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Jesus Christ
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for their iniquity..." ISAIAH 26:21a*



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Meditation

God's Healing Wonders to the Jew First and Then the Greek

Rev. G.M. de Leeuw, Grand Rapids, MI

“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began”
(Acts 3:21).

Beloved Reader,

In this third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the wonder of healing. A man who was born lame (verse 2) stood up and walked (verse 8). In the previous chapter we read of the wonder on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem when the third Person in the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, descended from on high as had been promised by the Lord Jesus Himself while He was upon earth. Shadowed forth in the shape of a dove, the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him during His baptism (Matthew 3:16&17). This coming on the Day of Pentecost, however, had been foretold in John 16:7, where we read: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

Now this remarkable sending of the third Person of the Holy Trinity had taken place. We read in Acts 2:14 that Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed the multitude. On that day the Lord gave them such a blessing that as a fruit upon their preaching three thousand souls were added to the Church militant. That blessing of conversion was sealed by the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (Acts 2:41). Then we read of their unity and that they continued daily with one accord in the temple. That was a prelude of what the Church triumphant will be when all things will be fulfilled. Presently, we are almost two thousand years closer to that day.

Now comes chapter 3, where things are going to be different. There we will meet with opposition, for as soon as the Lord begins, Satan is there as well. In this chapter we read of the remarkable healing of a certain man. He was lame from his mother's womb (verse 2) and was daily lying at a certain gate of the temple. There you have a contradiction as we will see later. (What do you think, younger readers: Was this the temple that Solomon built?) We read that this man was lame from his birth, but actually he was so even before his birth when he was formed in his mother's womb. (What a relief it is, parents, when a birth takes place and we may receive out of the hand of the Lord a healthy child. Never take that for granted when two lives are spared. Oh, how many concerns can arise during the pregnancy. Husbands, always lay these concerns before the Lord. Let each of you also remember the needs of your own dear wife,

for you are the priest in your house.) Because it was the hour of prayer, Peter and John went into the temple at the ninth hour which is for us 3:00 P.M. You ask, what is now the contradiction? Dear reader, the name of that gate was Beautiful, yet when that lame man is lying there every day it is not such a beautiful sight at all. However, it will become beautiful both in a bodily and in a spiritual way. Let us see what happens.

This change begins in verse 4 when that lame man is commanded by Peter to look upon the two disciples. This he did, of course, in the hope of receiving some money (verse 5). Then Peter, having nothing to give materially but himself having received so much spiritually, cried out, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”

Do you, my dear reader, see the wonder? “And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up”—he, who until now had never taken one step on earth, of him the Bible says, “immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.”

With his first steps he entered the house of God, “walking, and leaping, and praising God.” At this solemn and unforgettable moment, when all this drew much attention of the people, Peter used the opportunity to explain what has happened.

He says as it were, “Do not think that this is our work. No, not at all. It is by Him whom ye delivered up, and whom ye denied in the presence of Pilate who had the intention to let Christ go. Your intention was different. You exchanged Him, the Holy and the Just One, for a murderer. You killed the Prince of Life, which you did—not believing in the name of Jesus Christ. Now the fact that this lame man is walking is by faith in that same name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (verse 6).” With this, Peter calls the people to repentance.

What do you think, dear reader? When Peter was preaching to these people, did it perhaps come back in his memory how once he had denied the Lord thrice, even though he also knew about God's healing wonders? How necessary it is that they who are preaching also themselves know what they are preaching.

I need to finish. The days of commemoration are behind us—the days beginning with Advent until Pentecost which is about half a year. How very precious is the spiritual meaning of these days. People of God, how much of this have you experienced? It is dark in the world, and it is dark in the church as well. Yet, the Lord remains the same today, yesterday, and forever. Oh, that it may please Him to convert us and our dear children and grandchildren.

Dear youth of the congregation, shall you waste your precious time with your electronic devices? Shall you not rather bow your knees in your bedroom seeking for that God? Do you know what He says? Listen: "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain..." (Isaiah 45:19b). Dear parents, remember your children's birth and their baptism, for you will stand with them before God in the great Day of Judgment. Oh, that day is fast approaching

with rapid strides. People of God, how long ago was it that He spoke to you? How long ago was it that precious, true saving faith came in exercise? Oh, keep courage; your strife comes to an end. Then you will be delivered of self, of Satan, and of this world. You will receive the fullest desire of your heart, to be forever with the Lord and with one another. Therefore, comfort one another with these words. □

The Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ

Rev. J. Spaans (1930-2009)

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50&51).

In the Gospel of Luke, we are told that the Lord Jesus had prepared His disciples for His ascension. Earlier in this chapter we read, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" concerning the way of Christ's active and passive obedience in His death, burial, and resurrection.

During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, the Lord had appeared to the disciples at different times, but there remained so many riddles. They were encouraged, yet there was no solution for the state of their souls. The prophetic office of Christ was, by grace, so precious to the disciples, but the high priestly office of Christ was veiled for them. That can still be the experience of people today. They may confess with Peter and the disciples, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and yet miss the solution for their never-dying soul. It is a blessing if, in our time here below, we may also meet persons who do not know the way themselves and who cannot figure it out but must wait until the Lord opens the way and instructs them in that way.

When the Lord opened their understanding, then that way which before was such a riddle became so clear to them. My friends, the Lord Jesus instructed them regarding the things concerning Himself, opening their understanding to see that they were guilty of actual and original sins before God and were without righteousness in themselves. He caused them to know that it was only in His active obedience under the law and in His passive obedience unto death to remove the curse that He had arisen, as the Lion

out of the tribe of Judah, to apply the purchased salvation to His people by the Holy Spirit.

"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy"

The text reads, "And He led them out as far as to Bethany." What a privilege it is to be led by the Lord, and what grace is necessary to be made willing to follow Him. Otherwise, we are inclined to go before Him, but blessed are those who are taught to come behind.

And as they came to Bethany—that unforgettable place of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, which was located at the foot of Mount Olivet—"He lifted up His hands and blessed them." With this blessing they were led into His high priestly

office, His suffering, the Just of the unjust, that by faith, that precious gift of the Holy Spirit, they might receive the application of His blood and peace with God through Him. Then they might be led also into His kingship and their citizenship in it.

It was an unforgettable day in the lives of the disciples, for they were by grace prepared by the Lord for the ascension of their Prophet, Priest, and King into heaven. No longer did they speak

of an earthly kingdom, but they rejoiced by the assurance of faith, in Christ's coming home to the Father, believing assuredly that He would come again to receive them unto Himself (John 14:3).

"And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." It was a blessed experience, a day never to be forgotten in their lives, for we read in the following verse, "And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." They believed His words. "And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

It was an unforgettable day in the lives of the disciples, for they were by grace prepared by the Lord for the ascension of their Prophet, Priest, and King into heaven. No longer did they speak of an earthly kingdom, but they rejoiced by the assurance of faith, in Christ's coming home to the Father, believing assuredly that He would come again to receive them unto Himself.

May it please the Lord to bless us and our children with the blessings of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, for that is worth more than all the world a thousand times over. May He work irresistibly with His Holy Spirit to the true conversion of many, both young and old, great and small. Dear readers, what do we seek? The world passes away with all of its so-called pleasures and possessions. His Word calls to us, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found" (Isaiah 55:6a).

Concerned ones, you who go over the world in your misery, feeling your sin and guilt, emptiness of heart, and separation from God, may the Lord make room in your hearts for that only High Priest. You cannot deny that, at

times, His Word was precious unto you, but may all of your reformation, prayers, tears, feelings, and even your conversion fall away as grounds for your salvation. May you receive grace to bow before Him, confessing that He may do with you as He will. May the Lord fill that void in your soul with Himself.

People of the Lord, may the Lord give need and desire to be exercised with these blessed things, with both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ and with the promise of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Acts tells us that the disciples were together in one accord in prayer and supplication for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. May many today also be found doing so. □



Bible Study

The Life of Daniel (3)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

"But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets"
(Daniel 2:28).

The Lord has shown His approval to Daniel and his friends after a trial period. He had manifested His blessing upon their refusal to eat food from the king's table. God also gave Daniel a high position in the king's court. This continued for a very long time. Kings arose and were put down. There were many changes in those who had governing power. In chapter 2, we still read of King Nebuchadnezzar. There is much unrest in Babel. We see it in its helplessness. What is the reason for the unrest? Is it a revolution or economic recession? No, it is only a dream. It must have been a frightening dream for Nebuchadnezzar, for his spirit was troubled. However, he could not remember his dream anymore. He called the magicians which were masters in occultism and the astrologers who made predictions from the course of stars; the sorcerers, who made predictions from the tokens in nature, were also called. In addition, the Chaldeans were summoned to help the king. They were the philosophers of their time. We read in the Scriptures, "There is no peace for the wicked." Human wisdom failed and was insufficient.

Human helplessness

The king was furious and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. This included also Daniel and his friends. So, the situation was dangerous. The king's foolishness is evident because he sought human help and wisdom but did not call upon the Lord who can solve all riddles. We read in Psalm 146:3, "Put not your trust in

princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." This is a lesson that we need to learn also in our days. God has so clearly shown how helpless man is when the coronavirus appeared. Many necessary measures are taken. Precautions need to be followed. Normal life in many countries is severely disrupted. The economy is suffering severely. Churches are now nearly empty. Many wonder what this has to say to us. However, what we do not hear is that leaders of the nations become guilty ones before the Lord and that they seek to try to turn their subjects back to life in accordance with God's law and testimony. Mankind has achieved an enormous development of knowledge, and scientific possibilities seem to be nearly unlimited. Then, suddenly, nearly everything comes to a standstill, and fear takes hold of many, especially older people.

