

the **Banner** *of Truth*

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Deadly Decree

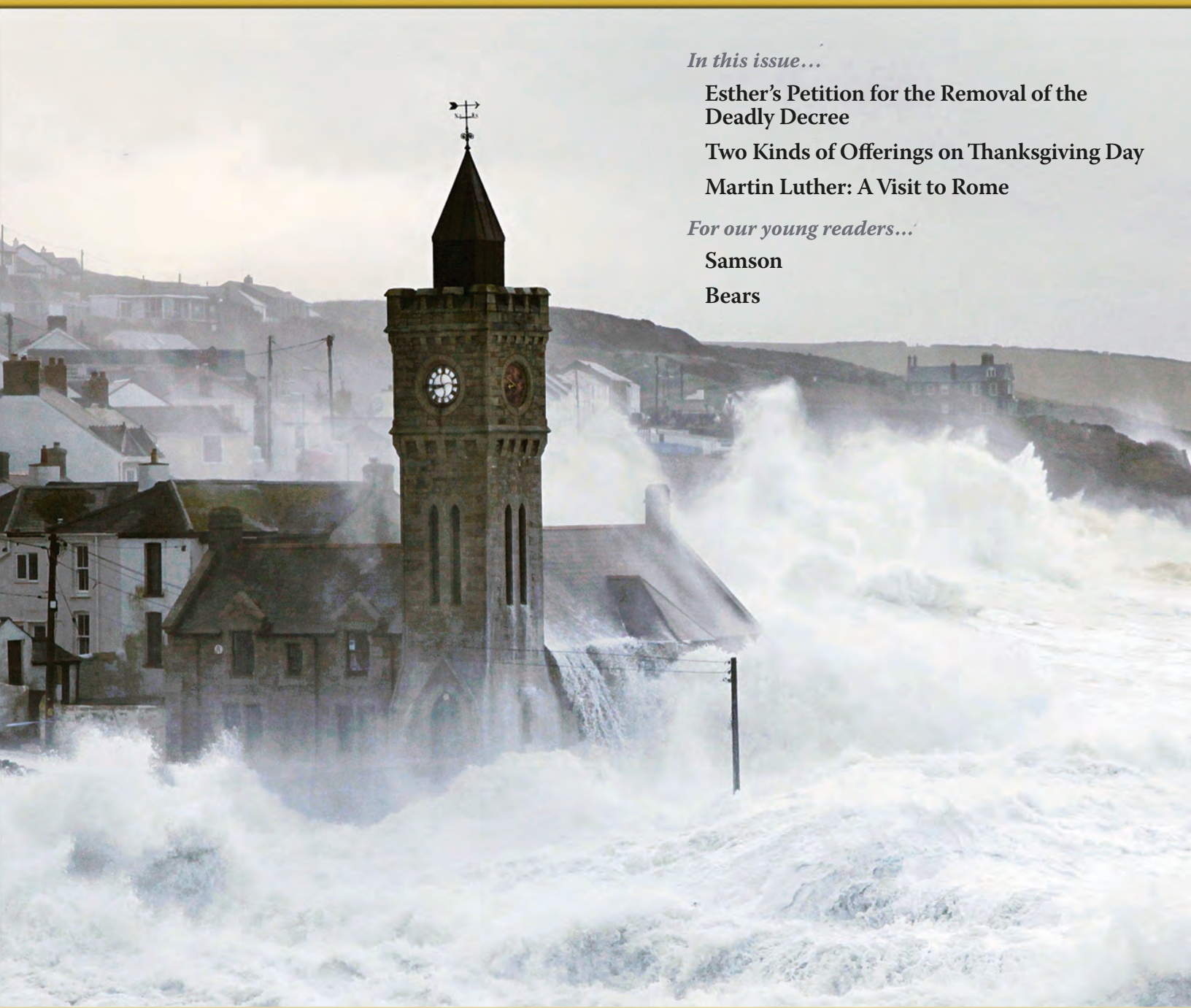
Two Kinds of Offerings on Thanksgiving Day

Martin Luther: A Visit to Rome

For our young readers...

Samson

Bears



*"Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah....
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." PSALM 46:3&5*



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Meditation

Esther's Petition for the Removal of the Deadly Decree

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Franklin Lakes, NJ

“And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews” (Esther 8:3).

In these text words we read of the well-known Jewish girl who became the queen of the Persian Empire. The Lord in His providence opened the way for this. It was at a time when Israel was brought into captivity. Esther was an orphan raised by her uncle Mordecai. She never forgot her humble origin. She became the one who, at God's time, was raised up for the deliverance of His people.

Deliverance will always have value when misery is experienced. The Bible book of Esther reveals a clear picture of this. Haman, under God's providence, has made a serious threat to the existence of God's covenant people. Esther 3:8&9a clearly show this: “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed.”

Haman speaks about the true religion which the Jews had as diverse from all people. He says that the truth is not the truth but is contradictory to the king's law.

This statement from Haman stems from his pride because Mordecai did not bow to him in the gate. Haman's wicked pride feeds his desire to destroy God's people. This evil plan was uncovered by Esther at the banquet. Haman is executed on the gallows of his own making. Haman is destroyed!

So, also, Satan made war in heaven; he wanted the throne but was cast out. Satan, because of his vicious wrath, then went to the crown jewel of God's Creation in the state of rectitude, desiring to destroy them. Then the Lord revealed His eternal decree, “I will bring you out from the people” (Ezekiel 20:34). He gave there the mother promise—His elect shall be saved, and Satan shall not have one of them. Satan is destroyed.

Esther is a Jew. In our text we meet her on her knees beseeching the king with tears. Why would Esther cry? Haman is dead. Esther is crying because although the enemy has been killed, Haman's evil is still in effect. We are approaching the day to again remember the Reformation. What a victory the Lord gave over the deceitful religion

of Rome. It was a defeat for Satan, but that leaves us with a need. Satan's power still has effect. He is trying so hard to mislead and to destroy those under the truth. Satan is trying to destroy the marriage state as well as the God-given genders. Satan is trying to take away more and more of our religious freedoms. Satan, as a destroyed enemy, is still so busy. Esther sees the danger.

Are there those who see the danger today of the power and influences of Satan? The dangers of world conformity? Are there those who see the danger of a religion that is based on feelings and emotions? Are there those who see the danger of a religion that denies man's death state by rendering him capable to believe? There are other church denominations who, fifty years ago, could never have imagined what is taking place in their churches today. Will that also become our pathway? We can be so at ease that we have the truth, but are there “Esthers” who are not satisfied with that? The truth needs application! Our unconverted members need to become converted in the way God converts all His people. God's people need to receive the exercises of faith in the further leadings as the

Church of all ages received.

Esther ends up on her knees at the feet of the king. Why there? First of all, to show her humility as a queen to come down to the level of the feet of the king. There she beseeches

with tears. This means revealing to the king her sorrow over this remaining decree of the destroyed Haman. She reveals her humility by bowing deeply before the king. Second, because she has learned in her life that the king is the only one who can help her. His mercy has become her hope. She seeks to make her needs the king's care. She does not bring them to the streets of Shushan. She goes to the only one who can help her.

Church of God, when was the last time you were given to exercise true humility? When was the last time that you needed His mercy because He was the only one who could yet help? When was the last time that all other sources of trust were withdrawn? When was the last time you had to flee to Him as a miserable sinner suffering under the consequences of the vicious influences of the destroyed enemy?

May the Lord bind the need of our times on the hearts of His people that there may be a beseeching at the throne of grace for the Lord to remember His own work. Is that a worthy petition? Yes, my dear reader, Christ has ascended;

*Yes, my dear reader, Christ has ascended;
Satan will not be victorious. Christ shall
have dominion; He sits as supreme Ruler.
He will guide all things to a perfect end.*

Satan will not be victorious. Christ shall have dominion; He sits as supreme Ruler. He will guide all things to a perfect end. May He give petitioners who beseech the Lord that Satan's power will be broken and that by the irresistible power of His Holy Spirit the Lord may build His kingdom among us. The clearest sign that the Lord is among us is

when there may be true conversions. May the Lord give His people to display in their daily lives the fruits of the tender fear of the Lord. May such fruits arouse a jealousy so that the unconverted may go in their inner chambers pleading, "The grace Thou showest to Thy saints, that grace reveal to me." □



Bible Study

The Life of Moses (11)

Rev. C. Vogelaar, Clifton, NJ

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet" (Exodus 15:23-25a).

It was a wonderful deliverance that the Lord had given to Israel. They walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea. When they all had come safely to the other side of the sea, they sang a song to praise the Lord for what He had done. Israel rejoiced, but they were not yet in Canaan. It was but the beginning of the wilderness journey. After rich comforts in the life of God's Church, sometimes heavy trials follow.

We read in verse 22, "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." They traveled in the desert, not led actually by Moses but by the pillar of cloud and of fire.

Israel murmured

It was not the way of their own choice but God's faithful hand that was leading them in a way of trial. In this desert there was no water, and the supply they may have taken along out of Egypt was soon gone. What must it have been for caring parents to hear their children complaining of thirst and then to say, "My child, there is no water anymore for you." The second day was bad, but the third day of traveling was worse, and there was no solution for their needs. We read in verse 23a, "And when they came to Marah." Finally, they saw water—it was not a mirage as one may sometimes see in hot deserts; no, it was real water. That sight must have made the weary travelers hasten to drink of what the Lord had provided. However, we read, "They could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were

bitter." What a disappointment! They were at the end of their strength; here was water, but they could not drink it.

