

the **Banner** *of Truth*

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The Official Periodical
of the Netherlands Reformed
Congregations of the
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Fruitful Death

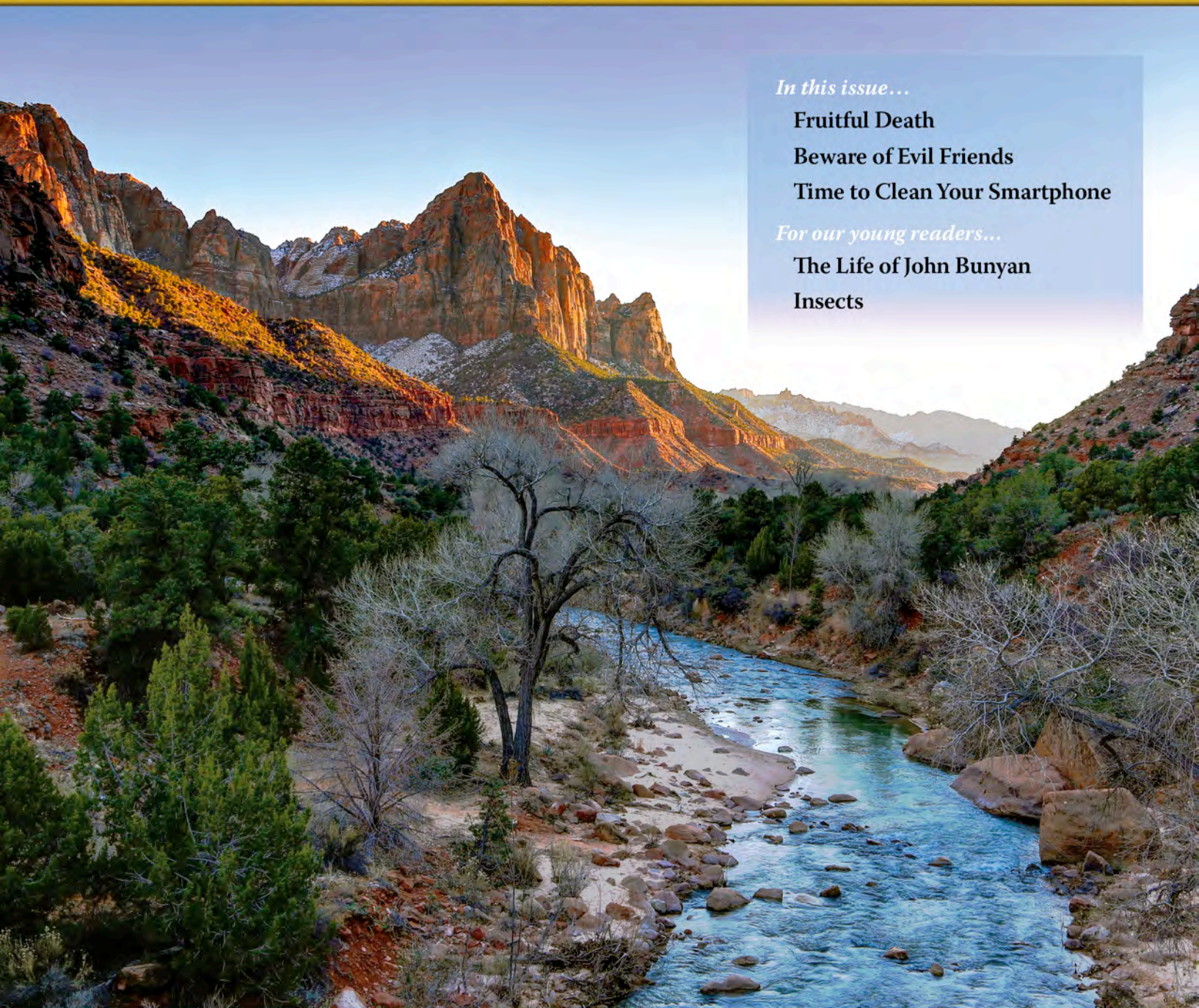
Beware of Evil Friends

Time to Clean Your Smartphone

For our young readers...

The Life of John Bunyan

Insects



*"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them...
I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." ISAIAH 41:17a&18a*



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Rev. J. den Hoed, Editor

972 Hemlock Loop, Lynden, WA 98264

Home: 360-354-0210 • Study/Fax: 360-354-0216

James Okken, Managing Editor

3 Joseph Court, Hackettstown, NJ 07840-4664

973-809-2112 • Fax: 973-381-1483 • E-mail: jamesokken79@gmail.com

John Sweetman, Subscription Manager

11 Split Rock Road, Boonton Township, NJ 07005

973-335-4679 • E-mail: nrcbannersubscriptions@yahoo.com

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In all our publications, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations aim to remain true to inerrant Scripture and its Reformed heritage as expounded in the denomination's doctrinal standards: the Belgic Confession (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and Canons of Dort (1618-1619). The Netherlands Reformed Congregations are also in agreement with the Westminster Standards (1640s): the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. The Netherlands Reformed Denomination in the United States and Canada consists of twenty-seven congregations and approximately 11,000 members. Our sister denomination in the Netherlands has 152 congregations and a membership of approximately 107,000. The North American churches have established a mission post and congregation in Loma Alta, Bolivia, South America.



Meditation

Fruitful Death

Rev. H.D. den Hollander, Fort Macleod, AB

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

Verily, verily, I say unto you.” “Verily, verily!” Here Christ would instruct His disciples, but the matter is hard. The mind does not understand it when the heart does not receive it. However, the truth does not change. “Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

“Except a corn of wheat fall...” Though a single seed brings forth much fruit, it is only through death. Adam’s death brought forth an innumerable stillborn race. Christ’s death will bring forth an innumerable living multitude.

Christ would have them know that death is the only way. “Except a corn of wheat fall...” Justice must be satisfied. In this, Christ was willing, but because His humanity was real, it recoiled. “O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it.” Yet His human will was without a moment’s disagreement... “Thy will be done.” However, this is not so with His Church. “Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee.” They will not have it for Him. They will not have it for themselves. However, He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” He goes before. They will follow. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Adam’s death was threefold for his posterity; we read of more, however, for the posterity of Christ. First, their love for life in this world must die. “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” Of the prodigal we read, “He came to himself.” Where? In the swine pit, where he died to the world after he had spent all in it. “But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” There, in that pit, new life was born. “I will arise and go.” By the Spirit blowing where it listeth, a dead man becomes a living soul. A new life hungering... thirsting...longing...for despised and forsaken treasures, where the least have bread enough and to spare. “For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psalm 84:10). Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, a great man with his master, honorable, a mighty man in valour...“but he was a leper.” This was death to all. “But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

Secondly, Paul says that the first husband must die. “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.” The first covenant wed us to the law of merit. Do this and thou shalt live. Death must break this bond. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

As death is unnatural, human nature recoils, so also with our bond to merit. Naaman turns away in a rage but where mercy reigns, death is certain. “There is no discharge in that war.” The Lord perseveres with His people. The gentle voice of a servant is heard: “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” The arrow enters. The heart is conquered. The victory is won. “Then went he down.” He has a willing people in the day of His power. The old way is forsaken. The first husband is dead. “But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Hope! New hope! A better hope! The old perished...a new is born. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” “A New and Living Way!” “On earth peace, good will toward men.” Revealed from heaven! Suddenly! Surprisingly! Great light! Great joy! So suitable, so simple: Wash and be clean!

Thirdly, turning is not yet cleansing, for the leprosy has yet to be cured. The direction and expectation are new, but the disease remains. “I rejoice, and tremble.” The new way goes down. “Then went he down.” Down the banks. The river is low. A valley of humiliation. Another death. A different death. Down from the chariot. Royal coverings removed. Uncovered in the light of God’s countenance. All dignity perishes. Shame appears. The malady exposed. “His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers...” (Job 33:21&22). The evidence is clear: Corruption! The cause is single and the judgment plain: Guilty! A sinner before God! He cannot live!

“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God.” “Down unto death Thou leadest me.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die...” “And dipped himself...according to the saying of the man of God.” “If there be a Messenger with him, an Interpreter, One among a thousand, to shew unto man His uprightness” (Job 33:23). God is righteous.

God is just. It is shown. The mouth is closed. And dipped himself...once...twice... "The waters come in unto my soul"...three...four times... "I am come into deep waters"... five...six...seven times... "the floods overflow me."

"Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a Ransom" (Job 33:24). "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth" (Job 33:25). "And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Life! New life! The malady cured, for the cause is grappled with! The debt is paid! Justice is satisfied! The head of the enemy is bruised! Principalities and powers are spoiled! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." "I pray thee, give to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD." One talent? Take two talents. "...but if it die...fruit...it bringeth forth much fruit."

And yet? "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant." A new life. Not a dead life, but a living life, a daily life. And in that new life...a new death...a daily death. "I die daily." The flesh is yet a child's, and death is at the heels. It is the fourth death, to be lived out, every day again, until the day of death. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." The fruit of the new life!

"Another law in my members, warring...bringing me into captivity." "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Fruit! Much fruit! Daily fruit! Living out of another death, yes, out of another Life. "I am He that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Grafted into Him. A branch of the Vine. The Living Vine! Never to be separated...else I die. "Without Me, ye can do nothing."

Finally, also for the Church, the seed of the body will be sown in the earth. "Lo, I die." "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." "I go the way of all the earth." "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." For "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). "And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healings of the nations" (Revelation 22:1&2).