How the Lord reminds us that we are but feeble and little creatures! It would be a blessing if also we, who know God's Word and may hear the truth, would be blessed with true repentance, that we personally might become the guilty one before the Lord. In the life of God's children, it has been experienced that the Lord brought them to an end, that they were bankrupt and did not know what to do anymore. They could not help themselves. However, this is the way in which He makes room for the work of an Almighty Saviour. Daniel speaks of the Lord.

A mighty Helper

When Daniel knew of the intent of the king to slay all the wise men of his country, he requested some delay from the king. If he would give him time, Daniel would show the king

the dream and its interpretation. This is the language of faith when Daniel says in verse 24, “Bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.” Arioch brought Daniel before the king in haste. He boasted, “I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.” When the king said to Daniel, “Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” Daniel gave a God-glorifying answer. First, he said from where the answer could not come. It cannot come from man, not even the wisemen in his country. Yet, hear him saying, “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.” The wisemen had said in verse 11, “And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

Daniel speaks about a God whose dwelling is with flesh. Christ is made of a woman, made under the law, but He will dwell among the people. He is the Wisdom Himself and will teach sinners mysteries of salvation. We read in Matthew 11:25, “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” This the Lord still does when He teaches sinners His ways. Secrets are the things of God’s kingdom. The poet says in Psalm 25:14, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.” Of these secrets we also read in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Daniel was God’s servant, and those servants may proclaim these mysteries. The gospel is a mystery—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.” In our days, it seems that the name Jesus is no hidden name anymore. Yes, that name should

be proclaimed and, as such, it should not be a hidden name. However, in the life of an uncovered sinner who has been shown his ungodliness, his being outside of God, alienated from Him, Jesus is so hidden. What he sees is God’s anger, the separation from Him, his own guilt, and he learns the inability to ever pay his debts or satisfy God’s justice. He first learns his impossibility to ever come back to God. Yes, there is a mighty Helper, for help is laid upon One that is mighty. God’s justice is against sinners; He must punish them. Nevertheless, there lies the secret. How can a just God also be gracious? How can He be a mighty Helper for those who have sinned everything away and kindled His wrath against them? That secret of God’s wisdom and power is revealed when gospel light may shine upon the precious name Jesus—when something may be seen of His power, of His ability, of His willingness. Daniel sings, as it were, a doxology in verse 20, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His.” What a wonder of God’s wisdom it is which He will reveal to babes, that there is a mighty, a willing, a suitable Saviour. A holy God dwells with sinners. Here is the ladder of Jacob. Here is the Ark of the Covenant. Here is the golden mercy seat, covering the law which curses the disobedient sinner. Here is the secret revealed, how grace can be given and yet justice maintained, how a place may be obtained in this Refuge, how poor sinners may be justified freely, how sinners can dwell with God.

Babel’s knowledge and wisdom could not find the key to the secret chamber of God. Neither the wise and learned of this world nor the theologians can find it without the light of God’s Spirit teaching them. However, babes who are instructed in the school of God’s grace may behold those secrets and admire the free favor of God, His good pleasure. There was no reason in them that He looked upon them in mercy. It was, and will always be, His free and sovereign grace; therefore, they will give all the honor to Him. □

(To be continued)

Curatorium Postponement

Due to government restrictions put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Curatorium scheduled for June 3, 2020, has been indefinitely postponed. We hope to announce a new meeting date as soon as we are able. Persons are still welcome to approach their consistory concerning an attest, but it must be understood that at this time we do not know when the Curatorium will be able to meet. This decision will be especially difficult for Student Slingerland and the vacant congregations who were looking forward to him serving them with an edifying word. May the Lord grant patience and submission under His dealings, both as a nation and also as congregations, with solemn contemplations concerning our unworthiness to receive the least blessing.

On behalf of the Curatorium,
Rev. H.D. den Hollander, *clerk*



From Our Inheritance

Pentecost and Its Significance

Rev. J. van Haaren (1933-1983)

(Taken from the June 1984 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

Pentecost is the feast of accomplishment and of fulfillment. It is the coronation feast of the Church of Christ, where Christ Himself, through His Spirit, comes and dwells in His Church. That is, in the deepest sense, the essence and content of this Pentecostal event. It is truly an awesome occurrence. Many people do not understand it. They have the greatest difficulty with the Pentecostal feast.

What is the exact meaning of Pentecost? We can hardly visualize it; therefore, many do not know how to answer this question. It is different with Christmas and with Easter. At Christmas there is the Babe in the manger in Bethlehem's stable, and we hear the angels singing. At Easter it is also different, for then our attention is fixed upon the open grave out of which the crucified Christ arose. We hear the angels say, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." These we can visualize somewhat, but how is it with the Pentecostal feast?

At Christmas and Easter, we can visualize a little of it. There we can observe what God does *for* sinners, but we cannot observe this at Pentecost because the important point there is what God does *in* sinners. Christmas is the feast of "God with us" and Easter is the feast of "God for us," but Pentecost is the feast of "God in us."

What precisely is the meaning of that? Of what does the Pentecostal feast consist? You must realize that you cannot comprehend it with your mind and intellect. At Pentecost the words are emphatically confirmed, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." He cannot understand them though he exerts himself ever so much, "because they are spiritually discerned." Since that ability of spiritual discernment is lacking in natural man, he will never be able to understand the meaning and profound content of Pentecost with his natural mind.

Only one thing is of importance here, and that is experience; if we may experience a little of it, even then we can hardly put into words that which we have experienced. Our words are entirely insufficient to express what we really have experienced. If we nevertheless try to express it, then we perceive how poor our words are and that we can never tell it as it was experienced by us. We notice this also in the description which the evangelist Luke gives of this Pentecostal event. You have perhaps noticed that when he writes about the Pentecostal feast, he is extremely brief and also extremely vague. Compare this with the description which this same evangelist gives of Christmas; you will surely

notice a great difference. In regard to Christmas, we are told in great detail what happened. It is also so with Easter; but when he begins to speak about Pentecost, he is quickly finished.

What is exactly the essence of the Pentecostal gospel? He tells it in a short sentence by saying, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." That is it—nothing more and nothing less. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." That is the important point. It does not so much concern the accompanying signs; it does not concern the sound that was heard, neither does it concern the tongues which were seen. It ultimately concerns the essence of the matter which is put into words by Luke as follows, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." It is extremely brief. He makes no attempt at all to make it more explicit.

What does that comprise—to be filled with the Holy Ghost? Luke is not only very brief, but he is also extremely vague in his description. When he speaks about the accompanying signs, he speaks about a "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind"; it was not a hurricane, but it was "as of." When he speaks about tongues, he says that they were "tongues like as of fire." It was not fire; they were not actual tongues of

fire, but they appeared like tongues of fire. Do you notice then how vague Luke is in his description?

These signs are there in order to let us understand a little of Pentecost. For these signs are not chosen by a human being but are chosen by the Most High and Holy God Himself. That is to say, they are chosen with wisdom and with great divine understanding and purpose. In those signs the Lord tells a little of Himself. In those signs we can perceive a little of who and what God the Holy Spirit is, what He does, and what He is willing to do.

Pentecost is the feast which reminds us of the other feasts. Pentecost is not to be separated from Christmas, from Good Friday, and from Easter. Pentecost would never have taken place if there had been no Christmas, if there had been no Good Friday, and if there had been no Easter. Pentecost is then also the fruit of Christmas, of Good Friday, and of Easter. That the Holy Spirit, that God Himself, through His Spirit, can dwell in men is only for Jesus' sake. Christ made reconciliation for the iniquity which made separation.

God no longer needs to conceal His glory to prevent sinners from being consumed. There is One who was con-

What is exactly the essence of the Pentecostal gospel? He tells it in a short sentence by saying, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." That is it—nothing more and nothing less. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." That is the important point.

sumed, who with His blood quenched the fierceness of God's anger. Now He no longer needs to hide His presence behind a very thick veil in the temple as a symbol and as a shadow. God has rent the veil with His hand; it was rent from the top to the bottom. The partition has fallen away. Now the living Church, purchased and sanctified through the blood of Christ, has become a temple of the Holy Spirit. That is, in the deepest sense, the essence of the Pentecostal events.

At Pentecost, strictly speaking, the main object is not the Holy Spirit, but Pentecost has reference to Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to glorify Christ. Thus, I would almost say that Pentecost, even more than the other feasts, proclaims the necessity of being born in Christ. For soon we will meet this glorious God, and if we are not then hidden in Christ, that will be a deadly, a crushing, and a fearful meeting. However, if we may hide ourselves behind Christ, we will experience that there are with Him "tender mercies and loving-kindnesses." This now is the work of the Holy Spirit—that He glorifies Christ in the hearts of sinners. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." Pentecost is pre-eminently the feast of Christ since it is the Holy Spirit who brings near to us that which Christ obtained, who causes us to partake of that which we have in Christ so that we experience the power of it.

Christmas caused the *angels* to sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," but at Pentecost *people* begin to sing. People take over the song of the angels, and then they sing more beautifully than the angels because angels can only sing about it, but people sing out of it. How seldom that song is heard. Do you know why that is? Because we are so little warmed and inspired and uncovered through the Holy Spirit. Oh, that it would one day become Pentecost for us, for all of us, individually.

