

Insight Into



May / June 2022

“He hath made every thing beautiful in His time” (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

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Insight Into

General Information

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MEDITATION

The Great Difference Between Saul and David

“And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me”

(Psalm 51:11b).

Rev. E. Venema (1922-2003)

We so often forget that David had a great sorrow after God. Then he was small before God, and in his smallness, his soul speaks so nobly. In that prayer, you see: *“And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”* Thus David has previously known the workings of the Spirit; therefore, he prays so earnestly. Yes, if you read thoughtfully, he never lost that Spirit. Otherwise, he could not have prayed this prayer, for it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

So the question comes to you and me whether we also know of these workings of the Spirit. Of that true sorrow after God, that crying and weeping at the throne of grace. Something must be learned of that in this life. Perhaps you are still a stranger to it; oh, that it would yet quicken a holy jealousy in you, to learn to pray as David. Perhaps you think that you are not a stranger of it. Do not deceive yourself, for Saul also knew of the common workings of the Spirit. He could pray so movingly, yes, he could confess his guilt so honestly. And yet, it became evident at the end of his life that he missed the true work of the Spirit. The prayer never arose in his heart: *“And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”* Here, David may bow under the knowledge of God, while Saul ended up at the witch of Endor.

It is so necessary to examine ourselves, for we are on a journey to an all-decisive eternity. You know how David, after he confessed his guilt, was also privileged to know his guilt was forgiven. How graciously the Lord had mercy upon His child.

The more the Lord forgives, the smaller David becomes, and the more the prayer is heard: *“And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”* Here, Saul and David stand next to one another; the one is not better than the other. Yet, what David knew was a strange matter for Saul. Here shines God’s faithful care and eternal love in Christ. Therefore, that Spirit cannot be taken away from David, for Christ has prayed that his faith would not fail. He is graven in the palms of His hands.

“God is the highest good of the reasonable creature. The enjoyment of Him is our proper; and is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Better than fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of any, or all earthly friends. These are but shadows; but the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the Fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.”

~ Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*“Faint not, poor soul, in God still trust;
Fear not the things thou suffer must;
For, whom He loves He doth chastise,
And then all tears wipes from their eyes.”*

~ William Bradford (1590-1657)

"Almost"

Rev. M. Romeyn (1913-1971)

The word “almost” was said by King Agrippa to Paul in Acts 26:28: *“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”* This King Agrippa was the son of Herod III, who died a very sad death. In Acts 12:23, we read about his death: *“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms; and gave up the ghost.”* The king who said “almost” to Paul was also King Herod IV. His surname is mentioned (Agrippa). King Agrippa was very much favoured by Caesar Nero. He became ruler of Judea in later years. He united himself with Titus, the general of the Roman army and helped him take and destroy Jerusalem. He died at the age of about 70 years. Festus, who is mentioned in this chapter, was appointed by Caesar Nero to be the governor of Judea.

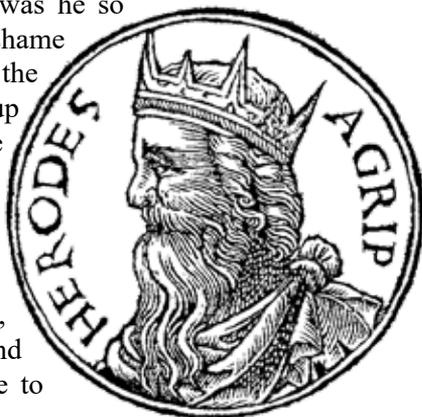
Festus spoke about the Apostle Paul and his appeal to the Caesar of Rome. King Agrippa was interested to see Paul and said to Festus, “I would also like to hear the man myself.” Paul himself was very willing to give an account of his faith and his past experiences. He also used this fine opportunity to preach the gospel to those who were placed and appointed to be the rulers of the country. Paul, at this time, was a prisoner for the sake of the gospel. We do know that Paul was blessed with much light and spiritual wisdom, and he was also a powerful speaker. Not that everything Paul said was understood; that which was so clear to the apostle was very complicated for Festus and Agrippa. The truth written in 1 Corinthians 2:14 was proven: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* So the gospel sounded to Festus; and he said, *“Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad”* (Acts 26:24).