Now, praising the Lord by the Red Sea gave place to complaining by Marah. They forgot that they had been led by the pillar of cloud and of fire; they murmured against Moses (verse 24). We read in Psalm 106:13, "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel." The Lord knew that Israel would be a stubborn, rebellious people. It was His wisdom also to have prepared Moses for this task because he needed much patience and meekness with Israel. No, there was no reason in Israel that the Lord set them apart from other nations and that He would fulfill His promises to them. Faith was failing; their eye was no longer upon God. God's Word is clear about what His people are and remain after all the benefits given unto them. He would prove them, test them, in the wilderness. God's children are all wilderness travelers and the Lord often leads them in ways in which they are tested. He knows what lives in their hearts, but He also wants to teach them that salvation and preservation are solely His work. He does not do it for their sakes but for His great name's sake. We often read in Psalm 107, "Then they cried unto the LORD."

Here, Moses was a mediator, no, not of salvation or redemption, but of intercession. We read in verse 25a, "And he cried unto the LORD." Foolish and rebellious travelers, in sometimes incomprehensible ways, need One greater than Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of Him in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The apostle also speaks of Him in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Lord heard the cry of His servant. He is still the same God: He hears the needy when they cry.

A remedy shown

God used a simple instrument, “and the LORD shewed him a tree.” It was just a piece of wood. It was there, but it had to be shown to Moses; it had to be revealed. What did this tree signify? What was God’s instrument in giving deliverance? There have been different ideas about the meaning of this tree. However, it was not, as some say, a piece of wood with sweetening power. It was the Lord who used this piece of wood to display His almighty power. What does the Lord use to lift up the weary burdened traveler through the wilderness of this world? How does He strengthen what is weak and comfort what mourns, instruct what does not know the way, and give joy and rest to struggling pilgrims? He uses His Word, but that Word then needs to be opened, and what is hidden needs to be revealed. How unexpectedly, at His time, which is always the best, He answered the cries of a needy people.

There was One who would thirst on Calvary’s cross. For Him there was no refreshment; His Father was the Judge who demanded satisfaction of His justice. Oh, how bitter was the cup of God’s wrath that He had to empty, and how willing He was to do this in order to glorify God’s attributes but also to quicken, to lead, and preserve His people, His bride. Now there is balm in Gilead for all the wounds, for circumstances of body and soul. We read of Christ in 1 Peter 2:24, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” This cross of Christ makes the bitter sweet. The apostle said of Him in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” This has been and will be the experience throughout all the ages. It was so with Paul and Silas in the stocks, their backs bleeding, but singing praises. Acts 16:25 tells us,

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

We read of that tree, that piece of wood which “when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.” This was experienced by the wilderness travelers.

Gracious healing

When Moses had cast the tree into the water, the bitterness was taken away. Oh, when that Word is opened, when an eye of faith may behold the suffering Christ, that which was bitter becomes sweet, for there is healing, “I am the LORD that healeth thee” (verse 26b). Nothing is impossible with Him! He heals in various ways:

- a) By changing our circumstances in His providence.
- b) By giving some encouragement, some balm to His people, or strength to bear.
- c) By giving more satisfaction with His will as Eli said after Samuel’s message to him, “It is the LORD.”
- d) He may prevent the evil they fear and can heal also from bodily infirmities.
- e) He is especially the Healer of souls. We are full of leprosy and need a supernatural work.

We must be born again, not only learning to know our misery and the impossibility from our side but also needing to have our eyes opened for the Saviour and to be drawn irresistibly unto Him. There is a resting place in His mediatorial heart. There we may take up our cross again, trusting in Him, following Him as Israel did the pillar of cloud and of fire.

The purpose of God’s dealings with Israel was to glorify Himself as the only One who would save and deliver them. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the fruit of His work by which man is shown his own foolishness, but God’s free grace and His faithful care will be glorified. ◻

(To be continued)

An Eternal Inheritance

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

“An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away”

(1 Peter 1:4).

This eternal inheritance “fadeth not away.” The sweetest flowers fade and are thrown away as they become nauseous to sight and smell. However, there is an abiding freshness, a constant verdure, a perpetual bloom, an unceasing fragrance, a permanent sweetness in this eternal inheritance so that it is never flat or stale; it remains ever the same or, rather, is ever increasing in beauty and blessedness, as more known, believed in, hoped unto, and loved.



A Word in Season

Two Kinds of Offerings on Thanksgiving Day

Rev. A.B. van der Heiden, the Netherlands

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

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4a).

Cain and Abel both observed a Thanksgiving Day. After completing a period of toilsome labor, both sons of Adam and Eve had reasons for thankfulness. God’s faithful care was yet stretched out over them. The Lord had blessed the work of Cain, and he was permitted to enjoy the fruits of the field. Abel also had not worked in vain. His flock had still been able to find pasture, and they were multiplied. Both sons of Adam had great reasons to observe Thanksgiving Day.

In this month we also may again observe the yearly Thanksgiving Day. There are many reasons humbly to thank the Lord. In your life God made a difference compared to other people. There are people who gathered with us on Prayer Day for whom there is no Thanksgiving Day. They have gone the way of all flesh. Not only has the Lord spared our lives up to this moment but He has surrounded us with many benefits. He has not yet broken the staff of bread. Our tables are yet furnished with food and drink, and we yet enjoy the fatness of the earth. Millions in this world suffer hunger and poverty, but we may eat and be satisfied. The Lord gave us a house in which to live. We have clothes to wear.

When we consider the deep decay of land and people where sins multiply unto the heavens, where our people have reckoned with God in foolish pride, oh, how inconceivably great are the exertions of God. Though the powers of unbelief and revolution wax stronger and stronger, the Lord has protected our poor nation from total chaos. Our land was yet spared from the terrors of war. Oh, where must we begin and where must we end in enumerating the mercies of the Lord?

The psalmist cried out, “For mercy is great unto the heavens.” Thus, it was also in the lives of Cain and Abel. They both had abundant reasons to observe Thanksgiving Day. Both were richly blessed; both partook of God’s faithful care. Yet, between the two brothers there was a great difference. Cain and Abel were both children of Adam and Eve, born after they had fallen away from the Lord. Both were, by nature, children of wrath. Yet, our text says that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. No, the excellence of Abel’s offering did not lie in outward matters. It was not the case that Cain gave the Lord some moldy

fruit and Abel offered the fattest sheep of his flock. No, the excellence of Abel’s offering did not lie in the magnitude of his gift, but the excellence of it lay in this—Abel’s offering was an offering of faith. His thanks to the Lord was a fruit of saving faith; his offering was the fruit of true love to the Lord.

Cain was not an openly worldly person who took no account of the Lord. No, he was a decent professor who lived in the God-fearing family of Adam and Eve. Cain also wanted to be religious. However, his religion was mere formality. It was not his purpose to serve the Lord, but in his religion he himself stood in the center. We can sit in church as a Cain and do as God’s people do; yet, there can be an infinite difference.

Abel possessed saving faith; Abel believed the Word of God which said that he was a lost sinner. He believed that he was a child of wrath. He believed that through sin he had lost all rights to temporal and eternal blessings. However, by faith Abel might also, through the depth of his misery, look upon Him who was promised in Paradise. By faith Abel might embrace the promise of God. By grace

he might look into the divine secret of salvation by deliverance in Christ Jesus.

When Abel offered the lamb, he looked by faith upon the Lamb who takes away the sins

of the world. Oh, Abel might not only thank the Lord for temporal blessings but, by grace, he might climb higher to thank the Lord for His unspeakably great Gift that would descend into the manger of Bethlehem, that heavenly Bread whereby hungry ones would be fed. Abel’s offering was pleasing to God because it proceeded from faith. Only a thank offering which proceeds from the source of true faith is pleasing to God. It is this source which matters, reader. The Lord looks for truth in the inward part. He examines the inward state of the heart.

Cain offered with a proud heart, without true faith. By God’s grace Abel thanked the Lord with a humble, believing heart, as an unworthy one in himself. By this he, being dead, yet speaks to us. Without faith it is impossible to please God. If you still miss that faith, know that the God of Abel still lives. He still plants the same faith in the hearts of lost sinners. That faith is yet to be obtained in the way of true repentance. May the memory of righteous Abel also be a blessing for us. □

When Abel offered the lamb, he looked by faith upon the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.



Doctrinal Studies

The Fruits of Holy Baptism (5)

Rev. G. Hoogerland, Kruiningen, the Netherlands

The Incorporation into Christ

Again, we wish to consider some of the fruits of the sacrament of Holy Baptism. This time we will study what God the Son seals unto us in Baptism. In the Form we read, "...that He doth wash us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God."

Do you see the drops of water dripping upon the head of the child being baptized? It is a token, a visible token of an invisible certainty. Just as the water washes away the filthiness of the body, so also there is a means whereby the soul can and must be washed. God's children know of that. Do you also know it? Has that become your greatest longing? Has that childhood prayer ever become precious unto you, "Though my sins are very many, be pleased, O Lord, for Jesus' sake, to cleanse me from them all"? Oh, those filthy sins!—the loathsomeness of your soul, the filthy wrongdoings of your works, with your words, your thoughts, with your silence, with your negligence. How much shame there is before God. See Ephraim smiting upon his thigh and the publican smiting upon his breast. Hear David's complaints; look and see Peter's tears.

Purifying the soul

Here, the means spoken of in the preaching are shown. Yea, the preaching must mention that in its message. The preaching must be overflowing with this message of those means which alone can wash away sin and purify the soul. Listen to the preacher as he so highly commends it. See in baptism the simple and clear token: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7b). See His bloody circumcision. Look at His blood-covered body in the Garden of Gethsemane. Look at His bleeding head with the crown of thorns; see his bloody back as a result of the scourging with the whips. See the blood coming from His hands and His feet which were nailed to the cross. Yea, see the stream of blood where the spear of the Roman soldier penetrated His side and entered His heart, His "love heart." Consider that He shed that blood for the sins of vile ones—for those who, by nature, despise Him and spurn His "blood-preaching"; for those who continue living in

their miserable manner. Truly they are incorrigible. That blood He shed for...yea, also for you, doubting child. He confirms this in every baptismal service. He has already confirmed and sealed it with your own baptism.