It is not enough that we are a member of the church. It is not enough that we attend church faithfully. It is not enough that we know there are people who are acquainted with the work of the Holy Spirit. The important thing is, as the catechism states, when speaking of the Holy Spirit, "that He is also given to me." It is not said in a general way, given to us, but very personally, "given to me." When the catechism speaks of the church, it says, "that I am, and for ever shall remain, a living member." Are you a living member

of the church? Has the Holy Spirit been given to you also? May it be that you are concerned with this and that this would always be the content of your prayer? For upon prayer the Lord will yet descend and will make room for Himself in the hearts of sinners. Pray without ceasing. For thus saith the Lord: "If ye then, being evil," (and such we are) "know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Where the Holy Spirit comes, He remains. There is no apostasy of saints. We cannot ever banish Him with our sinful life. We can truly grieve Him, but we cannot drive Him away. Whoever He conquers, He never again releases. This does not result in a careless life but, truly, in a life of wonderment. On the other hand, we remain dependent all our life on His ministration. Let us rightly understand that it will remain only a wrestling and a sighing life until it becomes Pentecost for us, and only then we have arrived, are finished, and have become established people.

What does it really mean to become established? God's people are only truly established when they are in heaven. We are never finished here. Grace does not make great, finished, accomplished people. No, grace makes people who continually have need of more grace. To keep us small the Holy Spirit withdraws Himself from us in His sensible nearness. What happens then? Our spiritual life languishes. We try to maintain ourselves by talking about the past, but we do not then possess our former life.

How necessary is the ministration, the quickening ministration of the Holy Spirit for all and each of us individually, that He may make room in all our hearts for Christ and cause us to live out of Christ. For then our tongue will become as the pen of a ready writer; our mouth shall ever show forth God's praise as a spring which pours itself upon the fields. However, it will always be in this life only in part and remain in part, full of shortcomings. Listen, one day each of them, with his own tongue, shall declare the works of God as they were wrought in his life. Then will be verified what the poet sings,

*Then in song and joyful mirth
Shall Thy ransomed sons agree;
Singing forth throughout the earth,
"All my fountains are in Thee."*

—Psalter 239:2 ◻

Humble Dependence

A truly humble man is sensible of his natural distance from God; of his dependence upon Him; of the insufficiency of his own power and wisdom; and that it is by God's power that he is upheld and provided for, and that he needs God's wisdom to lead and guide him, and His might to enable him to do what he ought to do for Him.

—Jonathan Edwards



Guidance

Cremation

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Franklin Lakes, NJ

We are living in a time of profound changes. Although much changes, it is written for God's inheritance in the strife, "I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." May that also be an encouragement in light of the ethical changes which we see around us.

One of the things which we see changing around us are the thoughts which people have in regard to death. Death is pushed away by many, but also in certain cases it is sought for by people (think of euthanasia). The fact that people die is something which no one has been able to avoid. People have invested much money in things which they thought would extend their life, yet death remains a reality for all of us. That death is unavoidable is clear, yet how people react to death or deal with the death of a loved one is changing even in the so-called "Christian church." Cremation is on the rise; I am afraid it is for purposes not so clearly seen at first but which do become clear when we look at the facts surrounding it.

What is cremation? The dictionary describes it as "a method of reducing a dead body to ashes." Cremation can be accomplished in a number of ways. It is not our intention, however, to discuss how cremation takes place but rather why it takes place.

To see cremation in a proper light we need to first ask, "Who are we?" When we speak of human beings, we speak about the crown jewels of Creation. In Psalm 8:5 we read, "For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." When we speak about human beings as the crown jewels of Creation, then that refers especially to how they were created as image bearers of their Creator. This image consisted of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Oh, the excellency with which we all were adorned, but we must also say that we all fell out of that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness in our deep fall in Adam. Oh, how much we have lost, we have lost everything! Now we are dead in sins and trespasses; we are dead in an active death state.

We have brought upon ourselves this death state, and this death state is threefold. We speak of a spiritual, a temporal, and an eternal death. When we view it in this light, it becomes clear why we die; we die because of sin. This means that death is never a result of natural consequences. Our loved ones are not taken away because of a disease or because of an accident, but our loved ones are taken away because of sin. We all will likewise follow because death is the punishment of a holy, just, and righteous God upon sin. He clearly warned that "the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

This also makes death an unavoidable reality. We know that no one likes this reality; we would rather not be confronted with death. Now, man in his fallen state brings about all kinds of ways to avoid the reality of what death is, namely, a punishment upon sin. Ways to celebrate life are put forth to remove any thoughts of the actual reality of death being a punishment. Many things are done to deny Hebrews 9:27: "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Death, we have said, is the punishment for sin. What, then, takes place when death comes? The moment when we, as the crown jewels of Creation, fell in our covenant head Adam, there came a separation. In our spiritual death we are separated from God; in our temporal death there is a separation between our soul and body; and in our eternal death, if divine grace does not intervene during our lifetime, there will be an eternal separation between God and us. Because the punishment of sin is a reality, and this punishment is unavoidable when temporal death comes upon us, a body remains which begins to decompose and, therefore, needs to be removed. Why do we, then, need a casket and not a cremation oven? Why do we need a grave and not a scattering of ashes in a forest, garden, or on the sea?

In the letter of Paul to the Corinthians we are told, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" (1 Corinthians 6:19a). The body, therefore, must also be kept holy. We may not defile it in our lifetime with worldly and carnal lusts, but we also may not remove it in an unbiblical way. Scripture clearly speaks of the threefold death of the body being the temple of the Holy Ghost. When death enters and the separation becomes real, what must be done with the body? "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19b). Here, the Lord was not speaking about the soul; that is impossible. The Lord speaks concerning the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

We bury because of biblical tradition. One example of a person in the Bible who understood two things very clearly as to what his body was and what he desired in regard to his body after his death was Joseph. When the Lord held a way with him that was not to be understood, Satan came with strong temptations. One of those temptations was to allure Joseph to fall into sin by yielding to Potiphar's wife. We read very clearly that Joseph knew at that time that his body was a temple of the Holy Ghost: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9b). He received strength to resist the temptation. We also read

of this same Joseph that he gave instruction in regard to his bones, not his ashes. In Hebrews 11:22 we read, "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." Although these were two separate events, we clearly see that the Lord has a people who learn that their bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost and that the removal of the body needs to be performed in an honorable way.

The question may arise, "Why is burning not honorable?" The examples in scripture are numerous (see Leviticus 20:14 & 21:9; Joshua 7:25; 1 Kings 13:1-3; 2 Kings 23:15-18). In these places you read the recurring theme that the burning of a body is a curse. The Lord also was grieved when Israel strayed so far from Him when they were burning their children in the arms of Molech. Herein we can see that the burning of bodies is related to pagan customs. These examples are clear evidences that the Lord is displeased with the burning of a soulless body; when it did take place in the history of Israel it was because of a curse.

What is the scriptural tradition by which we are shown the proper way to remove a soulless body? We can read of Abraham in Genesis 23:4, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead." We can mention Samson who, although having defiled the temple of the Holy Ghost, yet was buried. The kings of Israel were also buried.

The clearest example is Christ Himself; He was buried. By the example of the Lord Jesus' burial we can observe that burying remained a tradition in the early church. We also mention the instruction that Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 15 with regard to the burying of the body. This chapter is clear as to why the body must be buried. Another proof we have from the early church is that the people were buried in the catacombs. What does this tell us? Not only that the biblical tradition was to bury but also that the church desired to be Christ-like; therefore, like Him, they wished to be buried. When we say that burying is a biblical tradition and is also Christ-like, then it brings cremation into perspective. Cremation is a departure from scripture and from biblical tradition. This is a major reason why the practice of cremation is on the rise.

The *Smithsonian Magazine* wrote the following in an article: "Most funeral directors have seen a lot of families move away from traditions and move away from ceremony." What is the replacement? Cremation and celebration. Statistics show an alarming development. In the year 1960, 3.56% of dead bodies were cremated in the United States. In 2015, the percentage grew to 48.5%, and in 2018 to 53.1%. This means that more than half of the funerals in the USA are by cremation. Canada also has the same alarming development. In 1970, 5.9% of the funerals were cremation but expanded to 68.4% in 2009. What does this show?

Cremation is a development of a secularizing society. This shows that cremation is a result of a society which has moved away from tradition and ceremony, a result of a world that desires to have no reminders of God and sin or of salvation during times when sorrowing hearts are usually tender. There is also a theory that is creeping into so-called "Christian" circles, namely, that we choose to cremate because it is better for the environment, because of price, or because the cemeteries are getting full. This is nothing but Satan's craftiness to deceive souls in regards to the authority of Scripture that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. The biblical tradition to be Christ-like is no longer of value today.

For what must we then strive? To be separate. In 2 Corinthians 6:17 we read, "and be ye separate." It is also what the apostle exhorted the Romans: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). No matter how

difficult this may be, when, for example, a fellow worker, neighbor, or friend passes away and we find out that he or she will be cremated, then remember, "be ye separate." As hard as this may be, seek, in times like this, to not mix with the world but stand upon the scriptural foundation for the removing of the body. It becomes even harder when it comes closer to home. Perhaps our

son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, or some other close relative chooses to cremate his or her body after death. When in the grief of losing a loved one, this is added to the grief, what must then happen? We may call to mind what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). When Joseph was given the strength to remain standing in the moment of temptation, God helped him. Even when he ended up in prison, God was faithful. God provided that way of escape. So, even if we have to bear scorn for the principal of the biblical removal of the body of a loved one, He is faithful; He will make a way to escape.