If Festus cannot understand the apostle, he does not blame himself, but the Apostle Paul. If Festus’ mind is not receptive for the gospel, he accuses Paul of a confused mind. Indeed, Festus is ignorant, but he wants to hide his lack of knowledge by mockery. This is his only defense, and it is also the defense of the world. The reason is that Festus loved darkness rather

than light. The root of mockery is unruly, unwilling disobedience. This is repeated time and again. The people of Israel finally said about John the Baptist: *“He hath a devil”* (John 10:20). Festus is an example of brute unbelief. He is not so much against Paul, but he is against his preaching. He does not think that Paul is a criminal, not bad, but mad. King Agrippa is a different person than Festus. Agrippa has some historical knowledge about the Old Testament. Paul did not preach anything new. We observe that Paul said, *“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest”* (Acts 26:27).

Young friends, Paul did not say, “Agrippa, thou believest not,” but he acknowledged that he had some historical faith. Paul preached to Agrippa with the purpose to lead this king to the King of kings. He preached in the commission of an ambassador *“for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). The Messiah of Israel was preached openly and very clearly to Agrippa. What shall be the outcome of Paul’s preaching? What shall the answer be to Paul, or how shall the call of Christ to Agrippa be answered? The preaching of Paul was not altogether without effect, but not enough to break his heart. The answer? *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”* Here we see the attitude of both Herods toward the gospel. Not for it and not so much against it. The outwardly calling came to Herod Agrippa too; very likely his conscience was touched, but there was no regeneration, and if not, there will be no conversion. Agrippa is not far from the kingdom of God. What is the reason that the preaching of the apostle was not profitable to the soul of Agrippa? We know it is the election from eternity. No, young friends, nobody will ever become a true Christian by his own wisdom or desire. It is and it remains only free grace.

Agrippa can never say, “I did not know the way,” but he did not walk in the way preached to him. Why was he so against becoming a Christian? The shame of the cross of Christ? The loss of the friendship of the world? To give up and forsake the world, and to be counted with Paul? He probably was willing to become a Christian if he could remain King Agrippa, with everything connected to it. Agrippa wanted to gain and not to lose. Oh, how sad; the gospel of peace and pardon preached with so much love to



Agrippa and passed up for the world. The sorrow after the world worketh death. Young friends, this history is not written in the Bible only to satisfy our curiosity, but it must be a lesson for us. Festus and Agrippa were not so much against him, but they were not with him. It is a blessing if we do not have the heart of a Festus. Agrippa was almost a Christian; what are we, who are provided with the means of salvation? Oh, may the Lord protect us not to be a Festus, but how sad it would be if we would be an Agrippa and say almost a Christian. Let our prayer be, Lord bless the truth to my heart and grant me Thy Spirit that I am not only almost a Christian, but by grace a Christian indeed that may join the Apostle Paul and be saved by grace.

QUESTIONS

1. How did Herod III die?
2. When did Agrippa unite with Titus?
3. Who was Festus?
4. What was the attitude of Festus?
5. What was the attitude of Agrippa?
6. What was the purpose of Paul?
7. What must happen to become a Christian indeed?
8. What would be very sad for us?

“To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared”
(Titus 3:2-4).

We would be wise to follow that, for we never know what harm we might initiate upon some poor soul that is already discouraged about life. Look at what company “evil speaking” keeps in Ephesians 4:31-32, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Five Promises from Isaiah



“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

Rev. P. van Ruitenburch

The prophet Isaiah knew what encouragement was. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he let God speak. The people did not have to fear and feel dismayed or astonished. Surely Jerusalem would be taken, the people would be brought to Babylon, and the temple would be destroyed, but that was no reason to be so upset! Isaiah gave two ordinances and five reasons why they should not be afraid. The two ordinances are fear not and be not dismayed or astonished. The five reasons why Israel should take courage in spite of the exile are: I am with you; I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; and I will support you with the right hand of My justice. So we read the impressive word “I” five times. The comfort that Isaiah preached was based on these five pillars.

So Isaiah is talking about a very different kind of courage than the world. The people should not just be brave, not just think positively, not rely on their own strength, and not get themselves out of trouble. Isaiah gave a very different message, one that is still important today. In modern psychology, you have to develop yourself and stand on your own two feet. According to God’s Word, you receive courage by depending and leaning on God. That kind of courage is available in a way of repentance and faith. Guilt, the work of God’s Spirit, and self-knowledge is all part of that. Let us seek true comfort and courage in God! The Lord created all things, the Lord reigns, the Lord is Judge, and the Lord is Covenant God. That is precisely why we cannot do without Him and reconciliation with God is the first and foremost. Again, don’t fall into the hands of modern psychology which builds your ego. It’s about whether God is with us, strengthening us.