Flesh and bone

He also seals and confirms that He incorporates His people into the fellowship of His death and resurrection and makes them one with Him. We become members of His body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone. Can you fathom it all, child of God? Through the incorporation into Him, you have communion with Him. His death is your death. In His death your old man is crucified and done away with, but through the incorporation into Him you also have communion with His resurrection. The acquittal He received with His resurrection is your acquittal. The glorification He received in His resurrection is your glorification. The life He assumed at His resurrection is your life. His resurrection is the foundation of your blessed resurrection at the youngest day. He also seals this at a baptismal service.

Delivered from sin

By means of all of these benefits, child of God, you are delivered from all of your sins. They no longer have any dominion over you, for you are no longer under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14), in spite of all the torments and stumbling on account of sin. Later in the Form it is testified, "And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sin, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and undoubted testimony that we have an eternal covenant of grace with God."

By means of these benefits you are considered righteous before God. The Lord looks upon you in His Son. He no longer sees your sins. They are atoned for in His death and shedding of blood. They have remained in the grave. He reckons you justified in Christ, even if you cannot see it yourself, even if you doubt it a thousand times.

Are you able to see in your baptism these precious benefits? Does it make you desirous to have them applied to your soul so that you might experience the assurance thereof? Make then, in faith, much use of your own baptism. □

(To be continued)

Whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God.

—John Calvin



Commentary

The Man Born Blind (7)

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Franklin Lakes, NJ

“How were thine eyes opened?” (John 9:10b).

The man born blind has confessed who he was and who he, by the healing power of the Lord Jesus, has become—a seeing man. Now this man stands in the center of the conversation. The next question is asked: How were thine eyes opened? This question is an invitation to speak of the mighty deeds of the Lord. Notice that this man does not just start to speak himself; he receives the opportunity. We hope to consider this.

First, the question needs explanation. This question arises because of the visible change, because of the wonder. The visible difference between being blind and seeing is the cause of this question. So, this question reveals that the wonders of God have a visible effect. If souls are in strife about conversion and its fruits, you can discern that. They are not so involved but seem distant. When God’s justice is requiring full satisfaction from them or from another, the strife is visible in their daily life, but when the Lord gives deliverance, when the Lord reveals Himself, then the joy is also visible. This is how we must read this question. It originates with the neighbors of the man born blind because they have seen his misery. Now they may see his deliverance, and they ask the question, “How were thine eyes opened?”

Do we have a life that awakens questions due to such visible differences? Can our children see the strife on mother’s face when they come home from school? Can children hear the strife in the prayers of their fathers at the tables? Can they tell the difference when God has spoken? Can our children see that the life of God’s service is a blessed service? Not only because of the familiar clichés, or because father or mother attends the Lord’s Supper, but because they see and hear about the powerful work of God who delivers humbled sinners? May the Lord give the upcoming generation to ask because of visible divine power, “How were thine eyes opened?”

Second, this question is asked by witnesses. Why would they ask? Did they ask for curiosity’s sake? When remarkable things happen, the curiosity of people is often the reason of their question. There are people who want to know everything to the finest detail in order to satisfy their curiosity, but after they hear what they want to hear, it leaves them untouched. I know there are people who would like to ask, if they dared, how God works in the hearts of God’s people. Some do this only for curiosity’s sake, but there are those who ask because they long to receive what God’s people receive, by grace. Those people sometimes sing to themselves or with others, “The grace Thou showest to Thy saints, that grace reveal to me.” Do we have a jealousy for the grace that God exalts in the heart of sinners?

Thirdly, this question has meaning for our time of year. When you read this article, the season of house visitation will begin again or, perhaps, has begun already. We often hear the expression that house visitation is soul visitation. In the church the elders have the duty to know the state of the flock; therefore, they come. The motive is to listen for spiritual blessings which may have been graciously given since the last time they visited you. For the elders and deacons this is a task that ought to be done in dependence upon the Lord. May we be blest with office bearers who will not leave their home without bowing their knees to ask for the Lord’s help and leading because without Him they can do nothing. When the deacons attend a house visitation, they are not to be a “silent witness.” They accompany as “helping elders” in this solemn task. Personally, I will never forget when as a deacon I went along on house visitation with our unforgettable brother Bron, who was elder at the time in Fort Macleod. We were visiting a family, and he turned to me and said, “Maybe the brother deacon has something to say.”

The purpose of house visitation is to first ask if our spiritual eyes have been opened. If there may be an affirmative answer to this question, then it will always be in line with the history of the blind man, “How were thine eyes opened?” When something may be heard how the works of God are made manifest, the visit proves a good and quick hour. May the Lord give when the office bearers go from home to home that they may do their work faithfully, asking honestly about that one thing needful. May it be experienced that it is God’s time to manifest His work.

Receiving house visitation can be a great mountain. May it, therefore, be an hour in which the Lord is in the midst to guide it for His honor. If an office bearer at the end of what was said about how one’s eyes were opened discerns that a divine wonder is missing in it, or if words of correction or instruction are necessary, you should take that as a warning on the way to eternity. If it is right, the elder does not speak on behalf of himself but on behalf of the Lord who sent him to your home to be as a watch for your soul. Is house visitation valid for only those who have something to say about the works of God? No, house visitation can also be used by the Lord to make a beginning in a person’s life. May the Lord give love for unconverted souls that in all faithfulness the only way may yet be pointed out, a way in which the power of God will be revealed so that the office bearers may return to ask, “How were thine eyes opened?” □

(To be continued)



Church History

Martin Luther: A Visit to Rome

(Taken from the October 1985 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

The anonymous author of this article focuses on Luther's watershed visit to Rome in 1510, which served to pave the way for his embracement of the cardinal Reformation doctrine—justification by faith as God's gracious gift.

The light of gospel truth began to dawn upon Luther's soul in the second decade of the 1500s. The freeness of God's forgiveness of sins astounded him, for the Spirit caused him to realize that it was without money and without price; in other words, without the painful toiling that he had engaged in while under the law as he strove to merit the favor of God. The Spirit-taught lessons now impressed upon the Reformer never left him, and when the Reformation began in Germany, it was simply a pouring out of blessing similar to that which had already been bestowed upon the monk in the monastery at Erfurt. The Reformation, it has been truly said, was first worked out in Luther's own soul—not that he was as yet clear of many superstitions and misbeliefs. Unlike John Calvin, who passed from darkness to light with remarkable speed, Luther grew in knowledge over a period of years, and it is needful for students of his theology to take careful note of its chronological development.

Luther remained in the monastery for a little more than three years, and then his friend Staupitz secured him an appointment as Professor of Theology in the University of Wittenberg. At first, he found little pleasure in the work, for it was expected that his lectures would expound man's words and man's wisdom rather than the divine wisdom found in Scripture, but shortly Luther is found delivering evangelical sermons in profusion. Indeed, the old clay-plastered wooden chapel, a mere thirty feet in length and twenty in width, in which the sermons were delivered to "a handful of monks and professors," has been described as "the cradle of the German Reformation." Although these early sermons fell far short of the "full-orbed gospel" which Luther later proclaimed, they reflected his newborn experience of the grace of God. Much truth he had yet to learn, but if Luther's beginnings were small, his latter end was destined greatly to increase.

While the Reformer was thus occupied at Wittenberg, he was suddenly called aside to undertake a mission to Rome on behalf of Staupitz. The prospect of such a journey filled him with delight, for to him Rome was a veritable holy of holies where lived the choicest of saints, not least the Pope himself, whom Luther regarded as a kind of god upon earth. Accompanied by a brother monk, he set out across

the Alps and so came into Italy expecting to find that the nearer he got to Rome the more holy everything and every place would appear. To his deep sorrow he found, on the contrary, that Italy was a land of darkness rather than light. Many of the churchmen with whom he came into contact reveled in the lap of luxury, and gave to the simple-minded Germans the impression that there was in them more of that carnal-mindedness which is death than of that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace.

When the two men arrived within sight of Rome, Luther fell upon his knees, raised his hands to heaven, and exclaimed with deep emotion, "Hail, holy Rome! Made holy by the holy martyrs, and by the blood which has been spilt there." His admiration for the so-called holy city was, however, soon dispelled, but the explanation of this is best given in Luther's own words written twenty years after his visit:

"I remember that when I went to Rome, I ran about like a madman to all the churches, all the convents, all the places of note of every kind; I implicitly believed every tale about all of them that imposture had invented. I said a dozen masses, and I almost regretted that my father and mother were not dead so that I might have

The Reformation, it has been truly said, was first worked out in Luther's own soul.

availed myself of the opportunity to draw their souls out of purgatory by a dozen or more masses and other good works of a similar description. It is a proverb at

Rome, 'Happy the mother whose son says mass for her on the eve of St. John.' How glad I should have been to have saved my mother. We did these things then, knowing no better; it is the pope's interest to encourage such lies. Now, thank God, we have the gospels, the psalms, and the other words of God. To them we can make pilgrimages more useful than any others; in them we can visit and contemplate the true promised land, the true Jerusalem, the true paradise. In them we walk, not amid the tombs of saints, or over their mortal relics, but in their hearts, their thoughts, their spirit."

Luther was repeatedly shocked in Rome by the wicked and worldly lives lived by many of the highest officers of the church and, most of all, by the lightness with which they often referred to the most sacred subjects. Julius II, the Pope at this time, was scarcely anything more than a scheming statesman greedy of gain and willing to obtain his ends by fair means or foul. When the Reformer arrived in Rome, Julius was engaged in a war against the French.