Dear reader, we may be biblically sound in our principals regarding the proper way to remove the body after death, but are *we* prepared to die? How shall it be for us at that moment when the soul leaves the body? We may have been orthodox in principal, which is required of us, but it is not a ground on which to rest to meet God as our Judge. What is then necessary? That we know Him, Jesus Christ, as the Gift of the Father, His only beloved Son who has been under the hot, burning wrath and indignation of God's justice in order to be the Mediator to merit eternal life for His people. When do His people learn this? When they

Dear reader, we may be biblically sound in our principals regarding the proper way to remove the body after death, but are we prepared to die? How shall it be for us at that moment when the soul leaves the body?

believe that death as a punishment is not unfair but well deserved. When the love of God has been poured out by the Holy Spirit in their heart, this makes separation so unbearable. Such people long for a solution, a solution which satisfies the justice of God. For those who know Him, even if it is but with weak faith, there are no words to describe what it shall be when they may meet Him, not as their Judge but as their Saviour. Then they will enter into the rest that remains for the children of God. Then, no matter what is done with the body—think of the martyrs—the Lord will preserve their bodies until the last day. He knows where their dust is resting. When the trumpet shall blow, their body and soul shall be reunited. Then they will not have an eternal death but eternal life to praise God forever, to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb! “Through Thee, through Thee alone!”

On the other hand, what terror it will be when we who knew better will have to be with those who in their lifetime and even in their death desired to remove biblical direction and tradition. Then they will receive their burned body back, not as burned but capable of bearing the eternal fire of hell, the place where God’s anger will forever burn. Oh, therefore, dear reader, in the time of grace seek the God of grace. Seek to be covered with the blood and righteousness of Him of whom we confess with the church of all ages “was conceived by the Holy Ghost [to receive a prepared body, Hebrews 10:5]; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Oh, that you might then be prepared! □



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Kalamazoo, MI

What is the difference between the essence and the exercises of faith?

The word *essence* refers to an indispensable quality of something which determines its character. When this is applied to faith, we could think of what the Heidelberg Catechism writes about the essence of faith in Lord’s Day 7. What faith embraces and believes, however, is explained in the following Lord’s Days, all the way to Lord’s Day 23. One could also speak about the planting of faith in regeneration and the exercises of faith as wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart. The question here is if it is biblical to separate these from one another—is it merely hairsplitting dogmatics, or is it scripturally permissible to make a *distinction* here? Remember, a *distinction* is not the same as a *separation*.

The Scriptures clearly show that there is a distinction between the planting of faith as in regeneration and the exercises of the same. There is an *engrafting* in the Vine Jesus Christ but also an *abiding* in Him. That this is not an automatic matter is evident from John 15:2 and 6: “If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” The work of the Holy Spirit is so indispensable here! Let us never forget that man is just as dependent upon the Holy Spirit for the *planting* as for the exercises of faith! I am afraid this is often forgotten by those who would hear of no distinction between the planting and

exercises of faith. The Heidelberg Catechism clearly confirms this in Lord’s Day 7. There is an *engrafting* into Christ and a *receiving* of all His benefits. It is true that Christ may never be separated from all His benefits, but is it unscriptural to distinguish between the Person of Christ and His benefits? On the contrary, what Christ merited in His humiliation must be applied by the same Christ in His exaltation. They are the gifts for men, even for the rebellious also. It is the plentiful rain, whereby God confirmed His inheritance. It is His goodness which He has prepared for the poor (Psalm 68:9&10). It is the measure of faith, dealt by God to His people, through grace, that man is able to embrace these benefits.

Those who have difficulties with this distinction often also have difficulties with both a searching message as well as a message which lays out the very exercises of faith. Christ must be preached, we hear. This is, indeed, very true, but is He not preached in His wisdom, mercy, all-sufficiency, omnipotence, and more when the way He exercises the faith of His own is laid out? Is that just preaching the sinner? Is Christ not preached when particularly His wisdom comes to the foreground in leading ignorant souls? Is He not preached when He is shown to vile lost sinners as the Way, the Truth, and the Life? Ah, is He not altogether desirable and lovely when He sends scarcity instead of abundance so that the soul cries out all the more to Him? Is He not wiser in His dealings evermore when instead of victory He deems

it necessary to lead into defeat or instead of comfort He sends affliction? Is He not more victorious over sin, the enemy, and death when He waits till the fourth watch and walks on the water, the very source of the disciples' fear and dread? I read in the works of Rev. I. Kievit: "God's birds often sing the best when they are in cages, and fly the highest when their wings are clipped. They approach closest to heaven when they lie as crushed upon the earth."

In closing, I would like to add one more thought in this context. Let us take to heart what the Marginal Notes to the Dutch Statenvertaling say in note #3 on "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit" (John 15:2a). They explain "that is anyone who outwardly confesses Me, but nevertheless does not believe with the heart." A mere outward confession is and remains a dead confession when it does not draw sap from the true Vine Christ, and it does not flow from the work and care of the heavenly Husbandman. There is such an essential difference with the second part of this verse, where He speaks of a branch that beareth fruit, which He purgeth, which means He purifies and cleanses it.

Let us take to heart that the purpose here is to *separate* and not merely to *distinguish*. Whatsoever is not of and in Christ is fit for the burning fire. How solemn are God's works of purging and pruning. On the other hand, the fact that the heavenly Husbandman purgeth or purifies the fruit bearing branches is the very proof that He recognizes the

state and condition of weak faith, tried faith, strong faith, great faith, and little faith. It truly is such a beautiful subject to study how the Lord Jesus **identified** such faith and how He **dealt** with it. Think only of the Syrophenician woman... The lesson here is that true saving faith must be planted, nourished, and tried to grow and mature. This does not happen overnight; on the contrary, it is a lifelong process. There is the essence and the well-being of faith. In closing, we see a clear example in the life of the disciples. It is distinctly shown that before Pentecost, the knowledge of Christ, particularly concerning His priestly administration (the marrow of the gospel), by the disciples was minimal. See the ignorance and questions in John 14 in this regard. Remember, it was not until after Pentecost that the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in Christ's name, would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had told them (John 14:26). What a blessing as well as a comfort it is that a Triune God has not left the essence nor the exercises of faith to the choice and discretion of man. Now we are reminded to whom we should turn for both. ◻

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



Doctrinal Studies

Holy Baptism (4)

Rev. G.J. van Aalst, Klaaswaal, the Netherlands

We and our children

Our baptismal form is rich in content. We should read it attentively and with discretion. For example, we should do so when there is spoken of "we and our children," while in another place there is spoken of "this child."

Isaac and Ishmael were both circumcised, and they both lived under the administration of the Covenant of Grace in the tent of Abraham. Were they both converted? The case was the same with Jacob and Esau. There appeared to be a difference. This was not a difference by nature, but God had made a difference. To be separated by means of the sacrament is a privilege, but it is not a conferring of grace. On the field of the covenant is drawn a line of division which God has placed there. The conferring of grace comes forth out of the fruits of regeneration, being stopped by God and to be accepted in His beloved Son. This is true

for "us and our children," but it can also be that "this child" hardens himself, which is apparent in the loving of sin and the rejection of the gospel.

Essence and administration

The epistles in the New Testament belong to the essence of the Church. What is meant when this is said? When Paul writes in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God..." then he does not mean that all of his hearers are included in that "we." God is the interpreter of the essence of the Church; they are His elect, His regenerated children. It is they to whom Paul is referring with his "we." This is how the Canons of Dort confess it in Head 2, Article 8: "...should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith." Yet the Lawgiver says to all hearers who sit under the Word of God, "I am the LORD your God..." They live, therefore,

under the administration of the Covenant of Grace, but it is apparent that it is not all Israel which is so named (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). To the essence of the Church belong the true believers in Christ, who await their salvation only from Christ, being washed in His blood, sanctified, and sealed by the Holy Ghost (Confession of Faith, Article 27). Just as not all the people who stood around Mount Sinai were converted, so likewise that was not the case in the church of Corinth. That is very clear in both epistles. That is also not the case with the New Testament church which meets together under the administration of Word and sacrament. The differentiation between the essence and the administration of the Covenant of Grace is, therefore, a biblical fact which resonates in all of our confessions.

Not all mankind are God's people

Our forefathers also make this distinction in their baptismal instruction. Sometimes it is clearly about "this child." This cannot be understood any other way than, namely, each child which is baptized. This child belongs to the natural seed of the church. The parents of all of these children confess that "they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His church ought to be baptized" in their answer to the first question asked at baptism.

They have an external bond with Christ. On the basis of John 15:1-8, we differentiate between two sorts of branches:

"Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit" (2a);

"...every branch that beareth fruit" (2b).

There are, therefore, branches which, it is true, have an external bond with the Vine but who do not bear fruit. How heartrending, for they are cut off and cast into the fire (John 15:2a&6). That is why, in the closing prayer of the form, it is asked if it may be different with this child. There the church prays that this child, by the powerful operation of the Spirit which makes alive, may learn to know of the bond with the Saviour and that he may "increase and grow up" therein. We read another example in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. The people of Israel "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat (Manna); and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them" (verses 2-4). Paul adds that "that rock was Christ" (verse 4c). In spite of this, many were slain because of their tempting of Christ (verse 9). Here you have several examples and proofs from Scripture that being separated in baptism is not the receiving of grace.

We and our children

In our Form for the Administration of Baptism we hear, "applying unto us that which we have in Christ...till we shall finally be presented without spot or wrinkle among the assembly of the elect in life eternal." It is clear that this refers to the essence of the Church. That is why we hear in the closing prayer, "Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of Thy Son Jesus Christ...and adopted us to be Thy children, and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism." With the knowledge of a living faith, the Church of all ages acknowledges the Lord that He has glorified the Covenant of Grace among young and old. The water in baptism also speaks to the fact that He will continue to carry out His electing good pleasure. The Church and her spiritual seed are and remain the proof of that.

