turned every way. The Son of God has come and placed Himself under the sword of God's justice, and so opened the way to the Father. We read of the glorious opening of the gates of heaven for Christ: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in" (Psalm 24:9).

3) The Lord's message in the house—

Twice, our text mentions the Word of the LORD. We even read of "this word." Thus, Jeremiah was not to bring his own message but solely what the Lord had commanded him to bring. The first watchword of the Reformers was *Sola Scriptura* which means *Scripture Alone*. To that end may we be given to zealously guard this house so that the Word of God has the foremost place. We live in a time where there is much amusement and recreation in the churches. The hearers do not need their ears tickled but need their hearts pricked as in the day of Pentecost. They need to be told of their lost condition, of a rich Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost, and how they may be brought together by the work of the Holy Spirit.

"Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah." This implies the necessity of faithfully coming up to God's house when there is no lawful reason to abstain (Hebrews 11:25). The Lord has promised to gather His Church by Word and Spirit, and it shall not return void unto Him.

4) The required worship in this house—

The word worship means to fall down and to prostrate oneself. This is the purpose prescribed in our text of coming to the house of the Lord. In order to worship the Lord, we need to know Him. Oh, there is the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of young and old. The text is followed by an admonishment to repent, "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place."

The sermon was concluded with the prayer of Solomon concerning the temple as recorded in 2 Chronicles 6:40: "Now, my God, let, I beseech Thee, Thine eyes be open, and let Thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place."

The following speakers were then given an opportunity to address all those gathered together:

Rev. H. den Hollander
(Southern Alberta NRC)

Mr. D. McDowell
(Mayor of Nobleford)

Miss Rachael Harder
(Member of Parliament)

Elder J. van Garderen
(Building Committee)

The service was concluded with prayer, the singing of Psalter 394:1-3, and the benediction.

Institution Service

In the evening, following the dedication of the church in Nobleford, many from far and near gathered with the people of Nobleford in their new sanctuary which was instituted as a congregation with the installation of office bearers. The text words were found in 1 Samuel 12:22-24: *“For the LORD will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you His people. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you.”* This speaks of Samuel’s profound message to the congregation of Israel, which was explained in four thoughts:

1) Words upon the people’s prayer—

1 Samuel 7 speaks of a remarkable time in the Old Testament. We could call it a “Pentecost” where the people have repented, put away their gods, and begged Samuel to pray for them. Samuel then offered a whole sucking lamb as a burnt offering pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ who would come in the fullness of time. Alas, in 1 Samuel 8 they have asked for a king. In this chapter Samuel has come to reason with them (verse 7). It was the time of wheat harvest, implying that it was undoubtedly the feast of Pentecost. At this feast the Lord has done something very extraordinary in sending thunder and rain. As a congregation we have also come up in the time of harvest. The Lord has also done something very extraordinary on September 26-28 by sending a great snow storm of twenty-two inches of wet snow accompanied with wind. We read of Israel that they feared greatly because they had sinned so grievously; they asked Samuel to pray for them. Have there been those among us who have also feared and prayed, or does all remain cold and hard inside?

2) Words expressing the Lord’s faithfulness—

Upon this request Samuel first addresses them. It was a message of hope and consolation when Samuel uttered the precious words *“Fear not.”* Samuel was given to exhort them to serve the LORD. Instead of relating all the sins of their forefathers, Samuel is given to speak of the faithful covenant-keeping Jehovah. A precious promise was given that the Lord would never forsake His own. What was the reason? Was it

because they were so good and obedient? No, but Samuel was given to declare that it pleased the Lord to make them His people. Israel of old is a type of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is a Church that was elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. To that end this new sanctuary has been built where we and our children may gather and where the Lord has promised to gather His Church by Word and Spirit.