Dear friends, consider the “I” statements of Christ: *“I am the Door”* (John 10:7); *“I am the Vine”* (John 15:5); *“I am the Way, I am the Truth, I am the Life”* (John 14:6); *“I am the Resurrection”* (John 11:25); *“I am the Good Shepherd”* (John 10:11). When He was baptized, God the Father said: *“Hear Him”* (Luke 9:35).

“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:13-14).



“Study to be Quiet, and to do Your Own Business”

***“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business,
and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”***

(1 Thessalonians 4:11).

Rev. H. D. den Hollander

The Lord here says that every person has his *“own business.”* The term refers to things that belong to ourselves, as opposed to belonging to others. We read of this principle more often in God’s Word. God Himself brings each person into this world and gives each one their own place, as He sees fit. The Lord Jesus said that *“from the beginning ... God made them male and female”* (Mark 10:6). He also brought Adam his wife and placed them in the Garden of Eden. We read that the LORD was *“intreated”* of Isaac, and Rebekah his wife conceived. Thus, the Lord Himself gives some persons the place of parents and withholds it from others. He gives each child his own parents. These they do not choose themselves. Mighty King Nebuchadnezzar had to learn by experience that *“the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”* (Daniel 4:17), even as Asaph sang, *“God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another”* (Psalm 75:7).

How unthankful we are when we are dissatisfied with the way the Lord has made us. In our days, some boys wish they were a girl, while some girls wish they were a boy. How dissatisfied we can be with our occupation or the place the Lord has given us in society. We wish to be among the rich in this world, when the Lord has given us a place among the poor. We strive for positions of honour or power which the Lord has withheld from us and given to others. Not all striving is evil, but it is very sinful if we do not wish to submit ourselves to the Lord’s will for us.

At the same time, in whatever relation or station the Lord places us for this short journey here below, we must *seek* “to do our own business,” *that is*, the business which belongs to that relation or position entrusted

to us from the Lord. Joseph did this faithfully, both in the prison and on the throne. Every relation or station in life has a certain “business” attached to it; that is, certain “duties” or “obligations.” The Lord Jesus told a parable about servants who received “talents” according to the good pleasure of their master. Each of these servants were accountable for the talent(s) he received. They did not have to answer for the talents given to another servant, but only for the ones they received themselves, whether many or few.

Thus, every relation and station in this life has a certain “business,” or certain obligations or duties connected to it. A child is duty-bound to obey his parents; a servant his master. For this each will be required to give an account to God, who placed them in this relation. Parents will be asked of the Lord how they have fulfilled their parental duties. Parents will not answer for children; children will not answer for parents. Likewise, teachers will not answer for students; students will not answer for teachers. Magistrates will give account for how they have governed; citizens for how they have submitted to their government. Husbands will be asked whether they have fulfilled *their* obligations; wives *their* obligations. Each have been created and given their place in this world by the Lord, and will be asked, whether they have “done their own business.” Christ Himself said, “*Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?*” (Luke 2:49). In the fulfillment of His Offices here below, He refrained from entering into the “business” of Caesar or a divider of inheritances.

Young people, the journey of life here below is shorter than we often believe in our youth. Each one of you has already been placed by the Lord in your individual circumstances. Are you thankful to the Lord for those circumstances, whatever they are? Or do you think the Lord has done it wrong in your life? It is natural that you are also concerned about many things regarding the future. Will I marry? What will I do for my occupation? These are important questions. I hope you may bow your knees and not take these steps without the Lord. Yet, they are not the most important things. In whatever place the Lord gives you in this world, you must seek to “*do your own business,*” “*studying to be quiet, working with your own hands.*” The world around us is far from this “quietness” in these times, but this is not the order which the Lord requires us to walk in upon the earth, and which He blesses. Citizens have duties to speak, and edify, but not rebel. If the Lord calls us to suffer, He will one day ask us

whether we have submitted to that, as it belonged to “our business.” Our responsibility is for the obligations He has placed upon *us*, not for what He has placed upon *others*. It is sinful of us to interfere with the obligations of others, such as persons in authority over us, for which they must personally give an account to the Lord. As well, the Lord Himself is King, and brings about His Own decrees, gathering His Church and directing all things according to His Own good pleasure through the stations He has placed each person in. This is His “business,” not ours. May the Lord grant you a “quiet” life in the station He places you, that while fulfilling your own obligations here below, you may seek and find Him for the greater needs of your never-dying soul.