It then follows in the closing prayer, "We beseech Thee, through the same Son of Thy love, that Thou wilt be pleased always to govern these baptized children..." Unmistakably, this speaks about every baptized child, for whom personally the saving and remaining work of God's Spirit is prayed.

Confessed and prayed for

We must, therefore, read our form with discretion. When does it mean the essence of the Church and her spiritual seed chosen by God? When does it refer to every baptized child? Prayer is offered for them that they may be "incorporated by the Holy Spirit into Thy Son Jesus Christ." That goes essentially further than being outwardly sanctified and separated. It is therefore confessed that this child "is sanctified in Christ."

Following this, prayer is offered for this same child, that he or she may assuredly have a portion in the body of Christ, the elect Church of all ages. To say it differently, prayer is offered that this natural seed may belong to the spiritual seed of the Church through the unfathomable mercy of the Holy Spirit by means of rebirth and conversion.

We must make a well-grounded differentiation between what is confessed and for what is prayed. Our forefathers definitely did not say that all baptized children belong to the essence of the Church because of birth and baptism. Let us hold fast to this difference as was also so clearly articulated by Rev. Kersten. □

(To be continued)

He who tasted the bitterness of sin will fear to commit it, and he who has felt the sweetness of mercy will fear to offend it.

—Stephen Charnock



For Young and Old

God's Free Grace Glorified (8)

Edited by Marinus Nijssse

(Uitgeverij Pieters, Oostburg, the Netherlands)

Mina prays for a long time. At last she sees only her lips moving; the words can no longer be understood. After praying for a long time she again opens her eyes. She has a cheerful look on her face.

"Dear Mina," asks her girlfriend, "how is it with you now?"

"It is good," says Mina. "You are now free to speak of the praise of the Lord. My soul is saved." More she cannot say. She is completely worn out. She lies there with her eyes closed, and her breathing is fast and irregular.

When she becomes somewhat quieter, her friend asks her, "Did I hear that correctly? Is your soul saved?"

With a weak voice she answers, "Yes, you may freely speak of the praise and glory of the Lord. My soul is saved."

The young girl is unable to speak more. Her voice becomes weaker and weaker. She grasps the hand of her friend and says, "Here we must part from one another, but in heaven we will be eternally reunited, never again to be separated from each other."

She stops speaking again. She is very tired; only her lips are still moving.

The ones surrounding her bed are deeply moved when they see her lying there. Her death will not be far away anymore.

Suddenly, she opens her eyes. She sees that her loved ones are crying. With a weak but calm voice she says:

*The Lord I will at all times bless,
In praise my mouth employ;
My soul shall in Jehovah boast,
The meek shall hear with joy.
O magnify the Lord with me,
Let us exalt His Name;
When in distress on Him I called,
He to my rescue came.*

When she comes to the second line, she lays her right hand upon her heart. She wants in this way to express the power of her faith.

Her mother now asks her, "Dear Mina, do you have such peace in your soul that in all of your circumstances you may rest upon the Lord? Is it just like it is in the psalm? May you feel the peace in this way?"

Mina lays her hand upon her heart. "Oh yes! If you only knew how much love I feel for the dear Lord Jesus in my

heart. Oh, if only I could share it with you! If only I could find words for it..."

She cannot speak any more. She is exhausted.

Mina's friend has taken a feather which she has dipped in water. She passes the wet feather over the parched lips of her girlfriend.

With a soft motion, Mina pushes the hand with the feather away. She then begins to pray: "Oh, Thy wonderful love, O God. I may still receive some refreshment, but dearest Lord Jesus, they gave Thee gall to drink. For Thee there was no help. Thou didst it all out of sovereign love for poor hell worthy sinners. Thou hast also done that for me."

It is touching to listen how she extolls and wonders about God's love!

Slowly, the hours pass. "What time is it?" she asks.

Someone answers, "It is just five o'clock."

"Oh, another hour, and then my dear brother will be here." She now lies there waiting with her eyes closed.

After a half hour her girlfriend asks, "Dear Mina, are you not afraid of death?"

"Why should I be afraid of death. The Lord is so good to me." She lays her hand upon her heart and continues, "Oh, if you only knew how much love I feel in my heart for the Lord Jesus. If I could only express it!"

She is unable to speak any further, but she lifts her eyes to above.

At six o'clock she hears some noise downstairs in the house. "Here comes my dear brother," she says. She hears that her brother and her mother are crying. "Listen," she says, "they are crying. There is no reason to cry over me. They may not do that because of me... Let my brother come here by me..."

Several moments later her brother is upstairs. It is a very moving moment. They embrace, and they both shed tears. At the edge of the grave, in the last moments of her life, she may still see and speak to her brother.

"How is your wife?" she asks.

"She is well," says her brother with deep emotion.

She then asks about some acquaintances in Vlaardingen. When she hears that they are doing well, a smile comes over her face. □

(To be continued)

God sweetens outward pain with inward peace.

—Thomas Watson



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (5) **Article XVI: Of Eternal Election**

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

The decrees of God extend over all things, both small and great, in heaven and in earth. If we believe this, then it will be impossible to say that this belief is denied by man. Our fathers discussed this very briefly in our Confession but with finality.

Eternal election is called predestination, which can be divided into election and rejection, and this doctrine is the heart of the Reformed confession. It can also be found in the Lutheran confessions, but it was placed more in the background. Our Reformed fathers have always defended this doctrine that God's decrees extend over the eternal destination or state of men and angels, the rational creatures. Thus, there is an election and rejection of angels as well as of men. We can read of the election of angels in 1 Timothy 5:21 and of their reprobation in Jude, verse 6.

The article we are considering speaks only of the predestination of man. As we will see later in the explanation of this article, both the election and rejection of man is spoken of in many places. Calvin said that by the bringing up of children with milk, election may not get too much emphasis, but in another place he wrote that predestination is the heart of the church. When we know something of it in our personal life, you can understand that it is a comforting doctrine.

In this confession is written that eternal election is the deepest ground of salvation. On the other hand, we can understand that this doctrine of predestination is a rock of offense for people who wish to maintain themselves and try to make God dependent on man. Satan used the pride of man to go against this teaching where everything of man is excluded. For God's people it is and always becomes a greater wonder that there is an election. If salvation would have to begin with their work, then all would be lost. Happily, the Lord was the first from eternity, and then they can say, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

We promised to mention a few places where election is mentioned in Scripture. In Romans 9:13 we read that God loved Jacob but hated Esau; in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that He has appointed some to wrath as well as others to obtain salvation; and in Romans 9:22&23 that there are vessels fitted to destruction as well as vessels prepared unto glory. Thus, election and rejection are of pure sovereignty, and all moving or conditional causes outside of God, whether good or evil, are thereby excluded. God did not elect because of foreseen faith or good works, nor reject because of certain sins. It is God's free, sovereign decree. Even faith in Christ Jesus is not a condition for election, but is a fruit of election. God shows His mercy to whom He will and hardens whom He will, yet it will never be possible to lay the blame upon God if we are not saved.

This article begins with the statement: "We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God did then manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just." The previous article dealt with original sin, which is the cause of our deep fall. The consequences of it are felt over the entire world. Because of the fall we are subject to the three-fold death, and we have no rights to anything. Being in this spiritual death we do not bother to ever think about salvation in the right way, yet we are responsible for our deeds because we have willfully brought ourselves into this misery.

This seems to be a contradiction—being spiritually dead and yet to be responsible, but since we are the jewels of God's creation, it is different! We are worthy to stay under the eternal curse of the Lord, but He is both merciful and just. If a man is saved, then the reason is with the Lord only. If we go lost, then it is our own fault. In Romans 9:21 we read, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"

The ways of the Lord will end to His glory, either in showing mercy or in His maintaining justice.

This doctrine of free grace has always had much resistance. We know that the Pelagians and the Socinians deny God's sovereign decrees and teach free will. Rome teaches that good works are the ground for salvation or at least a part of it. Luther speaks of foreseen belief and unbelief. Karl Barth denies election completely. The Remonstrants taught that those whom God foresaw would believe and convert themselves of their own free will are chosen to salvation, thus maintaining that God is dependent upon man in deciding his state for eternity.

Against all of these false doctrines we maintain, based upon God's Word, that the sole cause of predestination is God's sovereign good pleasure. It is also thus with how we come to salvation, namely, the union with Christ by faith under the administration of the Holy Spirit. I think it is self-evident that man,

created in this time state, cannot influence God's eternal decree. All things upon earth happen in virtue of God's decrees, and we may not ask the Lord to give an account of His deeds.

We know that all sorts of questions come up in the mind about election. One says, is it not arbitrary and hard of God to determine man's eternal destination in this manner? Another says, is it not an injustice when the Lord decrees such totally different ends for a people who are all sinners, where the one receives life and the other death? Is the Lord not being partial in dealing with people when one receives grace and another is rejected? We can multiply these questions.

Job gives the answer in Job 34:10: "Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity." He is righteous, and does righteously, also toward man. The Lord willing, more about this subject next time.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

The Ten Plagues (?)

(Based on Exodus 11&12)

It was the middle of the night, and it was very quiet. The people of Egypt were all asleep, and no one was up and about or talking. It seemed as though it was a normal night.

Suddenly there was a loud scream, a very sharp loud scream. Then another scream was heard, and another. Lights were going on in all of the houses. There was crying and wailing in every home. What was happening? Why were they all crying?

God had now sent the last punishment, the last plague, upon King Pharaoh. God had warned and warned the king. He had sent light plagues and hurtful plagues, but the king would not change his mind. He still would not let the people of Israel leave the country to go and worship their God.