"But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Oh, fruitful death! Holy contradiction! Wonderful mystery! Hid from the wise and prudent, revealed unto babes! ❑



Bible Study

The Names of the Mediator (4)

Rev. C. Neele (1962-2022) & Rev. A. Schot, Nunspeet, the Netherlands
(Translated from the 2010 issues of *De Saambinder*)

Branch

*"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth My Servant the **BRANCH**" (Zechariah 3:8).*

The Lord teaches the prophet Zechariah in night visions. In the fourth night vision we find the high priest Joshua accused by the devil. God the Father speaks; Joshua is redeemed. He is acquitted from guilt and punishment and received a right to eternal life by virtue of the merits of the Angel of the LORD because of the eternal good pleasure. An unclean high priest is cleansed. We find him in this night vision as a silent man. He could bring nothing against Satan's accusations. Nor could he appeal to his office as high priest. His conscience condemned him. Uncleanness

and death remained. The image of the accused high priest is shocking to the prophet Zechariah, but it is no less poignant for the people. After all, does this people not consist of returned exiles who look with joy and expectation to the high priest Joshua? However, if this high priest is unclean, nothing remains of their expectation.

Satan has powerful means against the Church. Sometimes he oppresses with the enmity of the world. At other times, the old man stirs and there is no strength in the battle against sin. Also, the Prince of Darkness aims his arrows at the servants of God. Despondency and despair make it impossible for them to serve. Joshua has no answer; neither do his friends. Then the Lord speaks the wonderful word, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth My Servant the **BRANCH**."

In spite of everything, Joshua may still be alive, as well as his friends, who are fellow warriors in God's kingdom. The fact that they are still alive after the exile is a sign. Christ, the Branch will come. A branch testifies of new, spotless life. Dejected office bearers, silent guilty ones, God will make His word come true. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jeremiah 23:5). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31b).

—October 14, 2010, Rev. C. Neele

Bread

"I am that **Bread** of life" (John 6:48).

In John 6, we find the Lord Jesus at the Sea of Galilee. There He fed thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish. This was a miracle. A miracle of Christ is a sign. We must see deeper than the external miracle. Christ wanted to give spiritual instruction with the multiplying of the bread. The multitude did not understand this spiritual instruction and neither did the disciples. The multitude wanted to make Christ king, but the Saviour forced His disciples to go into the ship; He Himself sought solitude. The disciples come into a storm; thus, Christ is going to prepare them for spiritual instruction.

The following day, the multitude finds the Lord Jesus in Capernaum. There He teaches about the meat that endures

unto everlasting life. He calls Himself the true Bread that came down from heaven. Bread is the common food in Scripture. Bread and water are the necessities of life. Thus, Christ is necessary for spiritual life. Without Him, no life is possible. Have we learned this already?

Someone who eats bread receives new vigour. The Lord Jesus wanted to use plain bread as a sign in the ministry of the Holy Supper so that there would be new strength in spiritual life. He calls Himself the living Bread. This is food that revives the soul. He who does not eat this Bread remains in the midst of death, but whoever may eat it will live forever. He declares that this Bread is His flesh. His flesh will be broken. He will die and, thereby, obtain eternal life.

In the time of the Bible, bread was not cut, but pieces were broken off. In each broken piece was nourishing power. This is how it will be experienced if the Bread of Life may be eaten. This is Bread that never runs out. God's people may eat a piece of this Bread each time. By faith they may look upon Christ who gave His flesh. This is the food for their souls. This is enough for them in this life but also in dying, yes, even unto eternity. There is a people who may know that a crumb satisfies. However, a beggar-people receive not only the crumbs of this heavenly Bread, but they receive the whole Bread. For "he that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). *This is life.*

—February 11, 2010, Rev. C. Neele

(To be continued)



A Word in Season

Philip's Request

Rev. A.T. Huijser, Rijssen-Noord, the Netherlands

(Translated from the March 8, 2018 issue of *De Saambinder*)

"*Shew us the Father*" (John 14:8b).

John 14 leads our thoughts to the Easter room in Jerusalem. There we meet Christ in the circle of His disciples.

It is the night in which He will be betrayed and over which the shadows of suffering fall; they lead toward Calvary with the Surety. While His heart and thoughts are focused on the course He will take as Priest, He is teaching His disciples in these last hours as Prophet.

His teaching is focused more than ever on His heavenly Father. Sitting at the Easter table, He speaks of the Father's house, of the way to the Father, but also of His oneness with the Father. Precisely with regard to the latter, His oneness with the Father, He tests in these moments the spiritual fruit of His teaching in the lives of His disciples.

A sincere desire

In verse 7 we read, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him." Then suddenly there is Philip's question: "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

Much could be said about this question. First of all, let us interpret this question positively. It echoes something of a genuine desire for full salvation. Christ's teaching concerning the Father aroused the looking forward in Philip's soul to the full revelation of the matter, to the full communion with God as a reconciled Father. Of this he says, "It sufficeth us." In other words, if we may come to that full and blessed knowledge of God, then nothing is left for us to desire. Therein lies full salvation.

Philip and his fellow brethren missed the exercise of faith to discern God in a Jesus going to the cross. That touched the Mediator; that was a bitter drop in His cup of suffering.

At the same time, this question also reveals a lack of exercise in true faith. On that lack Christ puts His finger when He says, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?” Philip speaks of the Father, and the Son points to Himself. Now that exactly exposes the error. Philip separates the knowledge of God the Father from the knowledge of God the Son. Therefore, Jesus continues, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” Do you feel the pain in Jesus’ words? Philip’s question signifies a piece of suffering on His way of suffering. Did His disciples understand so little of it even though He had been with them for three years? Oh, certainly, they knew Christ by faith but not as well as they could and should have known Him. Their vision was still so clouded. Their spiritual eye was not yet sharpened enough to see through the dense garment of His servant-form and see in Him the glory of God.

Indeed, Philip and his brethren missed the exercise of faith to discern God in a Jesus going to the tree of the cross. Indeed, that touched the Mediator; it was a bitter drop in His cup of suffering. He says, “He that hath seen Me hath

seen the Father.” Certainly, in His teaching God’s wisdom shone forth; in His miracles God’s power and, after all, in His spotless purity God’s holiness shone forth. Calvin notes, “So nowadays such people progress badly in the gospel, who, not satisfied with Christ alone, are driven to foolish contemplations to seek God.”

Longing in the soul

Therein lies a lesson for us as well. If it is right in the lives of God’s children, their souls will, at times, know a longing for the revelation of full salvation, for the blessed communion with God. There will be found the urge to meet a reconciled Father in God, but whoever separates this benefit from the Mediator is guilty of foolish reflections that sadden the Mediator and leave the soul unfruitful. The closer the walk of faith with Christ, the closer the soul approaches to the Person and work of the Father.

At the same time, we may say that there is a distinguished knowledge of God the Father. For as much as it is true that in Christ the glory of the Father shines forth, the Father has not thereby ceased to be an independent Person. Therefore, it is a glorious matter to be able to find a homecoming with the Father through the Mediator with consciousness for one’s own heart and life and to hear the call of the Pentecostal Spirit in the soul, “Abba, Father.” ◻

Every Time That Name...

Rev. G.J. van Aalst

(Translated from the February 25, 2016 issue of *De Saambinder*)

Pilate—every time during these **Passion weeks** you hear his name. “Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified”—it sounds even every Sunday evening from the Apostolic Creed in Article 4 of the twelve. It is the second name of a human being mentioned in this summary of the core of the Scripture testimony. We can understand that the name “Mary,” the woman who gave life to the Saviour, is explicitly confessed time and again. Is it not too much honor to time and again mention the man who took His life? The “governor”—this is how our King James translation refers to Pilate—ruled Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. He is known to have been a man of inflexible character, self-willed, implacable, corrupt and violent. Beatings, atrocities, executions without prior judicial verdict and harsh indifference are charged against him. In the year 36—not so long, therefore, after his pronounced death sentence on Jesus—he proved untenable and was called back to Rome to answer for his practices.

Question 38 of our *Book of Comfort* emphatically asks this question about the constant mentioning of the name of this pagan lawbreaker: “Why did He suffer under the Pontius Pilate as judge?” Every time again that name

sounds during our worship service. Why? There are several reasons for this. In the first place, the Church from ancient times wants to express with this that the suffering of the Saviour really happened. It can be dated because it took place at that time in history. On behalf of Emperor Tiberius, Pilate had legitimate authority as the procurator of Roman authority. Even though he abused it, he was officially a government person.

However, answer 38 of our *Book of Comfort* cites another reason. Our confession emphasizes that Pilate was a judge in the great Roman Empire. The Romans, with their high development and culture, insisted on just justice. Therefore, Roman law is to this day the best developed law in the world. Now, what does our confession say? That Zion’s Surety was innocently condemned to death by Pontius Pilate, who administered justice within this righteous legal system. Profoundly judging “by the grace of God,” he testified at least five times that he found no guilt in this “malefactor.” This is an official trial recorded in the annals of history. It was no misunderstanding, no coincidence that the Lamb of God, although holy and innocent, went to the cross, condemned to a criminal’s death.

Our *Book of Comfort* would not be a book of comfort if it did not at the same time make the application: “*might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.*” He was innocently condemned by right in order that His guilty-to-death Church might be equally delivered by right. So, Pilate, the law-breaker—in God’s incomprehensible order—has everything to do with God’s justice that had to run its course.

Have you come to love this justice? Have you, under the “righteous judgment of God,” already heartily bowed under

the first question of the part of deliverance (Lord’s Day 5, Question 12¹)? May Article 4 of the Apostle’s Creed,² along with this name Pilate, thus be comforting to you because you experientially know of the “severe judgment of God” upon you. □

¹“Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserved temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favor?”

²“He suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell.”