3) Words respecting weighty duties—

Samuel has answered the people in a very strong way, *“God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.”* Samuel did not call it a weakness, shortcoming, or lack if he would not pray for his people, but he called it a sin. This would be a sin of omission. Bishop Usher (1581-1656) stated at the end of his life that he became more burdened with the sins of omission than the sins of commission in his life. It is so needful in our times, also in the midst of a new congregation, for unceasing and persevering prayer for the Lord’s blessing.

The second duty Samuel was given to speak about was to teach the people in the good and right way. In order to teach the way, we need to know the way. The good and right way must be taught by parents in the family circles, by office bearers in the church, and by teachers in the Christian school.

4) Words exhorting to fear the Lord—

Samuel did not only speak of his duties as a leader, but he also addressed the people. He began this exhortation with the word “only.” Christ, in His Sermon on the Mount also said, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness”* (Matthew 6:33). For all of us there is one thing needful. *“Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart.”* We read in Proverbs 23:26, *“My son, give Me thine heart.”* The Lord does not require half of our heart but our whole heart. May the Holy Spirit also work mightily in the midst of this house. Samuel had also given a reason; the people were called upon to consider how great things God had done for them. Similarly, the Lord has done great and marvelous things for the people of Nobleford. The sermon was concluded with Psalm 107:43, *“Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.”*

After the Form for the Installation of Elders and Deacons was read, three elders and two

deacons were installed as the first consistory of the congregation of Nobleford. The following speakers were then given opportunity to address the consistory and congregation:

Elder W. Neels read a letter by Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg (Classis Far West)
Rev. G.M. de Leeuw (Classis Midwest)
Rev. A.H. Verhoef (Classis East)
Elder P. Verhoef (Nobleford)

The service was concluded with prayer, the singing of Psalter 348:6-8, and the benediction which was pronounced over the congregation of Nobleford for the first time. At the end of the day, it could be said with the psalmist of Psalm 126:3, *“The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”*

—Henry de Kok, Clerk of Picture Butte NRC

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

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.

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.**

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, We are interested in receiving applications for the following two positions: 1) For a transition into the administrator role of our school for the 2020-2021 school year. Qualified applicants would be those with educational administrative experience or who are experienced teachers with administrative aspirations. A suitable transition 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 desire for the temporal and spiritual welfare of the students. 2) For a teaching position opening for the 2020-21 school year. Qualified applicants would be those capable of teaching various Literature and other English related courses at the junior and senior high levels.

To apply or request more information, please contact the education chairman, Mr. Tim Mol, at 973-204-5677 or tjmol@yahoo.com or the administrator, Mr. John Van Der Brink, at 973-628-7400 or jvanderbrink@nrnsj.org.

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.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, invites inquiries from teachers desiring to teach in our small K-9 school. Interested parties, please contact the principal, Tom Kwekel, at tom.kwekel@gmail.com or 616-644-2661 for more 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!

Information Regarding English Instructions for Digibron.nl Website

Many of our readers have asked for an English translation of the instructions on how to use the Digibron website. This is now available. When you access the Digibron.nl website home page, you will see the words "english manual" just beneath the bold word "zoek" (see screen capture below). Click "english manual" to open extensive English instructions on how to use the Digibron website.



Harvest

GREAT sovereign Lord, what human eye
Amidst Thy works can rove,
And not Thy liberal hand espy,
Nor trace Thy bounteous love?

Each star that gilds the heavenly frame,
On earth each verdant clod,
In language loud to men proclaim
The great and bounteous God.

The lesson each revolving year
Repeats in various ways;
Rich Thy provisions, Lord, appear;
The poor shall shout Thy praise.

Our fruitful fields and pastures tell,
Of man and beast Thy care;
The thriving corn Thy breezes fill,
Thy breath perfumes the air.

But oh, what human eye can trace,
Or human heart conceive,
The greater riches of Thy grace
Impoverished souls receive?

Love everlasting has not spared
Its best beloved Son,
And in Him endless life prepared,
For souls by sin undone.

— *Samuel Boyce*
(from Gadsby's Hymns)