Because Pharaoh had not listened to God, the Lord sent a terrible judgment upon him and the Egyptian people. This time God did not make the people sick, or send some other disease upon the animals or the people, but God caused all the oldest children in the family to die. This means that there was someone who died in every Egyptian home. That is why everyone was crying. How awful that must have been. The same thing happened in every family from the

palace of the king to the poorest hut. In all of these homes the oldest child was dead. Even the oldest animals were found dead. The people cried bitterly, but it was too late. The king had not listened to Moses, so he and his people were punished.

But what about the people of Israel? Were their oldest children killed also?

No, they were not killed, as long as the fathers had done what God had told them to do.

What has God told them to do? He had told them that they had to pack up all of their belongings and to get ready to leave the country of Egypt. They were also to borrow lots of jewelry and other things from the Egyptians, and the Egyptians were very happy to give these things to the people of Israel, but I am sure they did not know why the Israelites wanted them. God also told the Israelites to do something special.

Each family was to take a lamb. It should not be just any lamb but a male lamb of one year old. It also had to be without blemish, that is, it could not have any deformity or any illness; it had to be perfect. This lamb served as an example of the Lord Jesus who was perfect in every way.

That last night the lamb had to be killed. The lamb had to be roasted and eaten, but something special had to be done with the blood. The people of Israel were to take the blood and spread it upon the two side posts and above the doors of their houses. When the angel of death passed by that night, he would not kill the oldest child when he saw the blood upon the two side posts and above the door.

Do you know why the Lord had the people do this? God had a reason. The blood pointed to the blood of the Lord Jesus. One day He too would die, and His blood would be shed. This was so that His people would be saved from death. Just as the lamb had to die, the Lord Jesus had to die to protect His people. We, too, are safe if we have been washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus.

The people of Egypt were now very much afraid of the people of Israel after their oldest child had been killed! "Go," they shouted, "please get out of our country!"

King Pharaoh was also glad to have the people leave, just as God said he would be. "Go," he said, "and take your children and everything you have. Just leave us before any other evil happens to us, but please bless me."

I am sure the people of Israel were happy to go. God told them to borrow more jewels of the Egyptians, and the Egyptians were happy to give them anything, just to get them out of the country. Then the children of Israel left. How happy they were to leave. They would never have to work for that cruel king again.

The people of Israel did not know this, but it would take many, many years before they would come unto their own country. That was because they would not listen and obey God. The children of Israel would grumble and complain and sin until God would also, at times, have to punish them. We will read more about that later.



Bible Quiz

Flowers

Dear Boys and Girls,

"Daddy, look!" Jeffrey triumphantly held his cupped hands up towards his dad. A green moth so large that he needed both little hands to hold it perched gently on his palms. It was enormous, and it was beautiful. On its leaf-green wings were detailed spots of brown that looked like owl's eyes. The moth could blend in perfectly with its surroundings and scare predators away as well. It was a Luna moth.

Dad held his hammer still for a moment and frowned deeply. "Jeff!" he scolded, "throw that away, hurry up! It could be poisonous!" Jeffrey's face fell, and he began to shake his head, but Dad was already swinging his hammer again. Sadly, Jeff placed the moth on a leaf of a nearby bush. As he did so, he noticed that the buds on the mountain laurel had unfolded, and all the little soft pink flowers



were cupped open to receive the fresh air, moisture, and sunshine. Jeffrey examined them closely. How beautiful they were. Each tiny flower had exactly five sides, and in its center was a perfect little star. From the star, dark pink lines spread out all around as though the star was bursting with little rays of light. On the underside of the flower, little knobs made it look almost like a teacup waiting to be filled. Jeffrey carefully picked a few. He held the blossoms gently in his cupped hand and hurried inside.

"Mom! Mom! I have something for you!" Jeffrey raced through the kitchen and burst into the family room. "Where are you, Mom?"



Mom was folding clothes. Big piles of clean laundry rose behind her on the couch. Jeffrey took her hand and gently poured the little blossoms into her palm.

“Flowers!” he said triumphantly. “For you. Make sure you put them in water, okay? Won’t that look nice on the table when Grandma comes for supper?”

Mom smiled and nodded. “Nice, Jeffrey,” she said absentmindedly, and Jeff skipped away. As soon as Mom saw his back disappear around the corner, she tossed the handful of blossoms into the bottom of the laundry basket. “I’ll put them in the garbage when he isn’t looking,” she said to herself. “They don’t even have stems. I can’t put those in a vase!” She pulled another shirt from the pile and sighed. She had not even noticed the intricate design in the tiny flowers. She had not seen at all how beautiful they actually were, no matter how small. They lay forgotten in the basket—just another thing to toss out when she had a minute. She had to hurry, or she wouldn’t finish in time to make supper.

Jeff was outside again, handing Dad nails as he worked on the fence. Meanwhile, he chattered on cheerfully. “Dad, aren’t the mountains so sunshine-y today? They look green over there, but they look kind of blue over there... And look, Dad, the sky has just one little bitty cloud in it, right above us. Do you see it? It looks like a little lost sheep, and Dad, is that an evergreen tree over there? It smells good, and it’s so tall and beautiful. Isn’t it?”

Dad grunted as he gave the stubborn nail a final whack. He wiped his brow and straightened his back. Looking up, he noticed the sky. Yes, there was just one small cloud, like a fluffy lamb. He stared at Jeffrey for a moment. When he was small like Jeffrey, he used to notice all those small, pretty things, too. What had happened? Why did he not notice them anymore? He looked at the fence rail and tossed his hammer onto the steps with a sigh. He was too busy to notice; he was always too much in a hurry. When was the last time he had realized the sky was such a bright blue and that the mountains changed color day by day? He took Jeffrey by the hand. “Mom and I should take you for a hike soon,” he said. “The work can wait for a bit.”

Boys and girls, perhaps last summer you had time to swing lazily in a hammock or lie flat on your back on a trampoline. You had time to notice the leaves, grass, flowers, and sky. However, maybe you also went on a vacation or took day trips, and you still remember vividly all the beautiful things you saw—trickling waterfalls, rocks with red and white sparkles, oddly shaped seashells, birds that whistled early in the morning, treefrogs with suction feet, blue-tailed salamanders, and small beetles with shimmering green backs. There is something for you to think about when you discover these things. First of all, remember who has made all these things, and marvel

at their beauty. How can we understand such wisdom and design, such beauty in the smallest things?

However, you must remember something else. When you are older, you will be busier. As you grow, you will notice these things less. When you are all grown up, you will often be too much in a hurry to care much about these things. Jeffrey’s parents were not trying to be cruel—they were overwhelmed with being busy. Do you know what this pictures? It is what happens to our heart. When you become older, your heart will also become harder. It will not notice so much the warnings in church. It will not see so much the necessity of being converted. It will be too occupied to seek God, and it will be too used to hearing that God’s children are a happy and blessed people to feel or need it. You will not realize that your best time to seek the Lord was when you were young, and you will think that perhaps some other day you will have time to seek Him. However, as the days and years roll by, your heart will remain harder and harder as you sit in church or hear God’s Word.

Do you know what is so important, boys and girls? Do not WAIT. Do not wait to listen to what the minister says in church until you think you will understand it better. Do not wait to pray often and ask the Lord to give you a true desire and prayer in your heart. Do not hasten from one fun thing to the next; do not spend all your thought wishing for things of this world or dreaming of what the future might hold for you. Seek the Lord NOW, while you are young!

If the Lord would change your heart and make it new, you would not only sometimes see God in the smallest objects and events, but you would also find all the things of this world below not as important anymore. No matter how prized and valued they would be by others, they would pale in comparison to the things of heaven.

For such people, the things of time might frighten them when they begin to occupy too much of a place in their heart, and after some time, they will beg the Lord to give them other desires again. Sometimes their eyes will be closed to the beauty of a good book or sermon or God’s Word, and it will feel dark, but the Lord will hear them, and when He knows it is the right time, they will see it again. If their eyes are ever given to “see the King in His beauty,” they will desire above all else the things from this King. Sometimes these people look back and say, “If the Lord had not begun to work in my heart then, when I was not yet as busy as I am now, perhaps I would now never think about it at all...”

Seek the Lord while you are young, boys and girls. Pay attention in church and ask the Lord if He will no longer let you harden your heart more and more. Ask Him to send an arrow into your heart. You are not too young for that!

* * * * *

Circle the correct answer.

1. "And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and _____ (white, open, small) flowers, within and without" (1 Kings).

2. "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the _____ (molting, feeding, singing) of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land" (Song of Solomon).

3. "The grass withereth, the flower _____ (fadeth, wilteth, bloometh): because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass" (Isaiah 40)

4. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the _____ (word, name, promise) of our God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40).

5. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the _____ (fields, gardens, valleys). As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons" (Song of Solomon).

6. "And upon the top of the pillars was _____ (rose, lily, crocus) work: so was the work of the pillars finished" (1 Kings).

7. "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his _____ (roots, leaves, flowers) as Lebanon" (Hosea 14).

8. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the _____ (flower, tree, rose)" (Isaiah).

9. "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they _____ (grow, look, begin); they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

10. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the _____ (pasture, hills, field), which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

For the Older Children

Place tiles in the correct order to form a verse.

11. "Woe to the cr
ich are on the head of the fat val
im, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, wh
own of pride, t o the drunk
leys of them that are overcome with wine!"
ards of Ephra

12. er of the grass he sh hat he i
"But the rich, in t ow: because as th e flow
all pass away." s made l

13. "For all flesh is as g
l the glory of man as the fl ached unto you."
hereth, and the flower thereof falleth a
rass, and al way: But the
word of the Lord endureth for ever. A
ower of grass. The gras
nd this is the word which by the gospel is pre
s wit

14. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a fl
no more." eth. For the
wind passeth over it, and it is g
one; and the place thereof shall know it
ower of the field, so he flourish

15. Look up Genesis 1:12 and Job 14:1,2. Both speak of flowers and plants. Which words speak of how plants were BEFORE the fall of man into sin, and which words speak of how it is AFTER sin entered the world? _____

For the Younger Children

Unscramble.