Contemporary Issues

A Timely Letter

A letter from the Committee for Correspondence with the Canadian Government

Dear Church Members,

The world that we live in is rapidly becoming hostile to the commandments of the Lord. The pressure to murder children in the womb, and the killing of the elderly or disabled under the guise of euthanasia or assisted suicide is greatly increasing. When we see the alternative family structures that man invents through the LGBTQ movement, the desecration of the Lord’s Day, together with the promotion of evil through media, business, and entertainment; then we fear the Lord is leaving us over to ourselves (Romans 1:18-32). In many ways our governments conform to the pressure to turn away from God’s Word, creating laws that promote the evil and forbid the good.

Yet, it remains our duty as citizens to faithfully remind our leaders of the Truth, bringing them daily and weekly in prayer before the Lord. We need to ask the Lord to give them wisdom, even if it could be His will to convert them. The Lord clearly commands in His Word to “honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17). In the following verses, the Lord shows how we must do this, with the example of servants obeying their masters. Even froward masters are to receive due respect for their office’s sake and to be obeyed in all things not contrary to God’s Word. Yet, the ways of the Lord are to be placed before them in honesty with kindness, with no fear of the consequences, no partiality to human persons, with respect and dignity to their office. To honour the king, or ruler, is to show him the truth, while demonstrating respect for his position.

Therefore, as the Synodical Committee for government correspondence, we have four requests to place before you:

- First, that you continually remember our leaders in prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

- Second, that you deport yourselves toward them as good and lawful citizens, to influence them through good conduct (Matthew 5:13-16).
- Third, that you respectfully speak or write to them. This is twofold. When government officials bring up a bill, attempting to preserve the moral foundations of our society, or to restore what has been lost, we must encourage them. This is very important, as they will, generally, also receive much opposition. On the other hand, when they debate bills which are contrary to God’s Word, we are to direct them to God’s laws and the consequences of not obeying them. This point also includes our being present at public meetings where these matters are discussed (Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- Fourth, that our men who have the gifts and talents would prayerfully seek positions in local or broader government. Although it is not easy in our time, we may be used also in this way as small instruments in our community and country to stem the tide (Matthew 25:14-30).

To fulfill these callings, it is necessary for each of us to personally stay informed. We as a committee will seek to help by trying to remind you in a timely manner when items come forward that need denominational attention and action.

Friends, let us remember that we are citizens and inhabitants of this country and, therefore, guilty citizens. National sins bring national guilt, followed by national judgments when there is not repentance. The Lord grant the portion of Ezra in Ezra 9:6—when he was confessing the sins of his people, he has confessed, “our iniquities” and “our trespasses.” Let us further remember that it is written in 1 Peter 4:17, “For the time is come that judgment must

begin at the house of God.” May the Lord grant a repentance and reformation from OUR worldly ways while the opportunity is yet given. Further, when we are given to behold the solemnity and seriousness of the times (who perceives it?) that we and our children may be given to hasten and flee by God’s grace to find shelter under the sheltering wings of the precious Immanuel. Christ is still

gathering His Church by Word and Spirit. To that end may the Lord remember us, our children, and our nation in His mercy. □

(Dear readers, this is not only good direction for those who live in Canada but also for EACH of us in whichever country we live. —Ed.)



From Our Inheritance

On the Begging List

John Warburton (1776–1857)

My dear child, I was very glad to find by your last letter, that you were on the begging list. God never had, nor ever will have, one soul on His begging list but will overcome all his enemies and shout, “Victory at last.”

Poor Jacob, when Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, came to his God as a beggar, and what a wonderful victory he obtained. Israel stood fast at the Red Sea and could see nothing but death; Moses set to begging the Lord—He heard and answered, bringing them through the Red Sea with wonder and joy, and destroyed all their enemies. Amalek threatened the destruction of Israel; the poor beggars with their cry went to their never-failing God, and they prevailed—God said, “I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” Poor Elijah, who was attacked with a captain and his fifty, and ordered to come from the top of the hill, that he might deliver him to the king, cried out unto his God—and fire came down from heaven and destroyed him and his fifty. Poor Elisha, who was surrounded by the Syrian army, cried unto his God that He would smite them with blindness and lead the whole army into the midst of Samaria—and He delivered them up to the king of Israel. Ahithophel planned David’s destruction; poor David’s cry was unto his God, “O LORD, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness”—and God overthrew his counsel, and he went and hanged himself. Hezekiah was surrounded with a terrible army, that with open mouth was ready to swallow him and Jerusalem up at a mouthful, and he cried unto his God—and the Lord arose and went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, one-hundred-and-fourscore-and-five-thousand, and when they arose early in the morning, behold! they were all dead corpses.

Oh, my dear child, what a mercy! what an honor! to be on this begging list. Not one soul that has entered on this begging list shall perish but shall stand every storm and live at last. Thou hast no cause to be ashamed of having thy name upon this list. I know the flesh does not like it, but

what of all the flesh; it is no friend to thee nor me. We have proved, again and again, that it is the sworn enemy of God and of the soul and is ever lusting against the Spirit so that we cannot do the things that we would. I have been upon the begging list hard upon fifty years and am more employed in the trade of begging now than ever. Oh, bless the dear Lord, that He does keep me sensibly begging for Him to teach me, to keep me, to help me, to defend me, to supply me, to support me, and never leave me nor forsake me, for my very soul knows I can do nothing without Him. I have been hundreds of times afraid that I had quite wearied Him and that He would never appear again. Bless His dear name. “Charity never faileth,” and I think He is more kind, tender, and compassionate, towards me now than ever. I am so helpless, so ignorant, and such a little that I need His tender compassion every moment. What a mercy to sit at the feet of Jesus, to learn of Him, who is meek and lowly of heart; no wrath, anger, prejudice, evil speaking, nor evil experiences here but humility, rest, and peace.

Oh, my dear child, may God grant thy soul, and mine, to be much here. This is the place to overcome evil with good, to bless when we are cursed, to pray for them that abuse us, and reward good for evil. What is the use of talking if there is no humble walking; the talk of the lips only tendeth to penury. I understand by your letter that you have met with some that had such an appearance of love that, had it been possible, they would have pulled out their eyes and given them to you but now cry out, “Away with Him.” Ah, my child, thou wilt see more of this if thou art spared, supported, and enabled to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear, but what hast thou to do with that? The wrath of men shall praise Him, and the remainder He will restrain. Take no notice of all the rage of man; God can and will manage them a great deal better than we can, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.” I have proved this hundreds of times in my pilgrimage. □



For Young and Old

Beware of Evil Friends

Rev. A.W. Verhoef (1917-1996)

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

Man is a social being. God made him so. “It is not good for man to be alone” applies also in this broader sense. The average man does not like to be alone. To be “forsaken” is to be cursed. Men have gone insane in the loneliness of their cabins in the frozen wastes of the north-land, far away from the company of their fellow-men, or in the solitary confinement of their prison cells.

If the Lord works saving conviction within us, it can be that we retreat at times from the company of our fellow-men for quiet and rest, for prayer and meditation, as the Lord Jesus did. Before long, however, we will go out again and seek the company of others. Those who believe that the devil cannot enter locked doors are sadly mistaken. He goes about in the loneliness of the cloister just as freely as on the crowded thoroughfares of our cities. God wants us to be kind, friendly to all. “Be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient” (2 Timothy 2:24b). We have to learn to see in every living human being an immortal soul which needs conversion and instruction on his journey to eternity.

Nevertheless, though a Christian lives in the world, he is not to be of the world. His companions must be chosen carefully. Do you know what good company is? It is what the apostle testifies in Acts 2:44, “And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” The world cannot and does not share with God’s people that which is, and always must be, uppermost in our heart.

Let us not walk in the counsel of the ungodly nor stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful. It has been correctly said that “wicked companions invite us to hell.” May God give us the courage to turn away from such.

God’s Word tells us, “Lovers of their own selves.” By nature, man is self-centered, an egoist. The one who always thinks and speaks in the first-person singular, “I,” is a bad influence and poor company for a true Christian. Such can say mildly, “Everyone must live his own life,” but this means, being interpreted, “Shall I be my brother’s keeper?” Do we feel at home in the company of those who are cold of heart?

How can you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and enter into intimate friendship with those who seek only money and what money can buy? How can we worship God, the living God, and admire a person who in all his waking hours bows down to the golden calf? Pity,

not admiration, is all we can have in our heart for such idol-worshippers.

Do we not often make the mistake of turning toward such persons—and then not to tell them their fault but to court their friendship? The Lord tells us, “From such turn away!” How can a child of God sit in the seat of the scornful? If those who mock God are your friends, how long will it be before you begin to think and speak as they? Remember Peter! He stood with the servants and warmed himself at the fire for a time, but when he heard the cock crow, he came out from their company, weeping bitterly.

I wish to say a few words in particular to young people and children. If you find that one of your friends or playmates is disobedient to his parents, speaks disrespectfully of his parents, kindly reprove him or her for that sin. If he/she persists in sin, there is but one thing for you to do. God tells you, “From such turn away.” Tell me with whom you play, and I shall tell you who you are.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is the unholy trinity which wrong friends worship. In the end this trinity reaps eternal disaster.

Although people can speak in our days about “new freedom,” “no inhibitions,” “no restrictions,” may it please the Lord to teach us, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” I know in many lives it is now, “Let us have fun.” They read unprofitable books and magazines, visit movie-theaters, and indulge in sin for one purpose—to get a thrill out of it. We pray you, “From such turn away.”

People will call you old-fashioned, but there are some things which are always up-to-date and contemporary, even today. Those are the things which God has ordained. What God makes is still “very good.” God is still “up-to-date” in His holy Word, in the realm of revelation.

Jesus suffered for poor sinners and will redeem them at a great price. Therefore, it would be a miracle if we could rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. You can read this of Peter and the other apostles. They were in prison and had to go through many tribulations, but the Lord tells us in Acts 5:41, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” May the Lord give such light in our heart, and may we turn to Him and His Word rather than to the evil influences of our fellow-men. Beware of evil friends! □

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is the unholy trinity which wrong friends worship. In the end this trinity reaps eternal disaster.