From such scenes Luther turned with a sorrowful heart

to try to find consolation in the performance of the various works which engaged the attention of Christendom's pilgrims. It was customary, for example, for a pilgrim to climb on his knees, while muttering prayers, the marble staircase which, it was claimed, had belonged to the Judgment Hall of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem. Accounts of what happened here to Luther vary between 19th century and 20th century historians. The former tend to make much of Luther's experience at this crisis of his career, the latter to play it down. The fact is that such records as exist supply somewhat divergent accounts of the climbing, and it is not easy to weave them together into a consistent narrative. On the one hand, there is a letter preserved in the handwriting of Paul Luther, Martin Luther's younger son, in which he states: "In the year 1544, my late dearest father, in the presence of us all, narrated the whole story of his journey to Rome. He acknowledged with great joy that, in that city, through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he had come to the knowledge of the truth of the everlasting gospel. It happened in this way. As he repeated his prayers on the Lateran staircase, the words of the prophet Habakkuk came suddenly to his mind: "The just shall live by faith." Thereupon he ceased his prayers, returned to Wittenberg, and took this as the chief foundation of all his doctrine."

On the other hand, in a sermon on Colossians 1:9 preached on September 15, 1545, Luther himself stated:

"As at Rome I wished to liberate my grandfather (Heine Luther) from purgatory, I went up the staircase of Pilate, praying a pater noster [Our Father...] on each step, for I was convinced that he who prayed thus could redeem his soul. But when I came to the top step, the thought kept coming to me, "Who knows whether this is true?"

It is clear that the visit to the imperial city was of crucial importance to Luther's development as a Reformer. In his anticipation, Rome was an earthly Paradise, the scene of all that was fairest and most to be revered in Christian story. In the outcome his reverence was turned into loathing. "I must also see Rome," the Apostle Paul had once exclaimed (Acts 19:21), and in the Lord's good time he arrived in the pagan capital. Luther's visit, a millennium-and-a-half later, must have caused him to wonder whether in any respect at all Rome's professed Christianity was superior in moral and spiritual value to ancient paganism.

Yet, it must be confessed that the German Reformer did not lack credulity. He seems to have believed that the relics which he saw were genuine. Rome was filled with them. Obviously, Luther still had to learn the difference between blind credulity and Spirit-imparted faith, and from this point of time, that knowledge came with increasing rapidity. Later he said, "I would not have missed seeing Rome for 100,000 florins; I should have always felt an uneasy doubt whether I was not, after all, doing injustice to the Pope. As it is, I am quite satisfied on the point."

As for Christian doctrine it is clear that Luther had still to become well established in the great truth of justification by faith. As the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Romans was of vital importance to him in this connection, we conclude this "Visit to Rome" by quoting the opening and closing paragraphs of the Preface to the Epistle which Luther prepared when his translation of the Bible into German was made at a later date:

"This Epistle is the right corner-stone of the New Testament, and the purest gospel, and is in itself so valuable that a Christian should not only know it by heart, word by word, but should have daily intercourse with it as with the daily bread of the soul. For it can never be too much and too well read and considered, and the more it is examined the more precious it becomes, and the more it will be relished... We find in this Epistle most copiously treated whatever a Christian ought to know, namely, what are the Law and the Gospel, sin, punishment, grace, faith, and righteousness, Christ and God, good works, charity, hope and crosses; how we ought to act towards every one, whether he be a religious man or a sinner, strong or weak, friend or foe, and how we ought to act towards ourselves. And all this so admirably laid down with examples from Holy Writ, and so exemplified both by himself and from the Prophets, as to leave nothing to wish for. It would seem as if St. Paul in this Epistle wished to epitomize the whole faith and doctrine of the Gospel of Christ, and thus prepare us an introduction to the whole of the Old Testament. For without doubt he who has this Epistle well by heart has in him the light and the power of the Old Testament. Every Christian should, therefore, make it his own and observe it constantly in practice. May the grace of God be with him! Amen."

When the race is ended and the play is either won or lost and ye are in the utmost circle and border of time and shall put your foot within the march of eternity, all the things of your short night-dream shall seem to you like ashes of a blaze of thorns or straw.

— Samuel Rutherford



Reflections

Jacob: A Precious Promise (1)

Rev. J. den Hoed, Lynden, WA

“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” (Genesis 28:15).

There are times and places in our lives we never forget. Think of Moses at the burning bush. Think of the disciples of Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. Think also of Jacob at Bethel. They are places where the Lord comes down to visit, comfort, and instruct His people. Perhaps you may know of such a time and place in your life. If you do, what a longing there can then lie in your heart for another visit.

The days before Bethel, Esau and Jacob’s father Isaac had become old and had desired to bestow the patriarchal blessing upon his descendent. Therefore, Esau had gone out to hunt to bring venison for his father, who would eat and then bestow the blessing upon his son Esau. However, their mother Rebekah had heard and come in between. That is why Jacob brought a meal to his father, confessing to be his son Esau. It is true that Jacob’s receiving the blessing was the will of the Lord, but the way he received it was wrong. He and his mother could not leave the matter in the hand of the Lord, trusting that He would bring it to pass. How often it is that way with us when we cannot trust the Lord, and we forge ahead with what we think is the way it must go. There, in the home of Isaac and Rebekah, matters ended in hatred; therefore, Jacob must flee.

That night he came to a certain place, a place where all was empty and dark. We can imagine how it must have been with this lonely traveler. He had a promise but missed the Promisor. Perhaps you are not a stranger of those lonely nights when it seems as if you will never hear the voice of the Lord anymore—when it is all dark outside but the deepest darkness lies inside. There, in that night, a young man slept with a stone for a pillow. Now we read it is the Lord’s time; He comes when all has come to an end from our side, but when He comes, it is an unforgettable time and place. As Jacob lay there the Lord came in a dream; Jacob saw angels ascending and descending.

What a wonderful revelation we have here of angels ascending and descending. This means that the Lord, at all times, has his angels around His children even when it is

empty and dark in their heart, when they do not hear the voice of the Lord anymore. Sometimes it is a struggle from day to day, there are times when they weep, “Lord, when will I hear Thy voice once again?”—times that with David they cry, “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11).

Jacob, in that long dark night, saw a ladder and upon that ladder angels descending. That ladder is Christ. In Christ the Lord had a message for Jacob. In this message we read that the Lord knew his fears. In the dream he heard God’s voice, “I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac.” Then the Lord confirmed the blessing that Jacob had received from his father Isaac. Oh, what a wonderful time when the Lord comes and confirms in one’s heart that He knows him. Legion are the times that the devil comes with the question: Are you sure that the Lord knows you? Why is it so empty and dark in your heart? However, when the Lord comes back, then one may believe, then in a night like that he may trust that it is the Lord who has sought and saved a wretch like him. We read

(In all those tomorrows, no matter how difficult your way may be, I will always be with you. When it becomes so dark and you may not see Me, I always see you.) Know then, God’s children do not travel their earthly journey alone.

in God’s Word that the Lord came with a promise to Jacob for the future, “And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.” (In all those tomorrows, no matter how difficult your way may be, I will always be with you. When it becomes so dark and you may not see Me, I always

see you.) Know then, God’s children do not travel their earthly journey alone. Oh, what a wonder it becomes when they may learn that in Christ He sees them. In Christ He is ever there to lead them onward, and in Christ He will bring them home.

When Jacob awaked out of his sleep, he knew that the Lord was there. He knew that the promise of the Lord was with him. “And he called the name of that place Bethel.” As he traveled onward, he was a man who had received a promise but missed the Promisor. Know then that those travelers cannot perish in a strange land. Think of Jacob, where for twenty years there was no further revelation of the Lord. In that time, His people miss a visit for their soul. In that time, they learn to cry, “Oh, Lord, may I hear Thy voice once again.” Remember, they cannot perish. Why? Because there is a faithful, guiding Lord. He says, “I will allure them, lead them into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto them and give a door of hope.” That door is

Christ. Jacob had a Bethel in his life. There, he not only heard a promising God, but that there was also a ladder. With that he could see that in Christ the door is open.

Perhaps at the end of this article I may ask you something. Dear friends, do you have a Bethel in your life? A place that you may hear from heaven that the Lord hears and knows you and, at the end, will bring you back to what you have

lost? A place where you may see that there is a God-given door? That door is Christ. May God give that your eye may ever be upon that door and that we may remember that door is open. From that door we poor, needy travelers may hear His loving voice calling out, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” ◻

(To be continued)

The Life and Dying of Mientje Vrijdag (3)

B. Roest of Scherpenzeel, the Netherlands

(Translated from the Dutch, published by bookstore P. Stuut, Rijssen, the Netherlands, 1977)

It was a heavy blow for her—so young, and to lose her husband after such a short marriage. She then had a time that she mourned greatly. She was full of sorrow and she grieved deeply. Because of this she lost the sweet communion with God. For several months she could not agree with God’s doings. Her flesh wasted away because of the bodily grief and sorrow. Finally, it pleased the sovereign God in Christ to humble her by Word and Spirit. She could bow and humble herself under God in self-abasement. She was again placed in the freedom, and because of the supplications of her eldest Brother, in His blood the sin of rebellion was washed away, and she might again see and meet the atoning countenance of God the Father. Thereupon it followed that she was able to walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. In this manner she was, by renewal, refined and purified.

That rebellion never returned, but she had continual spiritual communion with her husband above, and she longed to again be together without sinful flesh to glorify God. Because of this, she spoke much about her husband. All this gave her a place in God’s Church early in her life. In all of Rijssen, and later in the Netherlands, this widow was highly esteemed because of the work of grace. In her own estimation, she always had the lowest place among God’s people. For her they were the holy ones who sat in the high places. She was a planting of God and a cornerstone in God’s house. She was exercised under much strife, but also in the Word of righteousness. More and more she was led into the Rock, Christ Jesus. The fire of the Spirit burned in her continually. She had much freedom in faith. She also was a deeply led soul in God and the covenant mysteries. She was very clear in the exercises of faith. Her knowledge of faith was also very discerning and practical. She had become deeply knowledgeable in what were legalistic grounds and also in the way of atonement and godliness. She had a great love in searching out God’s Word and was a lover of the God ordained ordinances. It was a joy for her to sit under the truth. Her greatness existed in her humble nothingness, and then, that close uniting in faith with Christ.