16. In Isaiah 18:5, the flower buds into _____ (urso rpages).

17. In Hosea 14:5, the blossom grows into a _____ (yill).

18. In 2 Chronicles 4:5, the rim of the molten basin or sea/bath was as a cup adorned with lily _____ (ofwires).

19. In James 1:11, the burning sun makes the flower _____ (lfal).

Answers to April's "Panting" quiz:

- 1-13. fear, faileth, commandments, brooks, land, glorious, strong, triumph, river, living, heart, thirsty, word
- 14. Psalters 114-118 and 416
- 15. My soul doth pant for Thee.



Letters to My Young Readers

Welcome to our new members:
 Karianna Schipper, Anthony Knibbe, Lindsey
 Muis, Gabe Post, Caleb van Koeveringe,
 Mason & McKenna Fluit, Bethany Sporte,
 and Brett & Kason Van Veldhuizen.

Love,
 Aunt LenaBeth



Karianna Schipper

Thanks for your letter, Karianna. Do you help in the greenhouse? What do you grow? Yes, I have three brothers, three sisters, four sons, and three daughters. Do you play with or help watch your nieces and nephews? Perhaps you have been home from school this past month. I hope you were able to learn from home. How thankful we should be that we may have our Bibles to read wherever we are. Do you read it?

Marielle Neels

Thanks for writing, Marielle. Have you learned Psalter 38 by heart? Have you learned any new ones since then? Psalter 38 speaks about the Law of God and how obedience to it can fill the heart with delight. The Law of God is often disobeyed, isn't it, and sometimes God's judgments come to stop us and we must think about this. There are so many beautiful psalters. I like your favorite ones. I'm not sure I have a favorite, but a few favorites of mine are 426, 382, and 387.

Please send your answers to the
 address shown below:

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

Answers to previous quizzes were received in February from:

Anabelle Berkenbush (2) 12
 William Berkenbush (2) 12
 Britni Blom 10
 Jenina Blom 9
 Lawrence Blom 4
 Marissa Blom 10
 Riley Blom 7
 Aidan Bosch (2) 4
 Hayley Bosch 10
 Nicholas Bouman (2) 3
 Stephanie Bouman 2
 Derek Brouwer (3) 11
 Thomas Brouwer (3) 11
 Kaylee Den Boer 2
 Cody Driesen (2) 10
 Kacie Driesen (2) 10
 Sam Driesen 8
 Toby Driesen (2) 10
 Kaylynn Ekema 10
 Weston Ekema (2) 8
 Mason Fluit 1
 McKenna Fluit 1
 Kate Hoogendoorn 2
 Derek Hup (2) 7
 Justin Hup (2) 7
 Lauren Kardu 1
 Alia Kelderman 9

Brendan Kelderman 5
 Anthony Knibbe 1
 Ashley Knibbe 12
 Courtney Knibbe 12
 Lindsey Knibbe 12
 Whitney Knibbe 12
 Marlisa Korevaar (4) 8
 Rebekah Korevaar (4) 8
 Rebecca Krygsman 10
 Sarah Krygsman 11
 Lydia Mol 10
 Madeline Mol 1
 Rachel Mol 6
 Teddy Mol 10
 Lindsey Muis 1
 Mariah Muis 2
 Marielle Neels 7
 Lauren Pannekoek 3
 Alec Post 5
 Gabe Post (2) 2
 Nicolas Post 4
 Sierra Post 4
 Andrew Remijn 7
 Lauren Remijn 4
 Rueben Rozeboom 2
 Samuel Rozeboom 4
 Jacob Ruissen 2

Kimberly Ruissen 2
 Levi Ruissen 2
 Mitchell Ruissen 2
 Ale Rus (2) 8
 Jessa Rus (2) 10
 Karianna Schipper 1
 Bethany Sporte (2) 2
 Esmee Sweetman 1
 Aaliyah Timmer 7
 Drake Timmer 8
 Ashton Timmermans 1
 Hendrick Van Deuveren 6
 Maurice Van Garderen 10
 Emmalyn Van Garderen 10
 Caleb Van Koeveringe 1
 Shantel Van Liere (3) 12
 Lydia Van Manen 13
 Rosalee Van Manen 10
 Brett Van Velthuisen 1
 Kason Van Velthuisen 1
 Alivia Vande Hoef 12
 Jake Vande Stouwe 7
 Jonah Vande Stouwe 7
 Esther Vanden Broek 8
 Ian Vanden Broek 8
 Treena Vanden Broek 8
 Austin Van Den Top (3) 5

Caleb Van Den Top 3
 Collin Van Den Top (2) 3
 AaneKors Versteeg (3) 4
 Tena Versteeg (3) 4
 Jonathan Wesdyk (2) 9
 Laura Wesdyk (2) 9
 Nathan Wesdyk (2) 6
 Rebekah Wesdyk (2) 9
 Arthur Wisse (2) 11
 Emily Wisse 1
 Joanna Wisse (2) 11
 Lane Wisse (2) 10
 Tonia Wisse (2) 11
 Allyson Ymker (2) 7
 Cameron Ymker (2) 11
 Heidi Ymker 10
 Payton Ymker 7
 Quentin Ymker 7
 No Name 1

**4 Bibles were earned and
 sent to Bolivia this month.
 The total is 131.**

News & Announcements

Church News

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Declined:

By Rev. H. Hofman of Kalamazoo, Michigan, to the congregation of Sunnyside, Washington.

By Rev. M.H. Schot of Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

By Rev. A.H. Verhoef of St. Catharines, Ontario, to the congregation of Drachten, the Netherlands.

Obituaries

CAZANDER, Johan Tjakko – Age 68, April 7, 2020; Chilliwack, British Columbia; Wife – Louise; Children – Trichelle & Dave Beeke, Tiffany & Dave Delooff, Brandon & Alex Cazander, Lindsey & Daniel Holstein; 6 grandchildren; 1 sister, 3 brothers and their spouses, and in-laws. (Rev. P. Van Ruitenber, Micah 7:18&19.)

KLARENBEEK, Gerrit – Age 80, March 28, 2020; Rock Valley, Iowa; Wife – Geneva; Children – Donna & Corwin Harthoorn, Pamela & Randall Kats, Theresa & David Koedam, Gary & Aletha Klarenbeek; 19 grandchildren, 33 great-grandchildren; Sisters – Jennie Keizer, Elizabeth Dokter and Anne Wielenga; Brother – Clarence & Mary Ann Klarenbeek; Sister-in-law – Adrianna Klarenbeek; predeceased by sisters Willemina & John Den Besten, Gertrude & William Koedam; brothers Ray & Dora, Dick & (Ann & Lillian), William, and Lane & Jenny Klarenbeek; brothers-in-law John Keizer, James Wielenga, Thomas Kooima and Gary Dokter. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Isaiah 38:1&2.)

LOEDEMAN, Aartje – Age 63, April 3, 2020; Picture Butte, Alberta; Husband – Aalt; Children – Alie, Stijnie, Rein & Lorraine, Herman & Nelly, Hanneke Vande Munt, Derek & Ariette de Leeuw, Gerrit & Paige; 31 grandchildren; extended family in the Netherlands; predeceased by her parents Aalt & Stijntje Smit, parents-in-law Rein & Aaltje Loedeman, and sister-in-law Hannie Vrolijk. (Rev. E.C. Adams, Job 1:20&21a.)

VAN GROUW, Samuel P., Sr. – Age 88, April 2, 2020; Wyckoff, New Jersey; Wife – Johanna (deceased); Children – Samuel P., Jr. & Janice, Paul & Carolyn, James (deceased) & Betty Jean, Steve & Pamela, Timothy & Marni; 20 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren; Brothers – Peter & Judith, Dr. Anthony & Janyce, Raymond

& Cheryl; predeceased by 3 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Psalm 1:6.)

WALLET, Joyce – Age 85, April 10, 2020; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Barend; Children – Ed Wallet, Ernie & Jacqueline Wallet, Gary & Rita Wallet, Wendy & Bart Veldhuizen; 11 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren; 2 sisters, 6 sisters-in-law, and 5 brothers-in-law; predeceased by 3 brothers, 4 sisters, 7 brothers-in-law, and 3 sisters-in-law. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Psalm 46:10a.)

In Memoriam

Mr. Samuel P. Van Grouw, Sr.

On April 2, 2020, it pleased the Lord to take Mr. Samuel P. Van Grouw, Sr., at the age of eighty-eight, from his family and our congregation. He served our congregation as a deacon faithfully and with the love of his heart from 1971-1974 and 1991-1996. May the Lord graciously remember the mourning family and the calling to the entire congregation of Franklin Lakes.

— The Franklin Lakes ENRC Consistory

New Book Available: *A Hand Stretched Out*

The Dorcas Guild of the Kalamazoo NRC has published a booklet titled *A Hand Stretched Out*. The book contains a number of chapters dealing with different types of suffering. Its contents include contributions by ministers, healthcare workers, and other members of our church community who participated in an evening hosted by the Dorcas Guild on the theme, "Bearing One Another's Burdens." It is suitable for all families in providing information as to how to approach and support those who may be suffering. The book is available for \$6.00 plus shipping. To order, email jblok57@gmail.com or call Mrs. Joan Blok at 269-569-3125. Please make checks payable to Dorcas Guild. Mail to: 9739 S. 10th Street, Schoolcraft, MI 49087.