Great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. —John Bunyan



Media Use

Time to Clean Your Smartphone

Submitted by the Lethbridge Modern Media Committee

Every number of years, usually when your closet or drawers are overflowing, you realize that you need to clean out your closet. It is generally easy to start—you can quickly identify the pairs of clothes you no longer wear because they do not fit or you do not like them anymore. However, sometimes you may have to take a step back and reevaluate what you still should be wearing. Perhaps there has been a recent sermon on dressing decently that has touched your conscience. When you stop to review your clothes with a critical mind, you may pick other clothes that need to be replaced. You may not have realized how much your wardrobe has changed in the last number of years, but now when you step back with a different perspective, you might realize that one shirt might have inappropriate writing on it, another might be too tight, or a skirt might be too short.

With how much technology and software have changed in the last ten years regarding our cell phones, we must take a similar step back to evaluate what is on our phones and how we are using them. From the very beginning, our church leaders understood the dangers of television, but now instead of flipping through channels on our TV, we are scrolling through different apps on our phones.

Identifying items on someone else's phone that should be removed might be easy, but reviewing your own phone will be more difficult because you have grown into how you use it. As an adult, you can look at some apps on teenagers' phones and quickly critique them. You can look over their shoulder or look at reviews for apps such as TikTok and Snapchat and identify them as problem apps that should be removed. However, what do you do when some of the components on those apps are also on your favorite apps, like Facebook or Instagram?

Instead of identifying a list of good and bad apps, we need to learn to evaluate them based on their merits and risk. When television was banned in our churches, it was not because there was nothing good on it. It could be that many people got a TV to watch the news, which in itself is not wrong. From there, many people could have discovered useful cooking or business shows that they could consider educational. However, the availability of inappropriate material was too accessible, so the appropriate use did not justify television's downside. None of you will argue that our cell phones have much more potential for inappropriate material and wasting of time than the TV ever had.

Therefore, when reviewing apps, the first review should be the risks it poses. These risks can include wasting time or using inappropriate material. Both these risks are generally

found in apps that contain video sections or “reels” that continuously play short videos from influencers or other non-friends. Almost all popular social media apps, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, use some type of *Explore* feature that contains pictures and videos that are not linked to what you follow. These videos have numerous problems. The first is that most of them are not created by people you follow and often contain inappropriate language, dress, and other content. The second reason is that all these social media platforms are designed with algorithms to get you to spend as much time on the platform as possible. Therefore, they will follow up videos that you watch with similar videos that you may be interested in. Almost anyone who has used these apps will admit that they waste too much time on them. On top of these risks is the entire subject of social media and the damage that constant connectivity does to an individual's mental health.

The other item that should be reviewed is the necessity of a specific app. You might say Facebook is necessary to keep up with family members that have moved away. Or you might use Facebook or Instagram to promote your business. If you are a bit younger, you may say that you use Snapchat to communicate with your friends because it has features that make communication much easier than regular messaging apps. In this review, you must consider that all apps are trying to compete with each other for your time. Therefore, many will have valuable components, but all of them will add addictive features to get you to use them more frequently.

Knowing the risks and the usefulness can bring you to a difficult decision. Is the risk of inappropriate content justified because of the usefulness of an app? Do you say that you can control yourself to just use the app for what you need it and avoid spending time in the other sections of the app? If so, do you trust your children to do the same? If you justify the usefulness of Facebook even though it has an unfiltered “Watch” section, can you explain why your children cannot use Snapchat?

The answer to these questions can be complicated, but if we compare it to the TV example, perhaps the best solution is to make the issue black and white and delete all these apps from your phone. You may not have even realized what happened in the last few years, but some apps have been normalized. Along with the increased use of these social media apps, our exposure to worldly dress, attitudes and language has also been normalized, impacting our entire lives. We are not just bombarded with temptations and influences from the world when we go out, say to the

mall, but when we have all these apps on our phones, we are carrying around the world and its influences in our pockets! For example, when you watch a training video from a fitness instructor wearing skin-tight leggings on Instagram, it may cause adultery for one person, and for the next it may normalize indecent dress. Unfortunately, normalization happens without us even realizing it. Because we have become so accustomed to the world's customs, we may not even realize how much they have influenced us.

If you say that you really need a specific social media platform for business or communicating with a family member, it is time to look for alternatives. If Facebook is required for a business, you can log in on your filtered, public computer to manage your account during work hours, but is there really a need to have it on your phone? If you need another social media app to stay in contact with distant relatives, can you not contact them to find alternatives? Your relationship will likely improve if you take the time for individual communication rather than occasionally liking a picture on social media.

As a parent, are you concerned that if you do not let your children use the apps they have been using, they will get a second device to use them secretly? This is a possibility as we are rebellious by nature. However, do you want the rules in your house made by what has become social norms among young people, or can we start to change those norms so that we align more closely to what we have been instructed out of the Bible? It is essential to have conversations with your children to explain the dangers.

This pressure will only get worse as young people today have been exposed to more and more technology. Now is the time to reevaluate where we stand. Are we okay with getting caught up in social media and further evolving technology? Or is it time to make a stand and consciously remove some of these influences from our lives? In 2 Corinthians 6:17, it says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." If we allow the world to influence us by what we look at on our phones every day, are we really separate if we are not actually different from the world? ☐



Reflections

Evening Twilight (4)

Rev. P. Blok (1920-2019)

(Translated from the book *Avondschemering* [Evening Twilight])

The Fig Tree Withered

"And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away" (Matthew 21:19).

Man is very cunning in hiding his inner life. The will is a hidden source of all kinds of evil. He can cover the inner feelings with feigned love and even with feigned godliness. "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed Him."

How man can hide his feelings of hatred and enmity for a time is evident in the life of Ahithophel. He pretended to be a close friend of King David although his inner being was being consumed by vindictiveness. "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom." During Absalom's rebellion, the unholy well of Ahithophel's heart broke open. "Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night."

Therefore, heart-renewing grace is necessary if it is to be well on the way to eternity. Through the miracle of the renewal of life, the understanding is enlightened, the affections are regulated, and the will is bent. The will of natural man is bent away from God. By grace, the will is bent toward God. This cannot remain hidden.

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The inner resistance to this message of life cannot remain hidden either. Jesus severely warned about that. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The inner life, renewed by grace, is revealed in the fruits. The life given by God and bent toward God is seen in the course of one's life. An aversion to what God hates makes one hate what God hates. The love which is poured in makes one love what God loves. This concerns the entire revelation of God.

So, also, the order of salvation as established in His counsel. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

By the powerful, inward calling, Rahab could no longer endure being in Jericho. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." The grace of life which was granted revealed the choice of life and the fruits of life. Saul of Tarsus is another example of this. He was cut off from his former life. This was clearly seen in his course of life. "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." The will, bent by grace, bows for the revelation of the Word.

In the twilight of the evening of life, I thought of a visit. With an elder we had done some visits in the congregation. It was four o'clock in the afternoon. There was some time left, and we decided to yet visit a woman. In her life had been glorified what Paul wrote, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Through God, she was brought on God's side; the reversal in her life was seen. She received a place in the spiritual poorhouse and lived on the income from above. She was deeply discovered of her state. The instruction from heaven kept her ignorant and poor. The Lord gave her a place in the hearts of God's companions. She just could not rise above experiencing her state, and then the victuals are quickly gone. Yet, the Lord would discover deeper, for we met a woman who had been placed outside of everything. From the Word the Lord had uncovered her state of death, and she was at a loss with it. "And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away."

It was an arrow right through the soul. "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." The will, bent toward God, had to accept what was written there. We found her, a miserable person, one who had lost all hope in self. With everything, she had ended in death. For all God's people it

was true, but she was without fruit. She could no longer make out life from the life she had experienced before. God's justice had placed her outside and demanded satisfaction. Yet, we were inwardly pleased with her course. Bowing under justice makes way to the satisfaction of justice although we could not make her believe this. The Lord granted us that we could bring her and leave her in God's hands. The Lord gave to bring her along into the inner room and resolved the matter under the preaching on Sunday. It was the evening twilight of her beginning spiritual life. The revelation of salvation through the Saviour would be given to her. "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness."

Under the preaching, God broke the bonds. The soul, stirred by anxiety, was brought up from the grave as it were. She received instruction about a suffering and paying Surety. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The Lord made room for the virtue of His justice and the satisfying of the justice by Christ. Her will was bent toward God, to be saved as God had established in His counsel.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

*The Lord is just in all His ways,
In all His works the Lord is kind,
And all that call on Him in truth
In Him a present helper find.
He will fulfill the heart's desire
Of those that fear Him and obey;
Their cry the Lord will surely hear,
And He will save them when they pray.*

—Psalter 398:2 ◻

(To be continued)

Curatorium Announcement

The Lord willing, the Curatorium hopes to convene on Wednesday, June 5, in Grand Rapids at the Beckwith NRC church. The purpose of this meeting is to hear men who may have received an attest from their consistory pertaining to a calling to the sacred ministry of Word and sacrament. We commend this meeting to the prayers of the congregations, supplicating the Lord that it might please Him to give clarity and the leading of the Lord's indispensable Spirit in these weighty matters. May the Lord give opening and freedom to admit what the Lord of the harvest Himself thrusts forth.

At the moment our theological school is empty. May this great need, which is especially felt in the vacant congregations, be continually bound upon our heart. We do

not deserve the least token of the Lord's attention and favor, but it is the Lord Himself who commanded to pray for laborers in the harvest.