She was made to bear fruit unto Him. In that way she walked in faith and love with her God. That walking with Him was a walking in the Spirit. She was an exercised soul in the dying of the works of the flesh through the power of Jesus’ blood that flowed forth out of the use of the merits of the Mediator. That gave her great liberty with a deep humility. In this she was continually warning, arousing, or objecting. She had a deep insight into the fall of Adam and in her heart, but over against that, very clear revelations of the depth of God. She had a clear insight into the breach and decay in the church along with a deep insight into the judgments of God, both Fatherly as well as judiciously. Clearly the Lord showed her the judgments which had come as well as those which were still to come. At such times, she was very serious in her warnings. Through grace her garments were undefiled from her heritage and from barrenness in her life. She saw the seductive, depraved spirit of the times which had departed so far from the God of the forefathers. When she spoke of that and had entered into prayer, she was as a watered garden. She never shook off the judgment of the Church and nation, but was before God’s Spirit so deeply humbled that she bowed under the judgments as a deeply guilty person. No one dared to come against her at such a time, for so much flowed from her that showed she had the knowledge of it. She did not stand above the breach—she did not speak about it in that manner—but out of the breach. She carried the guilt out of her heart before God.

She also had the grace and virtue that she was sound and upright. She never spoke about anyone behind his or her back but spoke compassionately to the face. She could not go through uneven ways, for then she was a rebuking tongue. She spoke with praise and respect of God’s servants and people. She was very sharp in her warnings against back-biting or errors, but also for speaking about more than a person had personally experienced. Her life was edifying. She spoke lowly of herself but loftily of God. In conventicles and in houses of mourning she was edifying with a deep humility. ◻

(To be continued)



Questions & Answers

Between the Cradle and the Grave

Rev. B. Labee, Veenendaal, the Netherlands

The expression “something must happen between the cradle and the grave” is often used. Is there not too little attention paid to the life in the womb?

A way of speaking

This is, indeed, an expression in which something is lacking as are other expressions which do not completely communicate the reality of the subject matter. It is probable that this as well as some worldly sayings are often taken upon the lips thoughtlessly. The world wishes to provide for itself a “cradle to the grave” protection against damage to assure themselves good health or, at least, to receive the best care possible. A welfare state promises to provide this to its citizens.

It is, however, completely correct that we must say more. When there is life in the womb, there should be bent knees and folded hands before God for the given and anticipated life. It is a moving and shuddering thought that the safest place for the beginning of life has been made into a murder pit by modern man.

In Isaiah 49, Israel utters the complaint that the Lord has forsaken and forgotten her. Very definitely, the faithful covenant God refutes this accusation by asking, “Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” (verse 15a). You would think this is not possible, yet it happens—a mother who wishes for her child to die. This form of hatred should make one shudder. There may be all kinds of reasons put forth to justify this, but that does not take away from the seriousness of life.

Our heart must well shudder when we look at the active abortion clinics which are busy as murder machines snatching the lives of 30,000 fetuses per year (in the Netherlands). We sing in Psalm 74 (Psalter 205), “For in the earth are dark abodes of crime and cruelty.” Is that not the terrible truth which should fill us with anxiety? Is it possible that the God of life can let this all go on unpunished? Are not the judgments (also today) just and right which come over our nations and peoples? May the Lord give humility and a powerful testimony against these terrible practices. May there also be prayer for those of our elected officials

who speak up for the protection of unborn life along with all those who far and near join in protests against this sinful practice. Let it be heard loudly and clearly.

Once again, our questioner makes a very correct point. We are not only for the protection of human life, but we should also be greatly concerned about spiritual life. Even though we may not have a knowledge about God’s judgment over the unborn life...may the Lord give wrestling in the inner room when new life is expected. May something of this need be heard in public prayer, also in God’s house.

The time of grace

After all that has been said, we return to the expression “time of grace” for a moment. It must be noted that a wonder of God must take place in our lives—in a world where so many, like Nicodemus, are ignorant about this vital truth which the Lord commonly will work between the cradle and the grave. Jesus taught him, saying, “Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In one of his letters, Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661), wrote of the one thing needful: “Your mission in this life is to acquire the assurance of an eternal glory for your soul to be united with Christ. Everything else is idle talk.”

If this earnestness is truly part of our life, it cannot be any different but that there are also wrestlings for the beginning of life in the womb. The Holy Scripture gives us the exceptional example of John in the womb of Elisabeth: “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:” (Luke 1:41). The marginal note 50 teaches us that “this occurred because of a supernatural and exceptional action of the Holy Spirit.” We may beseech the Lord for that work of grace, also in our dark 21st century. □

(Note: Rev. Hofman was traveling to the Netherlands. He hopes to resume *Questions from Our Readers* next month, D.V.)

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The whole life of a Christian should be nothing but praises and thanks to God. We should neither eat nor sleep but eat to God, sleep to God, and work to God—do all to His glory and praise.

— Richard Sibbes



For Young and Old

Virtue

(Adapted from the April 1971 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

The story I am going to tell is an old story because it happened long ago, but it can also be called a new story for it was never told till now. It has lain in a person's memory all these years and in that way safely kept though never written on paper. It was written on what Scripture calls "flesh tables" of a child's heart, and every line can still be clearly read even though that child is now an old man. The human memory is a wonderful work of God. How many things can be written on it, one over the other; yet, the one does not blot out the other. Give thanks to God for His gift of memory and do not allow anything impure to be imprinted on its retentive page.

The little fellow I am going to tell you about was the youngest of a group of children who walked in company from several farms to the parish school. At one place the road passed over a stream by a stone bridge. The girls of the party usually walked over the bridge, but the boys, despising that luxury, usually crossed the stream below the bridge by stepping on the dry heads of boulders lying scattered in the bed of the little river. One morning after heavy rain the stream was swollen and discolored; it frothed along as if it were angry with everything that hindered its progress. That day only the tips of the largest stones were visible, but the boys were not daunted by the difficulty or dangers. They might have crossed the bridge with dry feet and ease, but rather, they longed for the adventure.

So down they went in a troop to try the stepping stones. At close quarters the sight was rather daunting, and some would have liked to retrace their steps, but one or two of the bolder spirits dashed safely over and tossed their caps for glee on the other side. The rest were then afraid. Afraid of what? Of falling into the stream? No, afraid of being laughed at for being cowards should they hesitate. So, eventually they all got across in safety except for our little fellow. He was small but no coward, except that he dreaded being taken for one. One or two of the older boys, realizing that Willie's short legs could not be expected to cover the big gaps between the stones, now advised him to take to the bridge. The sense of safety drew Willie to the bridge, but the desire for glory dragged him to the danger. After a moment of suspense, he made a dash at the passage, but halfway over he slipped on a wet stone and disappeared into the rushing waters with a splash. In a moment he had risen to his feet and quickly waded ashore, soaked completely.

Now a word of advice to boys. Do not jeer at little ones on account of weaknesses belonging to their small stature and tender age. They are not to blame for these things. On the other hand, little fellows are often very troublesome

to their older companions by their peevishness, or pride, or tormenting behavior. If that kind will foolishly pretend that they can do whatever the big boys do, they must suffer the consequences. When the young ones are gentle, unassuming, and obedient, generally they will draw from stronger hearts and hands an astonishing measure of kindly protection. However, let the younger member of the party be warned that if he be cheeky and make himself equal to his betters, they will leave him to his fate.

To resume—a council was held on the bank in which the sisters who had come over by way of the bridge also joined. It was unanimously resolved to send the dripping urchin home, for everyone knew that it would be wrong for him to go to school in wet clothes. They parted, the larger company onwards to school, and Willie homeward alone, this time by way of the bridge. The sun was bright and the wind strong, and as Willie at length drew near his home, he found to his horror that his clothes were nearly dry. Why should he count this a calamity though? Willie knew that his venture in the stream was a fault, but he reckoned correctly that the sympathy of his father, produced by his misfortune, would soften, if not completely blot out, the blame for his fault. As long, therefore, as he was wet, he trudged homeward hopefully, but when he discovered that he was dry, his hope faltered. He had lost the claim for sympathy, and the fault remained with nothing to shade or shield it. He was now afraid to go home lest, for lack of evidence, his story should be disbelieved. The older brothers and sisters could give ample testimony, but they would not return till evening, and the day seemed dreadful to the imagination of the child.

How was he to get out of his trouble? He was a resourceful boy, and that day he put his wits to the stretch. I ought to say here that he had no mother. His father was kind and just, but he was big and he was a man. His eldest sister, full-grown and in charge of the house, was a woman, but she was not a mother. I think if his mother had been alive and waiting in the house to receive him, he would have ventured all. As it was, what could he do but rely on his wits? His road lay by a quiet river, a different sort of water from the torrent which had earlier drenched him. Willie looked now at his clothes, alas, dreadfully dry, and now at the murmuring, friendly river. His mind was soon made up. Stepping in he waded to the middle, performed a sort of curtsey and so dipped himself up to the neck. He then climbed the bank, shook himself, and walked briskly home with a cool skin and a courageous heart. He had regained

(continued on page 237)



Current Events

Severe Pakistan Flooding

The most devastating monsoon in decades has brought flooding of an unprecedented scale in Pakistan, affecting some thirty-three million people. Amongst them are Christians, a small and vulnerable minority. Shocking satellite images make it look as though large portions of Pakistan have been transformed into a giant lake. Flood waters cover a third of the country. Even worse is expected when the swollen waters of the river Indus have flowed south which will add to the existing floods in Sindh. A report from Christian leaders in Sindh described people living in the open air without any shelter. Some have eaten nothing for days and only have contaminated flood water to drink. Disease is escalating. Health services are badly affected. The infrastructure of the churches in the area have been seriously affected. The Christian hospital there has been severely damaged and the Christian school destroyed.