“By the light of nature, we see God as a God above us; by the light of the law, we see Him as a God against us; but by the light of the gospel, we see Him as Emmanuel, God with us.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have an abundance.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“Religion is what keeps a nation from chaos - from falling asunder like uncemented sand.”

~ Rev. Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

“That religion is suspicious which is full of faction and discord.”

~ Rev. Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

Praying and Giving Thanks



Sadly, there are those in our family who pray and give thanks before eating but do not give thanks after eating. They look to the Lord Jesus, who would have done the same with the feeding of the five thousand.

Rev. B. Labee

Praying and giving thanks

Eating without praying is, as Martin Luther (1483-1546) so aptly put it, like those pigs who eat the acorns under the tree, but don't look up to where those acorns come from. According to the Holy Scriptures, prayer is always connected with thanks. Indeed, we read that when the Saviour feeds the five thousand men (not counting women and children), "*He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude*" (Matthew 14:19). With that blessing, our fathers write in the marginal note (16): "The Greek word sometimes means giving thanks, but here it is to be taken for blessing, which is accompanied by thanksgiving, as can be seen in Luke 9:16, which blessing has come through a special prayer, that these loaves may prosper to the satisfaction of all."

With the bread in His hand, Christ looks up to heaven. In acknowledgment to His Father for the gift of the bread, He may command the blessing upon it. Thus we must acknowledge the Lord for His good gifts and ask for His blessing on the food before we begin a meal.

Giving thanks and praying

That we also thank the Lord after eating is so self-evident that it does not actually need to be proven. At the same time, people in previous centuries have also wanted to omit this. We are happy to pass on an old story. In the nineteenth century, some people who lived in Amsterdam had domestic workers. A wealthy couple with staff also lived there at the time. That staff included a seamstress, not very old yet, but according to the employer,

somewhat old-fashioned.

When the lady once entered the kitchen as the staff was about to begin their meal, she saw that the seamstress was praying. She asked if she also gave thanks after dinner. The girl replied that she did. The lady really couldn't understand that. Yet she was interested and so she sometimes "coincidentally" came in just when the meal was beginning or when it was finished. One day she said, "Miss, I don't understand your praying." The girl looked at her and said, "But Madam, I don't understand why you don't pray." She hadn't expected that reaction and she replied, "Isn't that too obvious? But you work for it, right? Why then do you have to pray and give thanks for it?"

Now, at the end of the week, Madam always paid her staff their weekly wages. When it was the seamstress' turn, she pocketed the money, saluted, and was about to walk out the door. That was too much for Madam. Indignantly, she called her back. Did she sometimes not think to say, "thank you"? The seamstress looked at her. No, she wouldn't have wanted to be rude. But Madam had said there was no need to pray and give thanks if you had worked for it. As for praying and giving thanks to God, she would not fail to do that, but as far as Madam was concerned, then it was all right, wasn't it? Madam didn't know what to say.

The Lord grant that we may thank Him for His gifts and pray for whatever else we need as we continue our life's journey. Moses so plainly taught the people of Israel, "*When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God*" (Deuteronomy 8:10).

~ Translated, with editing, from *De Saambinder*

"[Concerning the Word preached:] Do we prize it in our judgments? Do we receive it into our hearts? Do we fear the loss of the Word preached more than the loss of peace and trade? Is it the removal of the ark that troubles us? Again, do we attend to the Word with reverential devotion? When the judge is giving the charge on the bench, all attend. When the Word is preached, the great God is giving us His charge. Do we listen to it as to a matter of life and death? This is a good sign that we love the Word."

~ Rev. Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

My Son, my Daughter, do you Pray?