Consistories who receive freedom to grant an attest must notify the clerk of the Curatorium. The deadline for an attest to be submitted is May 7, 2024, D.V.

May the Lord graciously provide and be in our midst.

On behalf of the Curatorium,
Rev. J. den Hoed, *Chairman*
Rev. H. Hofman, *Clerk*

2339 Deer Trail Drive, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
Email: hofman@premieronline.net
Telephone: (616) 805-4904



Commentary

What place does God's justice have in our lives?

Rev. A. Schot, Nunspeet, the Netherlands

(Translated from the February 18, 2023 issue of *Reformatorisch Dagblad* [*Reformed Daily*])

In my previous article I called attention to Advent preaching. It is only natural that I should now write a few lines about the preaching during the Passion season.

Several well-known ministers left a collection of sermons on Christ's suffering. I mention M. Antonides, D. Bruinings, A. Hellenbroek, J. Durham, J. Flavel, Th. Van Der Groe, H.F. Kohlburge, and Franciscus Ridderus.

That ministers bring these seasonal sermons to attention is entirely in line with the Apostle Paul's word, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Did Paul really preach nothing else at all? Those who know Paul's sermons and letters know better. Paul also uncovered, admonished, and separated, but he gave no rest outside the only ground. Paul himself came into contact with God's law in a penetrating way. He called it "the terror of the Lord." Those who know that judgment by experience will have no rest anywhere else. Why is it, after all, that many people do find rest when they cannot tell how that Christ's merits have become their portion? That is worrisome.

Passion preaching is first and foremost the preaching of God's justice. If that justice does not function, the preaching is superficial and does not do justice to the sufferings of Christ. If that justice does function, one must arrive at the sacrifice of Christ. Christ, on the Via Dolorosa ("Sorrowful Way" or "Way of Suffering"), fully recognized that justice of His Father. He saw that justice functioning in the earthly judge and that is why He bowed. That recognition Christ also teaches to His people. A clear example of this is the thief on the cross.

It worries me that many do not accept the "function of the law" (Advent preaching). Consequently, it follows that they will also find the "accepting God's justice" redundant (Passion preaching). By this I am not saying that God's children are asking to perish. Alexander Comrie wrote in his sermon on 1 Corinthians 6:17 (from the book *Attributes of Saving Faith*¹): "You may notice that we do not wish that

man should come to this, to be as willing to perish, as to be saved. This is a dangerous error against God's Word and contrary to our nature." However, Comrie added, "But to this end he must come, to vindicate and justify God."

Passion preaching is also preaching our blindness. Christ taught His disciples the necessity of satisfaction to God's justice. They were stone-blind to it. Intellectually they knew it very well, but intellectual knowledge and knowledge by faith do not go together. Because God's children are struck with the same blindness today, Passion preaching remains necessary. Our fathers call for humility: "First, that everyone consider by himself, his sins and the curse due to him for them, to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God, considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great, that (rather than it should go unpunished) He hath punished the same in His beloved Son Jesus Christ

with the bitter and shameful death of the cross" (Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper). The more the Prophet Christ teaches of God's justice, the more room there is for Christ's priestly ministry.

Passion preaching is also preaching of the Shepherd's love to His sheep. The sword of God's justice should have struck the

sheep, but it awakened against the Shepherd, and in that Shepherd God turns His hand to the little ones (Zechariah 13:7). Those who have become small under God's justice are sought out by the Shepherd. Their salvation is not *contrary* to God's justice but is *anchored* in God's justice.

Christ's suffering is also for an example. Peter wrote, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." The way of the Surety is also the way of the Church. In this, too, Passion preaching remains much needed. □

Passion preaching is first and foremost the preaching of God's justice.

If that justice does not function, the preaching is superficial and does not do justice to the sufferings of Christ.

If that justice does function, one must arrive at the sacrifice of Christ.

¹A book dealing with the first seven Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism. Not available in English.

The Spirit never loosens where the Word binds; the Spirit never justifies where the Word condemns; the Spirit never approves where the Word disapproves; the Spirit never blesses where the Word curses.

—Thomas Brooks



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

Rev. H. Hofman, Beckwith, Grand Rapids, MI

What is meant by the established Church?

This question was asked recently at a sing-a-long for young people, and I promised to answer it in *The Banner of Truth*, as well, as it really is a question that nicely fits the criteria set for the Q&A page.

The Bible clearly speaks about degrees or steps in the knowledge and experiences in the Church of God. Naturally, this is so in any earthly family as well. An infant of two years old is just as much a true child of the family as one who is eighteen years old, but common sense shows that the eighteen-year-old can understand and verbalize much more about what it means to be a member of the family than the other. Also, when we become a father or mother ourselves, more knowledge and experiences will be added to what it means to be a son or daughter. I remember in that regard what my father would say to me upon occasion, "Wait till you are a father yourself, then you'll know..." Now I can say the same to my children regarding being a *grand-father*...I am sure many readers will recognize this.

The Apostle John speaks in his epistles of little children, children, young men, fathers etc. When we read what the Dutch Marginal Notes explain here, they clearly do not refer to a distinction merely in age but also in experience. The Apostle Peter concludes his second epistle by exhorting, "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" To mention more: Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3 that he could not speak unto the Corinthians as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, "*even as unto babes in Christ.*"

The established Church, then, refers to a certain maturity in spiritual matters and leadings. It is a blessing if it pleases the Lord to lead further upon the way of grace and to exercise in the mysteries of salvation. I fear that we live in meager times as far as this is concerned. There can be several reasons for such a poor state of affairs. One of the main causes, I am afraid, is that nowadays there is a speedy resting in and upon an experience or two. Some rest in the

fact that the Lord opened their eyes. Others cling to a text they received many years ago, but there is no progress. With progress I mean something of dying to self and increasing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also possible that after it pleases the Lord to show more of Himself, that God's children begin to rest in being established...It is worse though, if some *think* they belong to the established but demonstrate in their speech and demeanor that they have lost sight of what it is to remain poor and lost in themselves. This prompted the more established people of God sometimes to say, "They have run aground by high tide." May the Lord teach!

Recently—while reading in Rev. Van Reenen's book about the wilderness journey of the children of Israel—I was struck by how he describes the difference between the established and a less assured faith. Case was jealous of God's people because they may daily go to that fountain and draw with joy water out of the wells of salvation, but Bart replied, saying, "I don't know if I say it right, but I find it already so precious if I might *thirst* for it in a right and lively manner." I summarize it in my own words: some may thirst in a true lively manner after the water of life while others may drink, but let the established church remember that it is not always that way. David longed and said, "*Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!*" (2 Samuel 23:15), but as the above-mentioned author wrote, "The enemies kept that gate occupied."

Thus, a measure of caution is in place when we speak about being established. Also, the established Church does not keep the matters of faith secure in their pockets or possession. To say it with John Newton—and this is true also for the established Church—if the Lord does not prevent it, the buzzing of a fly can become a distraction. It is the Lord who deals to every man the measure of faith. □

Send your questions to: Rev. H. Hofman, 2339 Deer Trail Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505, or hofman@premieronline.net.

Word and Spirit

Those that care not for the Word are strangers to the Spirit, and they that care not for the Spirit never make a right use of the Word. The Word is nothing without the Spirit, and only animated and quickened by Him. The Spirit and the Word are like the veins and arteries in the body that give life to the whole. Therefore, where the Word is most revealed, there is most of the Spirit.

—Richard Sibbes



Current Events

Christian Convert's Testimony of Persecution

A former Muslim turned Christian lives in a city with an almost 100% Muslim population. He had a co-worker who was a Christian, while he was still a Muslim. He relates the following... "I used to tease him and say, "What is a human being worshiped for? He died on the cross." I suddenly became interested when I saw him praying and worshiping God. I felt a sense of comfort that I had never had. I told my friend I wanted to go with him to church to find out how Christians worship and hear the stories about Jesus. Is the story the same as the one told at the Islamic boarding school?" Soon this man had been baptized. His family heard of this and gathered to judge him. He was slapped and beaten, and finally, was blocked from his family. He was also fired from his job. "I remember a verse in the Bible," he said. "If you want to follow Jesus, you must carry the cross. I am fighting alone for my life and my wife. We are keeping my whereabouts a secret, considering that my family is still looking for me and wants to bring me back to Islam."

—Persecution.org

Christians in India Pressured

Three members of a Christian family in Chhattisgarh state, India, who converted from Hinduism in 2020 have been attacked by other villagers because of their faith. It is reported that one of the family, a thirty-five-year-old man, was approached by a group of twenty people who asked him if he would convert back to Hinduism. When he refused, a mob of around two hundred fifty people gathered at his house and pressured him to renounce his Christian faith. He fled into the jungle. When he returned home, his family told him that they had been given an ultimatum to convert to Hinduism or face consequences. He called the police, but they told him that similar incidents had been reported all over the region and that their hands were tied. Village leaders were summoned to the police station, but efforts to diffuse the situation failed. One morning, three people came to his house and asked him again if he was ready to renounce his faith. When he refused, they hit him with rods, and he fell to the floor. His mother and brother pulled him away and the attackers turned on his father. The mob quickly grew, and he again fled to the jungle. When he returned, he saw his father unconscious on the floor and immediately took him and his brother to the government hospital, where all three were admitted. His father was in a critical condition due to a head injury but has improved and there are no longer fears for his life. The attack on his family is just one of hundreds that take place every year on Christian individuals and churches across India. The police are mostly complicit, or of no help.

—ChurchInChains.ie

Good Policy in Canada

In good news, although not entirely good enough, the Alberta Premier announced a plan to introduce policy changes related to vulnerable youth targeted by the transgender-lobby in a monumental win for parental rights, women's rights, and children's rights. In what was a widely anticipated announcement, the premier said that children do not have the capacity to make life-altering healthcare decisions. The new policy will ban minors aged seventeen and under from surgeries. Moreover, hormone therapy will not be permitted for youth fifteen and under (other than those who have already started). This includes several more related policies; one, for example, said that parental notification and an opt-in requirement by parents is required if teachers intend to give formal instruction on gender identity, sexual orientation, or human sexuality.