—*BarnabasFund.org*

Most Dangerous Place for Christians

One year after falling to the Taliban, Afghanistan is the most dangerous place in the world for Christians to live. A Christian Afghan refugee stated that Christians in Afghanistan are “fearful” of what could happen to them, and that “discrimination is allowed” against non-Muslims. People are turning Christians over to the Taliban for government favors. “...Many people are angry they don’t have food, so they can just sell you to the government...to get a favor from the Taliban... So, you are like a high target for anyone,” he added. It has been reported that the Taliban have acknowledged the existence of the Sikh and Hindu faiths but have denied the existence of a Christian community, despite the estimated 10,000 to 12,000 Christians there. Nearly all are converts from Islam and considered apostates, which means a likely death sentence. “Many Afghan Christians are in hiding as the Taliban searches for them and monitors their activities,” a source said. “If caught, they are subjected to beatings, kidnappings, torture and murder.

—*FoxNews.com*

What Does Persecution Look Like in North Korea?

North Korea has been at or near the top of the World Watch List for more than twenty years. That is because any North Korean caught following Jesus is at immediate risk of imprisonment, brutal torture, and death. An estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Christians are imprisoned in North Korea’s notorious system of prisons and labor camps. To make matters worse, often the family of the person captured will share the same fate. The government views Christians as the most dangerous political class of people, and their persecution is violent and intense. North Korean parents often hide their faith from their children, churches of more than a few people are non-existent, and most worship is done as secretly as possible. Life for Christians in North Korea is a constant cauldron of pressure; capture or death is only a mistake away. Currently failed harvests are impacting the North Korean people but Christians are more affected. Believers are on the lowest rung of society and neglected from receiving whatever meager food aid is available. North Korea continues to be extremely dangerous for followers of Jesus, and it is not likely to change any time soon unless the Kim regime is toppled.

—*OpenDoorsUSA.org*

Christian Jailed for Contempt of Court

A Christian teacher who refused to use gender neutral pronouns was suspended by his Church of Ireland-run boarding school. A student, with school and parental support, requested that the pronoun “they” be used instead of “he.” When the teacher refused to comply with the request, the school began disciplinary proceedings and he was suspended. Despite his suspension, the teacher continued to come to the school and sit in an empty classroom, claiming that he was there to work. A court order stipulated that he must not teach or be physically present at the school. He was arrested the next Monday for breaching the court order and sent to prison for contempt of court. “I will not give up my Christian beliefs,” he said; “I love my school, with its motto Res Non Verba (actions not words), but I am here today because I said I would not call a boy a girl!” He said that transgenderism went against his Christian beliefs and that he should not be forced to violate his conscience. “It is contrary to the Scriptures, contrary to the ethos of the Church of Ireland and of my school.” The court told him that he could be released if he agrees to comply with the court order.

—*ChristianToday.com*

Legal Status of Abortions in States

Abortions are now banned in at least twelve states as laws restricting the procedure take effect following the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. An additional two states now ban abortion at about six weeks of pregnancy. In many states the fight over abortion access is still taking place in courtrooms where advocates have sued to block enforcement of restrictions. About half the states are expected to enact bans on abortion. In some of these, abortion remains legal for now as courts determine whether existing or new bans can take effect. In the other half of the states, abortion is legal but still may be restricted in some way.

—*NYTimes.com*

Pediatricians Backpedaling on Minors Transitioning

For years, the American Academy of Pediatricians has pedaled gender ideology, including so-called “transition” for minors, but recently, after an article called out the organization, it published its own reply. While the response stopped far short of abandoning gender ideology, it nonetheless attempted to backpedal its stance on supporting transgender interventions for “the vast majority of children.” While this may likely be more of a political move to save face than a real change of heart, it was an important indicator that supporters of these interventions are being forced to go on the defense in the public eye—and that is a step in the right direction.

—*FamilyPolicyAlliance.com*

No doubt women of faith in the past were reproached for His name’s sake and accounted mad women, but they had a faith which enabled them at that time to overcome the world and by which they climbed up to heaven.

— *George Whitefield*



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Confession of Faith (34) **Article XXXI: Of the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons**

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

We have already heard that the church must be governed by the spiritual policy which the Lord has taught us in His Word. Christ is the Head of the church and exercises His power by office bearers.

Our present article speaks mainly about the election of the office bearer—how a person comes to that office. The confession does not describe literally how this must take place, for we know from the history of the church that different methods have been used, and this is still true today. The confession states that office bearers must be chosen but does not prescribe how this is to be done. Again, our fathers have given us a scriptural view; they were always concerned lest they go their own way; therefore, they let God's Word speak. This is also the rule for the election of office bearers.

In Acts 20 the Apostle Paul writes, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." It is clearly stated that the Holy Ghost has made them overseers, and we also read it in this article, "We believe that the ministers of God's Word, and the elders and deacons, ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the Church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teacheth."

God's Word itself shows the way we must go in these matters. After Judas had committed suicide, the congregation was called together to choose another in his stead. Two men were set as a duo, and after calling upon the name of the Lord, one of these two was chosen. The calling upon the name of the Lord is a very important part since His guidance cannot be missed. The election is not merely a human thing; no, the Lord has given authority to the office bearers, and He calls them through the congregation. As shown in Scripture, the congregation received this power, not only when Matthias was called but also when the deacons were chosen.

Office bearers must be men of honest report, which includes their whole life—daily, social, family, spiritual, and church life. It is possible that the church makes a mistake in these things since we see only the outward appearance of man, but the Lord knows what is inside. It also happens that the same ones are always chosen; personal liking can be a reason that more fit persons are not chosen. How important is the vote which each male member casts, but then also the manner in which it is done. The election is preceded by prayer, but has it already been a matter of prayer before that? Did we also need the Lord in these matters, as to for whom we should vote?

To become an office bearer, a lawful election is necessary. This calling to the service of the church is twofold, internal and external. Internal calling is the inner desire which the Lord gives in the heart to do this work out of love toward God in Christ to the welfare of the church. With such an internal calling the Lord inclines the heart to give oneself unconditionally to Him; the Lord will give the ability to fulfill this task. Such persons have the qualifications or receive these gifts of the Lord. He does not promise how many talents He will give, but they will be sufficient to do the labor in His vineyard.

The external calling to the office takes place under the leading of the consistory, for which we also find a basis in God's Word: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23a). The church elected, but it took place under the leading of the apostles, who took care that everything was done orderly. This is entirely different from the church of Rome. There the government is in the hands of the priests; more important decisions are handled by the bishops, and the pope, as the head of the church, has the last word.

The Reformers returned to God's Word and again placed the election of office bearers in the hands of the church. Different ways were used by them to

elect, but the freedom of the church was guaranteed. The three different methods used in electing church officers were the aristocratic, the democratic, and the aristocratic-democratic. It probably sounds confusing, but we will try to explain them.

In the French churches the aristocratic method was commonly used. The consistory then chose the elders and deacons, and these choices were presented to the congregation only for their approval. The democratic method, used by the Dutch refugee church in London, consisted of three steps. The members first, by a free ballot, selected a list of candidates. From this list the consistory chose those persons whom it considered most qualified. Those chosen by the consistory were then presented to the congregation for approval. In the aristocratic-democratic method of the Scottish churches and the Churches Under the Cross the

consistory presented a list of twice the number of office bearers needed, from which the members then chose half. The names of those elected were then presented to the congregation for approval, that is, their names were read in the congregation on the two following Sundays. If no lawful objections were brought in against them, installation would take place.

Our Reformed fathers have always objected against the democratic method as being too independent. In our denominations the aristocratic-democratic method is always used. Only in exceptional circumstances, for instance, in time of war when it is not possible to call a congregational meeting, the consistory may follow the aristocratic method.

Also, is it a prayer in our life that the Lord may remember us, our churches, and our consistories?



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Samson (1)

(Based on Judges 13)

Manoah and his wife were sad because they had no children. For years and years, they had prayed. Other families had been blessed with children, but God had not given any to Manoah and his wife; only God can give children. Yet, a wonderful day was coming for them.

One day Manoah's wife was working in the field when suddenly she saw a man standing before her. This man was really an angel of God, but the woman didn't know that. She saw that his face did not look like that of other men, and she was frightened. The angel said to her, "You do not have any children, but you are going to have a child, and it is going to be a boy."

Imagine how happy the woman was. Was it really true? Was the Lord now going to answer her many prayers? Then the angel of God told her, "Be very careful what you eat and drink. Do not drink any wine or strong drink, and don't eat any of the things that God calls unclean because this child will be special. God will use him to save the Israelites from the Philistines."

The woman heard this news, too, with happiness; God was going to deliver the Israelites from their

enemies! For forty years the Philistines had been ruling them cruelly. Many people were again crying to the Lord for deliverance; now God was answering their prayers with her own son. The angel told her that her son would be a certain kind of person called a Nazarite, "and just like other Nazarites, he may never have his hair cut."

As soon as the angel was gone, the woman hurried to her husband, Manoah. "A wonderful thing just happened," she cried, "and we are going to have a baby!"

Manoah was very happy. He believed his wife's message, but he wanted to hear again exactly how to bring up such a special child. "O God," he prayed, "please send the man of God back to us so he can teach us what we should do to the child that will be born."

God listened to Manoah's prayer. One day, when his wife was again in the field, the angel suddenly appeared, just as before. This time the woman hurried to find Manoah. "Hurry, hurry," she told him. "Come back with me; the man that came to me the other day is here again."

So Manoah followed her. The angel was still

standing there, and Manoah said, “Are you the man who spoke unto my wife before?” They still did not know that the man was an angel.

“Yes, I am,” answered the angel. Then he told them, “Your wife must do exactly what I told her to do the other day. She must not drink wine or strong drink; she may not eat anything except meat from animals God has called clean, such as meat from cows or goats; and you may never, ever cut your son’s hair.”

Manoah was very happy and humbled to hear God’s message again, and he invited the man to eat bread and meat with them. The angel said, “No, I will not eat your food, but if you want to offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord.”

“What is your name,” Manoah asked, “so when these things happen, we can reward you?” The angel wouldn’t give his name. “It is a secret,” he said.