Insight Into Editors

The following account is that of a preacher who had no money and therefore no food to feed his starving children, and **therefore he prayed**. He said: “Work was now very bad, and provisions immensely dear. We had three small children and had lost one about six months before. One circumstance that occurred about this time I think I shall never forget. Here was a gloomy scene, not a morsel of food for husband, wife, or child; the wife, too, with an infant at her breast. If ever I prayed in my life, I did that night. I prayed that the Lord would take away our appetite and send us to bed satisfied. And, I believe, the Lord heard my cry, for the poor children wanted to go to bed, and said not one word about anything to eat, for which I felt thankful.

But my trouble was about the morning, for I could not leave the morrow to take care for the things of itself. I rose very early the following morning, and worked until I was obliged to leave the loom, and could scarcely walk or stand, I was so weak and faint. My poor wife, who was as weak and sickly as I, burst into tears, and cried, “Oh, what shall we do? I cannot live; I am sure we shall die of want!” and I was sunk so low both in body and mind, that I verily believed it would be the case. But what put the finishing touch to my feelings was that my eldest child, who was about five years of age, looked up to me with tears running down its little cheeks, and cried, “Father, give me some bread; oh, my father, do give me some bread.” I thought my soul would have burst with grief. “Oh,” cried I, “are my children to die of want before my face, and I cannot help them?” I ran into a little place under the cellar stairs, fell on my knees before God, and entreated the Lord with all my soul, to take away my life. “O Lord, do take away my life; let me die; how can I behold the death of my wife and children?”

Did God leave this preacher and not rescue him in his time of need? He continued: “Whilst I was upon my knees, entreating God to take away my life, these words came with great power and force into my mind: *“And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full”* (Matthew 14:20). And it was repeated again, *“And they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.”* I did all I could to put it away. “What,” said I, “can it have to do with me in our situation? It has nothing to do with me.” I kept crying for some time, but the whole connection came so powerfully to my mind, how the Lord had fed five thousand in the wilderness with five loaves and two fishes, and they were all filled. Well, thought I, He is as able to feed us now with fish and bread as He was then. That precious text flowed into my soul with such light, life, liberty, power, and glory: *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”* (Hebrews 13:8), and my soul was so refreshed, and my faith so strengthened by it, that I was as sure that we should have a supply as that there was a God.

I arose off my knees as strong as a giant in mind and body, and I told my wife that the Lord would most certainly send us something to eat, and very soon. She wanted to know how and when. “It does not matter,” said I, “about the how nor the when; I know it will be the case, and my soul can bless God for it before it comes.”

Just upon the back of this, a man knocked at the door, and I went and opened it to him. He was a gentlemen’s servant. “John,” said he, “my master has bought some herrings to give to his factory people. I had no orders to leave you any, but I thought as I came along that I would leave you twelve, if you like to accept them.” I was so overpowered that I could scarcely speak to the man. The goodness, mercy, and kindness of my dear Lord shone so brightly that I was quite lost in wonder. Whilst I was still wondering and admiring the goodness of God to a worthless worm, a neighbour sent two cakes of bread. I thought my very soul would have burst through my poor body, and taken its flight into glory unto my dear Jesus. I withdrew into the little palace under the cellar steps, the very place in which, a few hours before, I had begged God to take away my life. And oh, what a heavenly palace it was.

After thanking my God, some of the fish were soon ready, and we sat

down at the table all crying together. “Come, my dears,” said I, “we are now dining on the same food as Jesus and the five thousand dined on in the wilderness: and I do believe in my very soul that Jesus sat with us at the table. Oh, the sweetness of that fish and bread!”

The following is a summary of the topic of **prayer** by Rev. Wilhelmus ‘A Brakel. God is a prayer-giving and a prayer-answering God. According to Rev. ‘A Brakel, prayer was the evidence of true religion in the early world. *“Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD”* (Genesis 4:26). Prayer has many synonyms, each expressing another aspect: supplication, complaint, crying, and worship.

1). In Scripture, prayer is seen in **worship**. This occurs as one reverently bows before the Lord, rendering Him honour and glory considering His attributes. The psalmist does this again and again: *“Speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works”* (Psalm 145:5).

2). Prayer is to **request** something from God for some need of our body or soul. Has He not promised, *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee”* (Psalm 50:15)?

3). Prayer is **supplication**. When a soul is humbled and yet preserves in prayer, they are supplication with David: *“Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto Thee”* (Psalm 28:2).

4). Prayer is **groaning**. Often our needs cannot be put into words. There are no words for our deepest needs and pains, but such must groan to the only Helper, *“Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee”* (Psalm 38:9).