—TheCounterSignal.com

What President Biden Would Focus On if Re-elected

Convinced that the ongoing Republican threats to abortion access will provide his party political jet fuel in November, President Biden spoke forcefully about reproductive rights in his State of the Union address, calling on Congress to protect abortion. Biden said that he believed *Roe v. Wade* "got it right" in securing access to abortion in the country and emphasized that if voters elect Democratic majorities in the House and Senate in November, he will push for a law enshrining nationwide the same protections to abortion access that *Roe* had guaranteed.

—Time.org

Israel Meets Trouble Delivering Aid

Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) review found that IDF troops did not fire at the humanitarian convoy but did fire at suspects who approached the nearby forces and posed a threat to them. The IDF said that thousands of Palestinians swarmed the aid trucks, which were traveling toward distribution centers, looting the trucks' equipment. They added that "incidents of significant harm" occurred to civilians from a stampede and being run over by trucks. These findings were quickly rejected by the Palestinian Foreign Ministry.

—CNN.com

U.S. Meets Trouble Delivering Aid

Reports say five people were killed and ten others injured when air-dropped aid packages fell on them near Gaza City. Footage posted on social media showed a large cluster of aid parcels suspended from parachutes drifting through the sky but appearing to get tangled before one, with its chute deployed but not fully opened, dropped much more quickly than the rest. The U.S., Jordan, Egypt, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium dropped aid over Gaza on Friday in an attempt to get supplies, including desperately needed food, to residents. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) denied in a statement that the fatalities were caused by U.S. airdrops. "We are aware of reports of civilians killed as a result of humanitarian airdrops. We express sympathies to the families of those who were killed. Contrary to some reports, this was not the result of U.S. airdrops," CENTCOM said.

—GlobalNews.ca

Sin Is a Plague

The best course to prevent falling into the pit is to keep at the greatest distance. He who will be so bold as to attempt to dance upon the brink of the pit may find by woeful experience that it is a righteous thing with God that he should fall into the pit! Sin is a plague, yes, the greatest and most infectious plague in the world; and yet, ah! how few are there that tremble at it, that keep at a distance from it.

—Thomas Brooks



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Life of John Bunyan (1)

(Taken from the book *Christian Stories for Children*)

The old jail of Bedford, shown in the illustration, will always be remembered as having been the birthplace of the book entitled *Pilgrim's Progress*. There its author wrote the first part of it during his long imprisonment. The name of John Bunyan is familiar to all our readers, yet a brief sketch of his life may be helpful. He was born at Elstow, near Bedford, in 1628. It is believed that his father was a gypsy tinker (in former times a person who traveled from place-to-place mending metal utensils), and what he has written of himself seems to support this. He says, "My descent was of a low and inconsiderable generation, my father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families of the land."

None the less, poor as his parents were, they did not neglect sending their children to school, for which John felt very grateful in later years. At a very early age he acquired the sad habit of swearing, for which he became notorious. He proved, however, "the way of transgressors is hard," for after spending a day thus in sin he was terrified at night with fearful dreams and thoughts of devils and wicked spirits, who, as he thought, were trying to carry him away. At times, thoughts of the Day of Judgment would so fill his mind that, in the midst of his play, he was often fearful and miserable. Having thus early in life (for he was not yet ten years old) gotten such evil habits, they grew up with him, becoming part of his nature.

As he got older, his fears left him, and he became more hardened in sin until he married. Then, reading two books, which his wife possessed and were all the dowry she had, and partly by her influence, he

was led to attend the parish church twice every Sunday. Yet, at this time he was totally ignorant of the nature of sin and his need of a Saviour. The times in which Bunyan lived were very corrupt. The king, in 1618, issued a permit to all who would go to evening prayer on the Lord's Day to entertain themselves in the afternoon with such games as leaping, dancing, playing at bowls, shooting with bows and arrows, as well as putting up May-poles etc. Those who refused to come to prayers were forbidden these sports.



Bunyan was only too glad to take advantage of such a law by playing games and profaning the day which the Lord had set apart for His worship. However, one Sunday morning when he went to church as usual, the minister spoke of the evil of Sabbath breaking. He felt in his conscience that the sermon was intended

for him, and, for the first time, he experienced what guilt was, going home sad at heart. Nevertheless, as soon as he had eaten, he shook the sermon out of his mind and went to his sports with increased delight. The same day, as he was in the midst of a game of cat (possibly a game similar to cricket or baseball), having struck it one blow and ready to strike another, a voice from heaven sounded in his soul, which said, "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?" At this, he was greatly disturbed, and leaving his cat upon the ground, he looked up to heaven and saw with the eyes of his understanding Jesus Christ looking down upon him greatly displeased and threatening him with grievous punishment for these and other ungodly practices.

He stood thinking in front of his friends when it was suggested to his mind that it was too late to

expect mercy. Despair took hold of him, and he made a desperate decision to go on with his games, determining to have his fill of pleasure before he went to hell as he thought. He went on in sin with great greediness, cursing and swearing, and playing the madman. For this, he was once reproved by a woman, who was herself a loose, ungodly person, saying it made her tremble to hear him, and that he was the most ungodly person that ever she heard in her life. This silenced him and put him to shame; he wished in his heart that he might be a little child again and that his father might teach him to speak without swearing.

How it came to pass he knew not, but from that time he swore no more. He became a wonder to himself, and shortly after putting on an outward form of religion, he thought he “pleased God as well as any man in England.”

In the providence of God, John Bunyan moved to Bedford to follow his calling as a tinker, and in one of the streets of that town, he came where there were three or four poor women talking about the things of God. “And me thought,” says he, “they spake as if joy did make them speak—as if they found a new world and were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbors.” His own heart began to shake, for such things as they talked of had never entered his mind. He,

however, felt he must listen to them, and continued going again and again and found his heart softened.

When they brought Scripture to prove their statements, he felt convinced of the truth of what they said and pondered the things in his heart. Thus God, in the riches of His free grace and boundless compassion, brought him to that wisdom which Moses points to, “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” (Deuteronomy 32:29).

We cannot include all that he experienced in this short story. We will only say that the Lord led him to a greater knowledge of himself as a lost, ruined, guilty, needy soul, and in due time showed him he was just the person Jesus came to save. This led him to rejoice in Him as his Saviour as described in his *Pilgrim’s Progress*, where Christian arrived at the cross, from whence he went on singing—

*Blest cross, blest sepulchre, blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me.*

(To be continued)

Dear Parents, the book from which this article is taken, and many others like it, contains several short and simple stories which children love to hear. We hope you read these or similar stories to them (prayerfully). It will certainly prepare them to read more religious books on their own when they grow older. —Ed.



Bible Stories for Little Ones

God Protects David from Saul

(Based on 1 Samuel 23&24)

“David, we need you,” cried some men, running toward David. “The city of Keilah needs help! The Philistines have broken into it!” Before David went to help that city fight, he did the best thing he could have done; he asked God if he should go there. God told him he should, but David’s men didn’t think it was wise to go up. “Do you really think we should?” they asked. “Look how afraid we are over here in Judah; just imagine how afraid we’ll be when we have to go to Keilah and face a whole army.” Again, David prayed to God, and God said that He would certainly be with the Israelites and help them win the battle. They did win; God helped David destroy many Philistines and protect the people of Keilah.

How thankful to Him they should have been, but they were not thankful. When Saul came to Keilah looking for David, the people told Saul they would HELP him look for David. How unthankful they were. Listen to what King Saul said, “Look how God is helping me capture David; He has brought him into a town with bars and gates.” However, that was not true.

Poor David! Now he had to run away and hide somewhere else. He must again “flee as a bird to your mountain away!” Look at what the Bible tells us here: “And Saul sought him (David) every day, but God delivered him not into his (Saul’s) hand.” God was protecting David even though it seemed as if everyone else was against him.

One man did not forget David. Jonathan, his good friend, came to David at his hiding place and told him, “Oh, David, don’t be afraid. I know for sure that my father will not kill you, and that you will certainly be the next king over Israel. I really believe that, deep down, my father knows that, too.” What a special kind friend Jonathan was! He was not jealous of David because David would be king instead of him. No, he came to him far out in the mountains to remind him to trust in God, and then they promised to keep their friendship. God sent Jonathan at just the right time; God used Jonathan to encourage David in the Lord, just when David needed strong faith. Now a new trouble came. The people of Ziph, the area in which David was hiding, found out where he was and—they went and told King Saul.

What did Saul say? “May God bless you,” he cried, “for being so kind to me.” What a thing to say! Saul and his men could not find David, at first, but David could see them getting closer and closer. Then it seemed that Saul would surely find David; they were on opposite sides of the same mountain. What was David to do? All David could do was pray, and that is what he did. We read his prayer in Psalm 54. “Save me, O God, by Thy name,” he prayed, “For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul!”

God sent an answer just when things seemed most impossible. Suddenly, a messenger came running to Saul. “Hurry, hurry,” the man cried. “The Philistines have invaded the land, come back to the city!” Saul had to stop searching for David and go to battle against the Philistines. Thus, God protected David once more.

When the battle against the Philistines was over, Saul had not forgotten David. As soon as he heard that David was in the mountains of Engedi, he took three thousand men and went to find him. Now the wilderness of Engedi was a perfect place to hide. There were hills and valleys. Sheep and wild goats scampered up and down the rocks. There were many large caves in the sides of the mountains. David was hiding in one of those caves with some of his men. He could hear Saul and his men as they came closer—and closer—and closer to where he was hiding. How afraid David must have been! During this time, he wrote Psalms 57 and 142. They tell us his thoughts as he prayed, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me!” (Psalm 57); “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psalm 142).