Then a surprising thing happened. As Manoah burnt the goat as an offering, the flames reached toward the sky—and the angel went up to the sky with them. Then they knew that this surely was an angel. The angel did not come back, and Manoah was frightened. “Now we will surely die,” he said to his wife, “because we have seen God!”

However, his wife was full of trust in the Lord. “No,” she said, “if God wanted to kill us, He wouldn’t have accepted our burnt offering as He did, and He wouldn’t have told us all these wonderful things.”

It wasn’t long before a little boy was, indeed, born into their family. Manoah and his wife named the baby “Samson,” which means “little sun.” Was he not a bright spot in their lives? In bringing up their child, Manoah and his wife taught him about the God of Israel, and God blessed him greatly, preparing him for the work which God had for him to do.



Bible Quiz

Bears

Dear Boys and Girls,

What do you think of when you hear the word bear? Do you think they look cute although you wouldn’t want to meet one in the wild? Do you think they are a prey to hunt or a predator to be avoided? Perhaps you can’t put your garbage out until the hour the garbage truck is expected because bears like to knock over the cans and drag away the bags, so you think they are a nuisance. Perhaps you have seen bears in a zoo, and they made you laugh.

This spring, something about bears struck me. The young bear that climbed the bird feeder pole at someone’s house was rather cute and funny, but the bear that came to our chicken coop was not. He was hungry, and he was powerful. We thought the coop had been built to withstand all predators. Nothing had been able to get in so far, but the bear simply pushed his way into the run one night and waited for a chicken to come out of the coop. A week later, he came back, and since we had secured the run, he decided to simply take the whole door off the coop. We were no match for the bear’s power.

It reminded me of something. The coop is perhaps much like our heart. Perhaps we are quite convinced that sin is wrong, and we want to do what is right. However, what happens when we meet with temptation? What happens when your friend asks you to look at something on his phone that is wrong? What happens when you know you ought to get up immediately and listen to your mother, but the book you are reading is so hard to put down? What happens when the answers for the spelling test are still up on the whiteboard, and the teacher hasn’t noticed? What happens when your brother has been annoying you all morning, and no one will see you knock him over? Are you honest and kind, and do you turn away from wrong things? Perhaps you try. You try very hard, but you try on your own. You think you are able to stand against wrong things. Perhaps you have an older brother or sister who thinks the same thing. “Mom, I don’t need a block on my phone! I don’t do anything wrong!” or “Dad, why don’t you trust me? I would never go on that!”

What is the problem here? Well, just like the chicken coop was strong, we think we can withstand sin on our own without help. We don't realize how strong and powerful sin is. We don't realize how quickly it can overcome us. Most of all, we don't know our own heart. Our heart is not only weak, but it is INCLINED to evil; it is DRAWN to sin. We often let sin into a wide-open door, and if we say "no," soon sin overcomes us so that we do it anyway. Instead of trusting ourselves and asking others to trust us, we ought to bow our knees. "Lord, I am just like the Bible says in Proverbs, my 'feet run to evil.' I cannot do right, and my heart is so sinful that it would rather do what is wrong. I am 'evil, born in sin,' and I grieve Thee every day. Lord, wilt Thou keep me from sin? Wilt Thou give me a new heart? Wilt Thou please 'deliver me from evil'?"

We are no match for our own heart. A bear can be tamed if it lives in a zoo, but it is impossible to tame our heart. However, what is impossible with us, is possible with God. Manasseh was a very wicked man, yet the Lord tamed him by giving him a new heart that desired to turn from evil and turn to God.

We read of bears in the Bible. We read of a mother bear (Proverbs 17), a bear lying in wait (Lamentations 3), a grazing bear (Isaiah 11), a rushing bear (Proverbs 28), and a bear killed by a man (1 Samuel 17). Two bears killed the children who mocked Elisha. This is a lesson, boys and girls. God not only sees what grown-ups do; He sees what children do, too. It matters how children behave. When they do wrong, the Lord is displeased.

Ask the Lord for a new heart. Ask Him every day to keep you from sin. When the Lord works in a person's heart, he will try to do what is right not because he fears punishment but because he does not want to grieve the Lord.

* * * * *

Read 1 Samuel 17:34-36.

1. David's job was to keep (watch) his father's _____.
2. Two animals came to steal a _____.
3. The first animal was a _____.
4. The second animal was a _____.
5. David _____ the lion, and delivered the lamb out of his mouth.
6. He caught him by the _____ and killed him.
7. David was sure that in the same way, the Lord would help him slay the _____.
8. He knew that the Lord would deliver him just as He had delivered him from the _____ of the lion and bear.

Find your answers in the word search.

W N W N L A M B B D D N N B I
 A O A O P A W M R R O O W A P
 P I P I A D A A A I I B M A L
 O L A L W L E E L L E T O M S
 B E A R D B B W A P B E A R D
 E P H I L I S T I N E R A E B
 P A W A P B S L W N O I L H H
 N O I L M L H E A L A M B W I
 B E N A S H E E P M P A W A N
 P E L I O N E L A M B N P P R
 R A A L L T P N D D N R O E A
 A E W R L I O N R R O N A I W
 E R A E B I O A A A I O P E L
 B L P B L I E N E E L I S A B
 H E L I L B A B B B E L H I W

Fill in the blanks.

9. "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three _____ in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh" (Daniel 7).
10. "I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild _____ shall tear them" (Hosea 13).
11. "And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the _____" (Isaiah 11).
12. "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like _____: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us" (Isaiah 59).
13. "For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her _____ in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people" (2 Samuel 17).
14. "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his _____ on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5).

For the Older Children



15. Unscramble the words and use them to fill in the blanks.



rsucde bkac mhet dowo tfyor owt enma wot

“And he turned _____, and looked on _____, and _____ them in the _____ of the LORD. And there came forth _____ she bears out of the _____, and tare _____ and _____ children of them.”

For the Younger Children

Write the word for the picture in each blank.

16. “Let a _____  robbed of her whelps meet a _____ , rather than a fool in his folly.” (Proverbs 17)

17. “As a roaring _____ , and a ranging _____ ; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.” (Proverbs 28)

Answers to September’s “Free” quiz:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. D or F | |
| 2. D or F | |
| 3. C. | |
| 4. A. | |
| 5. E. | |
| 6. B. | |
| 7. B. | |
| 8. A. | |
| 9. D. | |
| 10. C. | |
| 11. E. | |
| 12. F. | |
| 13. Liberty | Galatians 5:1a |
| 14. Truth | John 8:32 |
| 15. Son | John 8:36 |
| 16. Death | Psalms 107:10 |
| 17. Egypt | |
| 18. Adoption | Romans 8:15 |
| 19. Corruption | Romans 8:21 |
| 20. World | Galatians 4:3 |
| 21. Bondage | Galatians 4:9 |
| 22. Yoke | Galatians 5:1 |
| 23. Prisoners | Zechariah 9:12 |

Answers to previous quizzes were received in August from:

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Clay Bakker (2) 13 | Kynlee Grisnich 3 | Daniel Remijn (2) 8 | Mackenzie Vander Wiele 1 | Kohen Vandenberg 4 |
| Paige Bakker 1 | Logan Grisnich 20 | Lauren Remijn (2) 24 | Maurice Van Garderen 31 | Renaee Vandenberg 10 |
| Sara Bisschop 15 | Taryn Grisnich 16 | Jillian Rozeboom 4 | Emmalyn Van Garderen 33 | Esther Vanden Broek (3) 18 |
| Martena Blom (2) 39 | Kate Hoogendoorn (2) 21 | Lincoln Rozeboom 2 | Sadie Van Lagen 2 | Ian Vanden Broek (3) 17 |
| Tiffany Blom 9 | Weston Hoogendoorn (2) 15 | Logan Rozeboom 24 | Lydia Van Manen (2) 36 | Caleb Vogelaar (2) 15 |
| Jaxon DeKorne 9 | Anthony Knibbe 14 | Mindy Rozeboom 25 | Rosalee Van Manen (2) 33 | Matthew Vogelaar (2) 16 |
| Juliette DeKorne 10 | Ashley Knibbe 27 | Nevaeh Rozeboom (2) 11 | Alana Van Manen 2 | Jayden Weeda 22 |
| Zachary Den Dekker (2) 4 | Whitney Knibbe 27 | Alex Rus (3) 28 | Evan Van Manen 1 | Nathan Wesdyk (2) 28 |
| Cody Driesen 32 | Joey Koenen (2) 9 | Kaela Rus (3) 16 | Travis Van Manen (2) 2 | Rebekah Wesdyk (2) 32 |
| Ethan Driesen 4 | Lydia Koenen (2) 11 | Lakia Rus (3) 19 | Kaiven Van Middendorp (3) 38 | Allyson Ymker 22 |
| Toby Driesen 32 | Abraham Mol 4 | Tessa Spaans 6 | Konner Van Middendorp 36 | Cameron Ymker 28 |
| Lindsey Driesse (2) 23 | Lydia Mol 27 | Colin Ten Hove 26 | David VanDeMoere (2) 3 | |
| Allison Ekema 6 | Teddy Mol 29 | Hannah-Jo Ten Hove 13 | Jake Vande Stouwe 12 | |
| Kaylynn Ekema 37 | John Murphy 27 | Hunter Timmer 26 | Jonah Vande Stouwe 12 | |
| Weston Ekema (2) 26 | Andrew Murphy 7 | Kadin Timmer 26 | Joelle Vande Waerdt 1 | |
| Geralyn Engelen 23 | Brielle Painter 1 | Laurencia Timmer 19 | Wyatt Vande Waerdt (2) 22 | |
| Trevor Engelen 24 | Blake Pannekoek 17 | Sierra Timmer 24 | Aubrey Vanden Berg 16 | |
| Ronna Geuze 7 | Lauren Pannekoek 29 | Jedidiah Van Brugge 4 | Heidi Vandenberg 31 | |
| Kyal Grisnich 13 | Andrew Remijn (2) 28 | Miriam VanBrugge 4 | Kristen Vandenberg 18 | |

15 Bibles were sent to Bolivia this month. The total is now 610—thank you, boys and girls!

Key to numbers following names:
 • Numbers in parentheses represent how many quizzes person answered in the month being reported.
 • Numbers without parentheses indicate how many quizzes person has completed toward earning Bibles for Bolivia.
 • Solid box indicates person has earned a Bible in the month being reported. Each time six quizzes are completed, another Bible is sent to Bolivia.