Classis East Youth Conference June 26-27, 2020

The Classis East Youth Conference is scheduled for June 26-27, 2020, in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. All young people ages 16 and older

are welcome. We extend a special invitation to our older young adults. Separate activities are being planned for the older group. More details to follow.

Young Adult/Post High School Youth Camp—Northern Michigan August 13-15, 2020

A three-day, two-night trip to northern Michigan is being planned by the Kalamazoo Young Adult Committee under the oversight of the Kalamazoo NRC consistory. We are planning to stay in a beautiful lodge located in Boyne Falls, Michigan. On Friday, we plan to drive to Mackinaw City and take a ferry across to the scenic Mackinac Island. We hope to provide meaningful topics and discussions. For further information please contact Mrs. Konnie Kleppe at konniekleppe@hotmail.com or call 269-375-9504. You can also find information and sign up for this camp at www.KalamazooRetreats.org. The password to enter the site is: conference.

50th Wedding Anniversary

On April 10, 2020, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Rev. & Mrs. G.M. de Leeuw

commemorated their
50th wedding anniversary.

May the Lord remember and be near and dear to them, providing all things necessary both personally and officially in the climbing of the years (Psalm 91).

2339 Deer Trail Drive N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

60th Wedding Anniversary

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

Carl & Adrianna Koudys

hope to commemorate their
60th wedding anniversary
on May 5, 2020.

It is our wish and prayer that the Lord who has provided for them in the past may also care for them in the future.

"Shew me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths" (Psalm 25:4).

11 Lorraine Ave.
Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4Z9

Education

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2020-2021 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 further oversight by the consistory. May this position and our need be bound upon someone's heart to come over and help us. Any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail, rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY

ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED

The School Administrator will strive to direct the school according to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, the Constitution of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School, the policies of the NRC School Board, and the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Education.

The primary duty of the Administrator is to maintain productive relations with:

- School Board—Provide policy proposals and research relevant to total school operations, execute decisions made by the Board, and report to the Board on a regular basis.
- Students—Establish and maintain a healthy school atmosphere of love, respect, and academic learning. Oversee student enrollment and registration according to the admission policy and lead periodic school devotional periods.
- Faculty and Staff—Interview and recommend the hiring of new faculty and staff, help with coordinating wages and work assignments, inspect lesson plans. Evaluate teacher and staff performance, provide professional development opportunities, and attempt to resolve work problems or difficulties as they arise.
- Parents and Community—Direct a program for keeping all community members informed about school operations, co-ordinate handbook updates, and keep an open line for communication with the school community. Prepare a state-of-the-school report to be presented at the annual association meeting.

The successful candidate should have the following qualifications:

- A strong desire to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the students;
- A clear vision of the purpose of Christian education and a desire to see it maintained in our present day;
- Be a male NRC member in good standing with a solid knowledge of the Scriptures and Reformed doctrines;

- Have a bachelor's degree or higher in Education with a willingness to consider additional education as necessary;
- Be willing to travel as necessary for educational conferences;
- Have good written and verbal communication skills and the ability to relate to people in all social capacities.

For more information, or to apply for this position, please email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org, contact John Van Der Brink at 973-628-7400, or contact Tim Mol at 973-204-5677.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is looking to fill openings for the 2020-2021 school year. We have openings in grades 7-12: math and/or science, English/language arts, literature, church history (grade 8-9), and part-time computer technology.

Some of these positions could be combined depending upon qualifications and experience. We are also seeking a music teacher to begin at any time. The focus of this position would be instrumental (grades 5-12 band/orchestra) along with other opportunities in K-12 music.

Please contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breur, at 712-476-2821 or danbreur@nrcsia.org for further information. Visit www.nrcsia.org to learn more about our school. Log in to the main site by registering as a new user and wait for approval.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, are accepting applications for possible openings in the elementary and high school for the 2020-2021 school year. Interested K-6 applicants should send or email their resumés and/or questions to Mr. Nathan Bleeker, nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us. Interested 7-12 applicants should send or email their resumés and/or questions to Mr. James Bazen, jbazen@plymouthchristian.us.

PONATAHI CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NEW ZEALAND, is an NRCEA school seeking applications for a secondary English teacher with one or more supporting subjects such as Physical Education or Home Economics. The English position could be a beginner teacher. The starting date for the position is negotiable and we would not expect any teacher to leave their current school before the end of the current school year. All teachers in New Zealand must be qualified. We would be hoping for a minimum commitment of two years. For more information, please contact principal@ponatahischool.nz.

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 currently accepting applications to fill several elementary and secondary teaching positions for the 2020-2021 school year. Secondary openings especially include the subject areas of mathematics, humanities, and the industrial arts. In addition to welcoming applications from certified teachers, those with a bachelor's degree interested in our teaching training program are also encouraged to apply. Our program allows for a blend of paid teaching together with — support and training. Inquiries are welcome! We are also accepting applications for para-educator positions in the Special Education department. Visit us at www.rcsnorwich.com for more detailed information or contact the director, Mr. John Heikoop, at director@rcsnorwich.com or 519-863-2403 ext. 223. Please submit cover letters and resumes to hr@rcsnorwich.com.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is seeking British Columbia certifiable teachers who are interested in joining us in a motivating and exciting learning environment. We have implemented an interesting new curriculum that focuses on knowing, doing, and understanding while including self assessment strategies for learners. Teaching this curriculum through a Christian worldview requires teachers who thrive in a dynamic educational environment. We are seeking applications at all levels of interest from Kindergarten through Secondary as well as in a variety of electives from IT to Business and Physical Education. The teachers at Timothy Christian School are excited about teaching and have a particular love for the hearts of young people. If you are such a teacher and are a member of the NRC or a conservative Reformed denomination, please apply to join our team. For certification requirements and more information, and/or an application form regarding the above positions, please do not hesitate to contact either the principal, Mr. Doug Stam, at 604-794-7114 or dstam@timothychristian.ca, or the school board president, Mr. Wim Neels, at 604-858-8834) or wimneels@timothychristian.ca.

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!**



Contemporary Issues

The Lord Is Speaking

Rev. J. Witvoet, Rock Valley, IA

(Taken from the March 23, 2020, Rock Valley NRC bulletin)

“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations He hath made in the earth” (Psalm 46:8).

The psalmist in our text calls us to “Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.” Day by day, more things are grinding to a halt in our powerful nation. Shopping malls, stadiums, subways, restaurants, and thousands of other businesses are desolate. Even the streets and the skies that just days ago were packed with auto and airplane traffic are desolate. Also, for the second Lord’s Day in a row we are confined to our homes, and the sanctuaries of thousands of churches will likewise be desolate. In contrast, what commotion in the hospitals and morgues of our major cities as the Lord brings desolations upon the earth. The Lord is speaking!

Thankfully, as far we know at the time of writing this, there is no one among us or within the denomination that has contracted the coronavirus. In our sister denomination in the Netherlands, we were informed that one of the ministers, Rev. Verschuure, had been diagnosed and subsequently ended up in the hospital for a few days, becoming very ill. He has since returned home and continues to recover and strengthen. May the Lord spare us in the week ahead.

No doubt many of us, like so many millions across the nation and world, have been carefully following the countless news reports and developments from morning till evening concerning the ongoing pandemic and spread of the coronavirus. We are busy tracing the cases, the deaths, and the ages of the stricken. Perhaps we are even analyzing every symptom that manifests itself in our own bodies. Furthermore, what concerns there are surrounding the economic fallout from all of this. Indeed, how tuned in we have all become to these desolations. The Lord is speaking!

Oh, my friends, if we could only be so concerned about our spiritual state and condition, our own desolate circumstances! Are we a stranger to grace? Then we are without God upon this earth. Ah, what desolation!

Have we learned the cause of this desolation? We have separated ourselves from the LORD. Are there such who have learned to mourn over their desolate circumstances? Oh, blessed people who have learned these things by the convincing operation of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed are those people who may learn of the only Refuge and Strength and the very present Help in time of trouble. The Lord Jesus was left desolate; all forsook Him and fled as the angry billows of the Father’s wrath and justice broke over His soul for such guilty ones. And... the Lord was silent!

Today, as in the week before, we are still permitted to meet with a few consistory members in the church basement, as the rest of us do so in our homes to hear of these things in the Passion season. The proclamation of Law and Gospel may still go forth in the midst of all that has stopped, in the midst of all the desolation. How good the Lord is that His Word may still continue! May it please the Lord to bless the means He has provided in these times to our eternal welfare.

Congregation, what desolations must the Lord make for us to hear? May the Lord give a true stopping and beholding. “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord is speaking!

Your friend and minister,
Rev. J. Witvoet

■ ■ 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.**

Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

Jesus, our triumphant Head,
Risen victorious from the dead,
To the realms of glory gone,
To ascend His rightful throne.

[Heaven its King congratulates;
Opens wide her golden gates;
Angels songs of victory sing;
All the blissful regions ring.]

Cherubs on the Conqueror gaze;
Seraphs glow with brighter blaze;
Each bright order of the sky
Hails Him as He passes by.

Sinners, join the heavenly powers,
For redemption all is ours;
None but burdened sinners prove
Blood-bought pardon, dying love.

[Saints the glorious triumph meet,
See their enemies at His feet!
By His scars His toils are viewed,
And His garments rolled in blood.]

Hail, Thou dear, Thou worthy Lord;
Holy Lamb, incarnate Word!
Hail, Thou suffering Son of God!
Take the trophies of Thy blood.

— From *Gadsby's Hymns*