And then—Saul came into the cave. David might have thought everything was done for. Maybe he thought God would not answer his prayer, but God did answer it. Saul did NOT see David! The king just thought this was a good cave to take a rest in, and so he lay down. “Now is your chance,” David’s men whispered to him. “Now you can kill him! See, God has brought him right here to you.”

Then David quietly got up, took his knife, went over to Saul, and... Did he kill Saul? No, he did not. David only carefully cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe and hurried back to the shadows of the cave. Then David’s conscience spoke; he felt sorry for what he had done to Saul. Saul was still the anointed king of Israel and was to be treated with respect. “I cannot kill the king,” he told his men. “It was God who put him on the throne, and I may not put forth my hand against him.”

Do we always remember that, too? Do we remember to respect our parents because GOD put them in charge of us? Do we respect our teachers, or our consistory, even if they make mistakes, because GOD put them above us? And our minister, the policemen, and our rulers because GOD made them our leaders?

Soon Saul felt rested enough to go on his way. Then he heard a voice calling after him. Who could that be? Was it? —Was it? —yes, it was David himself. David bowed to the king and then said, “O my king, you were sleeping in the cave where I was. God brought you right to me, and I could have killed you. In fact, my men told me to, but I would not do it. Now look what I have in my hand, a piece of your clothes. That shows how close I came to you; yet I did not kill you. Now I have never done anything bad to you, and still, you are trying to kill me. Why? What have I done to you?”

“Oh, David!” Saul began to cry. “Is that really you, my son?” At that moment it seems as if Saul really felt sorry for what he was doing. It did not last; oh, no, it didn’t. It is like temporary faith, which cannot save us. For a little while we feel very sorry for our sins, but then it is all over and we go back to the world. Then our hearts are even harder than they were before. “You are better than I am, because you could have killed me but didn’t,” Saul said. Then he said something very surprising. “I know very well that you are going to be the next king. Please promise me that when you are king you will not destroy my family.”

David promised this, and he did not forget his promise, either. Then Saul went home. Did David go home? Oh, no, he knew Saul too well. David stayed hidden in the mountains.



Bible Quiz

Insects

Dear Boys and Girls,

Tom clapped the lid on the mason jar. Holding it up, he shouted triumphantly, "I have one!" Inside the jar, a bee buzzed angrily. Tom peered through the glass at the worried insect which kept banging into the sides, but he did not relent. He wouldn't let it go until tomorrow, after science class. His friends were bringing in insects too. Jason had an ant farm; Matthew wanted to bring in fireflies; Jackson said he had a butterfly kit at home. Tom had thought long and hard; what could he bring? The flies, ladybugs, and mosquitoes had escaped him, but this fuzzy bee had just crawled out of a flower, its belly full of nectar, when Tom had slipped the jar over the unsuspecting insect. It would make a wonderful addition to their science table at school.

One of the many, many wonders of Creation is the world of insects. There are thousands of them. Have you looked at any up close? Have you seen their intricate patterns? Have you seen how they collect their food, hide from predators, use their delicate wings, or feed their young? Have you seen how they survive?

A wasp will overpower a grasshopper, dig a hole in the earth, sting the grasshopper in exactly the right place so that he does not die, but becomes unconscious and lives on as a form of preserved meat. Then the wasp will lay her eggs nearby, so that her children when they hatch can nibble without killing the insect on which they feed; to them dead meat would be fatal. The mother then flies away and dies; she never sees her young. This is just one example of the mysterious techniques with which many insects were created.

The Lord has made everything perfectly balanced in Creation. Without ladybugs, there would be too many aphids; without spiders, there would be too many flies. Once, a certain cactus plant in Australia began to overtake all the villages and farmland. Nothing seemed to stop its rapid spread. Scientists hunted all over the earth to find help—they finally found an insect which eats only cacti. They brought the insects to Australia, and soon, the invasive cactus plant which was causing so much damage was under control.

There are also dangerous insects around us which can sting and hurt us, sometimes fatally. Paul once compared death to an insect. Death is like a stinging insect which frightens us and causes us to want to run from it. Death has the sharp sting of sin. Paul wrote, "O death, where is thy sting?" By this he means to say that sin makes guilty, and this guilt makes death so frightening and hostile; it stings. Death is so dreadful because it is a punishment for sin.

If an insect loses its stinger, it can no longer harm us. When Paul says, "O death, where is thy sting?" he means to say that there is a way in which death no longer harms someone. Paul had experienced the guilt of sin already in this life, as if he had died before death came; he had looked to His Saviour, who had taken the sting of sin upon Himself.

Christ took the sting out of death, and therefore death is no longer so terrifying for God's children. Death's sting is now harmless and cannot damage them anymore. It is no wonder that Paul called out, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He knew from what death he had been delivered, and true thankfulness arose in his heart.

For many, death is a terrifying punishment. For others, it is a passageway into heaven. Which way will it be for each one of us?

* * * * *

Look up the following verses. Which insects are mentioned? Find these in the wordsearch on the next page.

1. Leviticus 11:22 – _____,

2. Exodus 8:24 – _____
3. Joshua 24:12 – _____
4. Job 4:19 – _____
5. Exodus 8:16 – _____
6. 1 Samuel 24:14 – _____
7. Psalm 118:12 – _____
8. Proverbs 30:25 – _____

H E B N G R A S S H O P P E R
A C G U E H F T C K E S E E B
O I S L G A E S T M T G O E I
P L E F C A B E T O A M G O N
T E G H B R L L V O L N V E T
M R E B I F A T T E O W H C S
O E L T E E B L H E H C O G E
I H C Y F S F L E A O L O F R
R M A E L A H E I S R O L P R
R H F T I E B S E R N C M T A
E S L T E P A S L N E U O E A
I R P C S E L H P H T S T B N
B T I A I D N P E M C T H G T

Fill in the blanks with the correct insect.

<i>flies</i>	<i>grasshoppers</i>	<i>locust</i>	<i>hornets</i>
	<i>bees</i>	<i>ant</i>	

9. "Go to the _____, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:"

10. "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as _____, and so we were in their sight."

11. "Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the _____ shall consume it."

12. "Dead _____ cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."

13. "And I will send _____ before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee."

14. "And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of _____, and honey in the carcase of the lion."

For the Older Children

15. In Judges 7, who are called grasshoppers, because there were so many? _____ and _____

16. In Deuteronomy 28, what would eat the trees and fruit? _____

17. In Proverbs 30, which insect marches in a band, without a king to follow? _____

18. In Nahum 3, which insect camps in hedges on a cold day? _____

19. In Mark 1, what did John the Baptist eat with his honey? _____

20. In Deuteronomy 1, who would chase the people like bees do? _____

For the Younger Children

Match the punishment or plague given after the warnings were not heeded.

- a) *The east wind brought the locusts*
- b) *There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.*
- c) *The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.*
- d) *To morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast*
- e) *No swarms of flies shall be there*
- f) *He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one*
- g) *Which devoured them*
- h) *There came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts/ the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number*

21. If thou wilt not let my people go: _____

 (Exodus 8:21)

22. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell: _____

 (Exodus 8:22)

23. And the LORD did according to the word of Moses: _____
 _____ (Exodus 8:31)

24. He sent divers sorts of flies among them: _____

 (Psalm 78:45)

25. If thou refuse to let my people go: _____

 (Exodus 10:4)

26. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt: _____
 _____ (Exodus 10:13)

27. And the LORD turned a mighty strong west wind: _____
 _____ (Exodus 10:19)

28. He spake: _____
 _____ (Psalm 105:31 and 34)

Answers to March's "Questions" quiz:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Rising | Mark 9:10 |
| 2. Question | Mark 11:29 |
| 3. Sign | Mark 8:11 |
| 4. Philippi | Mark 8:27 |
| 5. Words | Luke 23:9 |
| 6. Knock | Matthew 7:7 |
| 7. Servants | Luke 15:26 |
| 8. Authority | Mark 1:27 |
| 9. Multitude | Mark 9:14 |
| 10. Paths | Jeremiah 6:16 |
| 11. Three | Luke 2:46 |
| 12. Lawyer | Matthew 22:35 |
| 13. Reason | 1 Peter 3:15 |
| 14. Durst | Mark 12:34 |
| 15. Given | James 1:5 |
| 16. Other | Acts 15:2 |
| 17. That | Luke 20:40 |
| 18. Again | John 18:38 |
| 19. Heavenly | Luke 11:13 |
| 20. Answer | Matthew 22:46 |
| 21. Answered,
give, drink,
living | John 4:10 |
| 22. Hard, all | 1 Kings 10:1,3 |

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth

180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435

E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Answers to previous quizzes were received in February from:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Clay Bakker (2) | John Murphy |
| Paige Bakker | Andrew Murphy |
| Christina Blom | Blake Pannekoek |
| Jenina Blom | Lauren Pannekoek |
| Lawrence Blom | Nevaeh Rozeboom |
| Martha Blom | Brogan Spaans |
| Kyle Bouman (5) | Jacob Spaans |
| Aryanna Breeweg | Micah Spaans |
| Carly Brouwer (2) | Samuel Spaans |
| Derek Brouwer (2) | Tessa Spaans |
| Thomas Brouwer (2) | Brandon Ten Hove |
| Brooklyn DeJager | Hannah-Jo Ten Hove |
| Laurel DeJager | Emmalyn Van Garderen |
| DeWilde Aidan | Alana Van Manen |
| DeWilde Serena | Evan Van Manen |
| Jackson Dendekker | Travis Van Manen |
| Cody Driesen | Brett Van Velthuisen |
| Ethan Driesen | Kenna Van Velthuisen |
| Jordan Driesse | Joelle Vande Waerdt |
| Kailyn Driesse | Sophia VAnde Waerdt |
| Lindsey Driesse | Wyatt Vande Waerdt |
| Alia Kelderman | Helen Verhoef |
| Anthony Knibbe | Shara Verhoef |
| Whitney Knibbe | Jayden Weeda |
| Abraham Mol | Nathan Wesdyk (2) |
| Madeline Mol | Josie Ymker |
| Teddy Mol | Lane Ymker |
| Zachary Mol | Lauren Ymker |



Letters to My Young Readers

Serena DeWilde

Welcome, Serena. Which songs do you play on the piano? The piano is a beautiful instrument. I'm sure having your opa so close by must be really enjoyable for you. Do you like school? What is your favorite subject? I hope you hear and learn many Bible stories and verses that you will always remember.