*Prepare me, gracious God
 To stand before Thy face;
 Thy Spirit must the work perform,
 For it is all of grace.
 —Augustus Toplady*

Please send your answers to the address shown below:
 Aunt LenaBeth
 180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
 E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com



Letters to My Young Readers



Welcome to our new members:
Paige Walker, Evan Van Manen,
and Mackenzie Vander Wiele.

Love,
Aunt LenaBeth



Jillion Rozeboom

I unscrambled your word, Jillion! Is it “baby”? That is very exciting news! I’m sure you are a good auntie to the other two children. I hope that all goes well. It is such a blessing and wonder when a baby is born. We can read about some babies in the Bible. Can you name them?

TOO YOUNG?

William Gadsby

I’m not too young to sin,
I’m not too young to die,
I’m not too little to begin
A life of faith and joy.

I’m not too young to know
The Saviour’s love to me
In coming down to earth below
To die upon the tree.

I’m not too young to love,
I’m not too young to pray,
To look to Jesus up above,
And all His Word obey.

Virtue *(continued from page 230)*

the lost evidence of his original plunge; he was wet. He was received with the tenderest affection, stripped in haste lest he should catch cold, and dressed in warm clothing. When the other children came home in the evening, they corroborated his story and all went well. Time passed—father, sister, elder brother, in succession were called away from this world and never knew of the little boy’s stratagem.

What do you think of this in its moral aspect? Here is a case where the evil and the good are curiously mixed. The dip in the river was very different from a forgery made to prove a lie. It was to support a truth, yet it was a kind of forgery. It was a device to make truth appear true. The best rule, however, is to leave truth to support itself. In the long run it will prevail, but this poor little fellow was unable to take the “long-run” into account. To lie under suspicion for a whole day, although it was certain that he would be justified in the evening, was too much for him, and he resorted to a trick.

Something, perhaps, might plausibly be said in defense of the trick. One might allege that the fall was a fact which could be proved by many witnesses. For a time, they were

at a distance, but to begin with, Willie had a kind of documentary evidence on his person sufficient to prove the truth of his claim, namely, his wet clothes. Then, unfortunately, sun and wind rubbed out his evidence, and Willie merely rubbed it in again.

Whatever force there may be in this reasoning it would have been a grander thing to have trusted in truth and to have despised all underhand dealings in support of it. Therefore, leaving our readers to settle for themselves the precise amount of our hero’s guilt in this matter, we would suggest something for older people who may read this. Be careful not to tempt children to engage in such stratagems. When they show a disposition to be true, encourage that disposition by trusting them. To expect truth is at least one method of getting it from children. “The fear of man bringeth a snare,” and into that snare poor Willie fell.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). □

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. A.A. Brugge of Doetinchem, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

To Rev. H. de Leeuw of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, by the congregation of Grand Rapids (Covell), Michigan.

To Rev. B. Labee of Veenendaal, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Declined:

By Rev. A.A. Brugge of Doetinchem, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

■ Obituaries

BAKKER, Marie (Van Voorst) – Age 93, August 27, 2022; Rock Valley, Iowa; Husband – John (deceased); Children – Audrey & Dennis Van Maanen, Fonda & Bob Chedester, Karen & Gerald Meyer, Gary & Joanne, Mary & Gene Rozeboom, John & Sandra, Alan & Avis; 34 grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; Brother – Jake Van Voorst; In-laws – Dorothy Van Voorst; Angeline & Gilbert Hoogendoorn, Evelyn, Leola; predeceased by 1 granddaughter and 2 great-grandsons. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, 2 Kings 4:39-41.)

BEEKE, Dorothy (nee Cook) – Age 101, August 14, 2022; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Husband – Peter (deceased); Children – Beth & Grant Solomon, David & Randi, Peter Jr. & Coleen, Tim & Ronda; 10 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren; Brothers – Jack & Virginia Cook, Eugene & Barb Cook; predeceased by grandson David James. (Rev. H. Hofman, Deuteronomy 5:16.)

KATTENBERG, Hendrik Sr. (Henry) – Age 68, August 19, 2022; Hull, Iowa; Wife – Harriet Ann (nee Fluit); Children – Joshua & Sharla, Hendrik (Rick) & Deborah, Derek & Laura, Alissa & Nathan Van Zweden; 15 grandchildren; Mother – Dina; Sister – Anita & Cory Dau; predeceased by father John;

sister Janet Van Beek, and brother Robert. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Matthew 22:11&12.)

KNIBBE, Mary A (nee Engelsma) – Age 74, August 20, 2022; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Husband – Dirk; Children – Nora & Scott Van't Zelfde, Jeff & Andrea, Kevin & Carrie, Ryan & Rachel, Karla, Randy & Heather, Joel & Jacqueline, Karalyn & Justin Weeda, Trent & Sharla; 48 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Daniel & Sharon Engelsma, Janet & Paul DeVisser, Ted & Nancy Engelsma, Tom & Deb Engelsma; Sister-in-law – Beth Engelsma; predeceased by brother David G. Engelsma. (Rev. H. Hofman, Numbers 16:46-48.)

In Memoriam

Mr. Jacob C. DeKorne

On December 9, 2021, the earthly pilgrimage of Mr. Jacob C. DeKorne came to an end at the age of eighty-five. He served as a deacon in the Covell Ave. congregation for twenty years (1956–1976). May the Lord remember the family that remains and sanctify these callings unto all of our hearts.

The Covell Ave. consistory apologizes for the oversight and lateness of this notice.

— *The Covell Ave. NRC Consistory*

65th Wedding Anniversary

On September 25, 2022, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

John H. & Gertrude Van Beek

hope to commemorate their 65th wedding anniversary.

“For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5a).

811 Heritage Drive, #103
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■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

Monthly copies of the articles appearing in *The Banner of Truth* are available on MP3s and CDs for those who have reading difficulties such as poor vision. These MP3s are produced by a committee in Norwich, with the support of the Norwich consistory, who make the MP3s available to your consistory. Consistories distribute the MP3s and CDs which are provided at no cost. You may contact Mrs. Tillie Lamain at 616-242-0291 or blamain@netscape.net to arrange for a free subscription or to discontinue receiving *The Banner of Truth* on CD.

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— *Editor*

Dear reader, the need is great. If you have an education background, please take a moment to consider the many positions available across our congregations.

Administrators Needed

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. 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 the school board, students, faculty and staff, parents and community.

Relocation expenses and financial incentives will be discussed upon inquiry. For more information or to apply, please contact Tim Mol (education chairman) at 973-204-5677 or email timjmol@yahoo.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org.

TRINITY REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON, welcomes applications for an administrator/teacher for our small school. We are an approved school for grades K-8 but currently have students in the lower grades. We have a four-day school week to allow for adequate preparation and administrative time for our multi-grade classroom. To apply or request more information, please contact the school board president, Mr. Arthur den Hoed, at 509-786-2354 or email artdenhoed@gmail.com, or Maaiké Van Wingerden at 509-840-0437 or email trinityrcs@embarqmail.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, James Okken, 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.**

Teachers Needed

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications from teachers of any grade level to begin in January 2023, D.V. We would be thankful to hear from versatile and dedicated applicants to enable continued provision of Christian education to our youth. All applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination, and eligible for Alberta certification. For information about positions available, please contact the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or marc.slingerland@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter, resumé or C.V., and references to office@ccschool.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2022-23 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. For any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail rdteunissen@yahoo.com.

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWICK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school year with multiple openings for teachers in elementary and secondary. Applicants must hold or be eligible for BC certification, and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCA Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America. Inquiries should be addressed to the principal, Mr. Jan Neels, at jneels@mcca.ca. Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels and to the board secretary, Mr. Toby de Rover, at tobyderover@gmail.com.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, continues to welcome applications for positions in our school. For more information about elementary opportunities, contact the elementary principal Mr. Andrew Korevaar at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-863-2403 ext. 241. For more information about secondary opportunities, contact the secondary principal Mr. Gerrit TenHove at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-863-2403 ext. 303. We continue to invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program for those who hold a bachelor's degree. Cover letters and resumé's should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed and those applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

To All Candidates for Education 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!**

Church Worker—Bolivia

The *North American General Mission* continues to look for someone to fill the Church Worker position in Bolivia. If there is someone in our denomination with a heartfelt desire and love for the truth, with a love for the souls of our fellow man, someone who has learned by grace that salvation can only be found outside of themselves, please inquire for further information at nagm@execulink.com. Certain conditions will apply.

"Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods" (Psalm 96:3&4).

From Depths of Woe I Raise to Thee

From depths of woe I raise to Thee
The voice of lamentation;
Lord, turn a gracious ear to me
And hear my supplication;
If Thou iniquities dost mark,
Our secret sins and misdeeds dark,
O who shall stand before Thee?

To wash away the crimson stain,
Grace, grace alone availeth;
Our works, alas! are all in vain;
In much the best life faileth:
No man can glory in Thy sight,
All must alike confess Thy might,
And live alone by mercy.

Therefore my trust is in the Lord,
And not in mine own merit;
On Him my soul shall rest, His Word
Upholds my fainting spirit:
His promised mercy is my fort,
My comfort, and my sweet support;
I wait for it with patience.

What though I wait the livelong night,
And till the dawn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in His might;
It doubteth not nor feareth:
Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;
And wait till God appeareth.

Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth.
Our Shepherd good and true is He,
Who will at last His Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow.

—*Martin Luther*