5). Prayer may be made in **public** when the congregation calls upon God with those found in Acts 12:5: *“Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”*

6). Prayer may be in **private**. We must bring our particular needs to God.

a). We find in Scripture those who brought an instantaneous need in the midst of their daily calling. Nehemiah sent up an urgent cry to God as he spoke to the king.

b). Prayers at set times through the day. David desired to pray at morning, noon, and in the evening as he expressed in Psalm 55:17: *“Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice.”*

7). Prayer is **intercession** when we seek God’s help for someone else. Paul entreated the church, “*Brethren, pray for us,*” in 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 25.

Young people, do you pray? Prayer is as essential as breathing. We cannot live unless we breathe, and neither can we prosper except we pray. God has commanded all men to pray and not to faint (Luke 18:1). However, above all, it is most important to be comprehended in the high-priestly prayers of the Lord Jesus. Peter, in the midst of all his temptations, was prayed for by Jesus. We live in a world of temptation and sin; should we not cry for the greatest blessing?

“The happiness promised us in Christ does not consist in outward advantages -- such as leading a joyous and peaceful life, having rich possessions, being safe from all harm, and abounding with delights such as the flesh commonly longs after. No, our happiness belongs to the heavenly life!”

~ John Calvin (1509-1564)

“The world and you must part, or Christ and you will never meet.”

~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

The Marketplace of Free Grace

Rev. J. Koster

Every one of us, also children, has likely visited a marketplace. We can distinguish various markets. The merchants display their wares at the market and recommend them to persuade the people to buy their goods. Probably we have all heard and seen this. But now we speak about the market of free grace. Where is, spiritually speaking, the marketplace? Very simple, that is the church. Those are the institutions which the Lord has granted us and still left unto us. Already in the Old Testament the Lord gave this marketplace. Then we think of the service of the tabernacle in the wilderness. When the people of Israel came in the land of Canaan, the Lord chose especially Mount Zion as a marketplace. Here the temple had to be built and the service of the Lord maintained. Also in the synagogues and elsewhere was the marketplace of free grace. I think of the place where Paul preached for the first time in Europe. There it was the marketplace by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made.

We may be glad that the Lord still has a marketplace in many locations. Also here. This marketplace is open for rich and poor, for those who have a high place, and for those who occupy a low place in society. In Psalm 49, we sing: “All of high and low degree, rich and poor, give heed to Me” (Psalter 135, stanza 1). This marketplace is open for young and old. Can we be too young or too small to be allowed in that marketplace? No, just listen! When Jesus was on earth, several parents went with their children to this marketplace to have them blessed by Him. The disciples said to those parents: “You should not come to the marketplace with

those children. They are too small. The Lord cannot be busy with them.” But the Lord heard it and taught the disciples a lesson. He said, “*Suffer little children and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 19:14). There are yet children, who must be converted. Also children must receive a new heart. So, boys and girls, you also may come to this marketplace. Do try to go there many times in your young life. This marketplace is also open for our older youth. They may come there as well, for the Lord testifies, “*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Young people, do visit that marketplace often, as long as it is still possible. The Lord testifies, “*My son [My daughter], give Me thine heart*” (Proverbs 23:26). Those are the sounds which are heard at that market.

The marketplace is also open for the older people. In our thoughts we see that old Simeon coming on the marketplace; he was brought there by God’s Spirit. This was Simeon, whose faith had been so tried. He had received a promise of God, but not yet the fulfilment. When it was God’s time, He brings Simeon to the marketplace through the ministry of His Spirit. And Simeon was privileged to buy there! Behold him standing in the temple with the Child in his arms. He had bought, he had enough. “*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation*” (Luke 2:29-30). What a wonder that there are still more people who come to this marketplace. I cannot mention them all, of course. But I am thinking about the Canaanitish woman, who came from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon to the marketplace. There we hear her calling, “*Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil*” (Matthew 15:22). That was a mother with her child at the marketplace of free grace. Fathers and mothers, do come often with your children to the marketplace. We think of Jairus. He also had such a daughter, with whom he was given to flee to the marketplace.

The Lord grant us to make our way often to that market. We do not stay home, do we, when the market is open? When the church doors are open and we remain at home, then we indicate by this that we are satisfied with whatever is outside that market. Do we then need nothing at all?