Aidan DeWilde

What color is Sarge, Aidan? What makes him your favorite cat? We have a cat named Benji. He is a very funny, fearless, cuddly cat who sometimes acts like a dog. We have a pet named Sarge, too, but he is a dog. Animals are nice to have around, aren't they? How many cows do you have? Thanks for writing and for your answers.

Joanna Verhoef

Thank you for your nice letter, Joanna. You will have to say hello to my sister often for me at church. I have three sisters. One lives nearby and two live far away. Can you think of some sisters in the Bible who were very good sisters to their siblings? There is someone in the Old Testament who watched over her little brother in the river and two in the New Testament who asked the Lord Jesus to come and heal their sick brother.

Welcome to our new members:
Zachary Mol, Aidan & Serena DeWilde,
Brandon TenHove

Love,
Aunt LenaBeth



News & Announcements

Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. A.H. Verhoef of St. Catharines, Ontario, by the congregation of Wolphaartsdijk, the Netherlands.

Declined:

By Rev. J.J. Witvoet of Rock Valley, Iowa, to the congregation of Nobleford, Alberta.

Obituaries

VAN WINGERDEN, John – Age 92, February 23, 2024; Lynden, Washington; Wife – Barbara; Children – Len (deceased) & Janie, Mike & Kathleen, Dave & Miek, Barb & Theo, Amy & Pete, Steve & Anita, Bea & Gerard; 40 grandchildren, 54 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Jannie, Christina, Kees & Rita, William & Joanne, Abraham & Ruth; predeceased by son Len, grandson Tanner, several siblings and in-laws. (Rev. J. den Hoed, Mark 10:27.)

VELTHUIS, Berend (Ben) – Age 86, February 17, 2024; Picture Butte, Alberta; Wife – Elisabeth (“Bep,” deceased); Children – Pieter & Ana, Ralph, Alice, Bert, Janet & Ed Ymker, Elisabeth, Hanna, David & Alisha; 20 grandchildren and numerous foster grandchildren; Siblings – a brother and spouse, 3 sisters and numerous in-laws in the Netherlands; predeceased by a brother and a sister, and several in-laws. (Rev. P. Kleijer, Job 14:10.)

Request Concerning Obituary Listings

Dear Readers,

The editorial team of *The Banner of Truth* attempts to list obituaries for each recently deceased member of our churches. We strive to ensure accurate and acceptable information especially with regard to the families mourning the loss. Though most obituaries are provided by the deceased’s consistory or officiating minister, being certain of some details can prove to be difficult at times. Accordingly, we kindly encourage the appropriate family member(s) to email the managing editor the week after the funeral to assist in confirming these details.

—The Editors

Seniors’ Care Home Positions

The NRC of Chilliwack Sunset Manor Care Home is looking to enhance our health care team. Opportunities are available for health care professionals (RN, LPN, RPN) and care aides. If you would enjoy working with our elderly residents, please contact us. We are willing to assist with obtaining the required recognition of professional credentials in B.C. Please contact board chairman, Neil Stam, at castam71@outlook.com or vice-chairman, Jake Klaassen, at jklaassen@jakesconstruction.ca.

Hope Bay Bible Camp

The Chilliwack NRC hopes to host the annual young adults’ retreat on Pender Island, British Columbia, on May 23-25, 2024, D.V. We welcome all post-secondary young adults to attend for a time of learning, fellowship, and exploration of the beauty of Pender Island. Mr. Arjan Arends, Elder Kevin Romeyn, and Rev. H. de Leeuw will present topics and Bible studies.

Accommodations for the following weekend can be arranged for out-of-town guests. You can register from March 18 to April 30 at bnrcyouth.com. If you have any questions, contact us at bnrc.youthgroup@gmail.com.

We fear men so much because we fear God so little. One fear cures another. When man’s terror scares you, turn your thoughts to the wrath of God.

—William Gurnall

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. Distribution of the MP3s and CDs are provided at no cost by your consistory. 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.

Classis East and Midwest Youth Conference

August 15-18, 2024 D.V.

Classis East and Midwest will be holding a joint Youth Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on August 16&17. Activities will be organized starting Thursday evening with the main topics and discussions scheduled for Saturday, August 17, at Plymouth Christian School. All young people entering tenth grade or age sixteen and older are invited and encouraged to attend. The main topics will be led by Rev. Hofman. To register or make arrangements for accommodations, text 616-329-0705 or email gryouthday2024@gmail.com

Grand Rapids Young Adults (Post-High School) Trip

August 15-18, 2024 D.V.

A two-day trip to a camp in northern Michigan for post-high school young adults is again being organized by a committee under the oversight of the Grand Rapids Beckwith consistory. The overnight trip will be Thursday to Friday evening. Rev. Hofman and others hope to provide meaningful topics and discussions on Saturday, August 17, at Plymouth Christian School. For additional information and to register for the trip, text 616-329-0705 or email nrcmackinawtrip@gmail.com

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on April 19, 2024, our dear parents and grandparents,

Edgar & Doris Rose

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (Psalm 146:5).

2090 Tyler St., Jenison, MI 49428

Anniversary and other announcements will be placed upon request. A donation for their placement would be appreciated. Please follow directions for check payment, shown in gray area at bottom of inside front cover. For consistency, copy size is limited. Send requests to James Okken, managing editor (see contact information at bottom of inside front cover.) Requests should be made **by the first of the month prior to the month of publication.**

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

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill a full-time secondary teacher/administrator position for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about this position, please contact the principal, Mr. A. Vrugteveen at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecs.school.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9 or call 647-271-8984, or email gerry@ecs.school.ca.

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 Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrce_office@nrce.nj.org.

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!**

Teachers Needed

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications from elementary or secondary teachers for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. Applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination and eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to 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 and resumé with references to office@ccschool.ca.

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill full-time elementary teacher positions for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. We would be gladdened by inquiries and applications of individuals who are qualified, versatile, and dedicated but who also love the doctrine according to godliness. For more information about these positions, please contact the principal, Mr. A. Vrugteveen, at 905-563-3077 or principal@ecs.school.ca. Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Call 647-271-8984 or email gerry@ecs.school.ca.

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2024-25 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.

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON, is in need of a teacher for the 2024-2025 school year. We welcome applications for teachers at the elementary, middle, or high school level. To apply or request more information, please contact the administrator, Ms. Beth Bleeker, at bbleeker@nrclslynden.org or the school board president, Mr. Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901 or jdebruin3797@gmail.com.

NERIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, is looking for an educational assistant for the 2024-25 school year, assisting in a one room multigrade classroom. This unique position is for an organized, flexible team player, willing to learn and able to transition between grade levels, who will report directly to the current teacher/principal. The position is for two days per week, subject to increase in future years pending student enrollment. Applicants must be a member of the Nether-

lands Reformed congregations or a closely related denomination. For more information or to apply (before the end of April 2024), contact the principal, Darlene Dekker, at darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or email visser.daniel@outlook.com.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY, needs a junior high English teacher for the 2024-25 school year. Interested applicants are asked to contact Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrce_office@nrce.nj.org.

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is seeking to fill openings in grades 7-12: math, elementary, physical education, and secondary teaching. Some of these positions are part-time or full-time and can be combined depending upon qualifications and experience. For further information, please contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at 712-476-2821 or dan.breuer@nrceia.org.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, welcomes teaching applications for positions in elementary and secondary for the 2024-2025 school year. We particularly have a need in the high school. For more information or to request an application, please contact the school principal, Mr. Nate Bleeker, at 616-454-9481 or email nbleeker@plymouthchristian.us.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, welcomes applications for teachers at the elementary and middle school levels. We are anticipating openings for the coming school year. For more information or to request an application, please contact the school administrator, Mr. Tom Kwekel, at 616-644-2661 or email at tkwekel@pcskzoo.com.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is welcoming applications for a grade 6 and a grade 7 teacher as well as for several high school teachers in various disciplines.

For more information about the elementary opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar, at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629.

For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit TenHove, at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-536-3689.

We continue to invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program. Cover letters and resumes should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed, and those applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

From **THE BANNER OF TRUTH**
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There Is a River

While the dear saints of God below
Travel this vale of sin and woe,
There is a river through the road,
“Makes glad the city of our God.”

This river is His heavenly love,
Proceeding from the throne above;
And all its streams which here are found,
With comfort, joy, and peace abound.

Blest river! great its virtues are;
Pure river, O how sweet and clear!
Deep river, through the desert way;
Full river, never to decay!

Ye thirsty, poor, and needy souls,
For you this wondrous river rolls.
Though sin and sorrow make you sad,
Yet drink, and let your hearts be glad.

Drink, and for ever bless His name
From whom these streams of mercy came:
Drink, for the Fountain's open still;
Drink, for He says, “Whosoever will.”

—*Samuel Medley*

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