

# the Banner of Truth

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The Official Periodical  
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The Unspeakable Gift

True Happiness

If Thou Wilt, Thou Canst Make Me Clean

*For our young readers...*

King Asa

Mire

*"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;  
though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." ISAIAH 1:18b*



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### THE BANNER OF TRUTH

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## Meditation

### A New Year's Reflection: The Unspeakable Gift

Rev. E. Maljaars, Courtland, ON

*"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"*  
(2 Corinthians 9:15).

What is this unspeakable gift? Let us take a moment to meditate on the Giver and His Gift. The Apostle Paul speaks of an unspeakable Gift, upon which our eternal life depends. Surely something that has eternal value warrants your time. Do you sit quietly and think, reflect, ponder, and pray? The Word of God and our forefathers spoke much of meditation. Do you have time for it? Pause, dear friend, and take time to consider this unspeakable Gift.

Dear reader, has your heart been touched by the undeserved mercy of God's Gift so that you feel a deep sense of gratitude, beyond the expression of words? Then your lips will echo Paul's words, *"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift."*

However, perhaps you must confess that you find yourself unable to express such thankfulness, realizing that you do not even desire His Gift; rather, you reject it. Have you considered the consequences of having to leave this life without this Gift? By nature, we do not want to believe our need, and we live comfortably without it. May the Holy Spirit personally convict you, teach you of your urgent need, and give repentance and faith; only then will your heart truly praise His name.

What is this unspeakable Gift? *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

God the Father gave His Son to save perishing sinners from the state in which they plunged themselves—what a Gift! Though this eternal Gift is most perfect and suitable, natural man still rejects it (John 1:11; Isaiah 53:1-3). Is this still you, not believing the death-state you are in and not seeing the suitability of the Saviour? What a wonder you are still alive—what long-suffering mercy!

There is more of a wonder; the Gift comes from One who is all-knowing and all-powerful. This becomes so significant because this Giver not only knows precisely what the receiver needs, but He also has the power to make the recipient who does not believe his urgent state or his need for the Saviour willing, in the day of His power, to receive the Gift.

The Apostle Paul knew of this experience and, therefore, calls it the "unspeakable" Gift. It became and remained such a wonder to Paul. His soul rang with praise to God, *"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift!"*

The Only Begotten Son was given by His Father, who knew the shadow of the cross lay over the manger in Bethlehem. The purpose of the birth of Jesus Christ was to give Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy justice (Hebrews 10) and redeem a people chosen to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). Does your soul long to know the Giver of this Gift and what He gives to undeserving ones? There is much to consider about the Giver and the Gift; let us briefly consider three points.

#### The love of the Father

We read in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world."* To understand this love, we must remember that the Father loves His Son with an eternal love beyond our understanding. John tells us eight times that the Father loves the Son (John 3:35). The whole work of redemption flows from the Father's love toward His Son, revealing that the work of redemption is not, in the first place, about man but rather about the Father's Beloved Son.

God created man perfect and saw in Adam a reflection of His Son's image. Man fell, became corrupt, and was expelled from the presence of God. God, in His wrath, could have justly destroyed this planet and created a new one. Instead, He sent the gospel to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). God proclaimed salvation through His Son by the seed of the woman. This is the amazing truth of our text.

Instead of reading, *"For God so hated the world that He poured out His wrath,"* we read, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."* The gospel is the expression of the love of God the Father. The very God whose majesty was offended by sin—by Adam's sin and our sin—sends the message of good news. *"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved"* (John 3:17).

We read, *"For God so loved the world."* God the Father gave the Son of His eternal love, the Son in whom He eternally delighted, to a world that, by nature, hates His Son. A greater contrast is not imaginable. Has your mind and heart been enlightened to see the awe of this truth? Someone might ask what Jesus meant by "world." John wrote this after seeing the gospel proclaimed to Jews and Gentiles—to the "world." Therefore, we can understand the text as: *"For God so loved a world of Jews and Gentiles, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever—whether Jew or Gentile—believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* This refers to humanity—wicked, corrupt, and rebellious—sinners who by nature hate the Son of God (Psalm 2:2). Dear reader, this gives hope for lost, corrupt

sinners. May the Holy Spirit bless His Word to your soul.

Dear child of God, you who have been born again by grace, you were drawn out of darkness into His marvelous light. What sort of boy, girl, man, or woman were you when the Lord found you? The Bible tells us. You were, by nature, an enemy of God, one who had no hunger for God or His Word—and yet God so loved you. God, in His grace—for no reason in you—set His love upon you; He sought you; He found you—whether a Pharisee or a prodigal—and He renewed you and drew you to His Son (John 6:44). It becomes such a wonder, “How can such a Holy God have love for a sinner such as I am?”

### The Gift of the Father

We read in John 3:16, “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.*” The Father “gave”—a word that signifies giving as a sacrifice. For God to love sinners, His justice had to be satisfied. He gave His Son not only to be born, to do miracles, and to proclaim the Word of God, but also to suffer and die. Why? It is because God cannot love sinners without His justice being satisfied.

The attribute of justice demands punishment for the transgressors of His holy law. God sent His Son in the flesh to become the object of His wrath. It is a mystery that the Father, who infinitely loves His Son and does everything to glorify Him, would give His precious Son to be a sacrifice for enemies. It is an even greater mystery that it “pleased” the Father to put Him to death (Isaiah 53:10).

It is because of the love of the Father in giving His dear Son as a sacrifice and because of Christ’s voluntary offering on the cross that this text ends with a promise.

### The Promise of the Father

“*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). What makes this promise so beautiful? This promise reveals what grace is—the unmerited favor of God. It is an unspeakable Gift. We deserve eternal condemnation, but God proclaims peace, pardon, and eternal life to those who believe in His Son.

By nature, we are blind to the fact that we are completely lost sinners and that our only hope is in the complete Saviour, Jesus Christ. Without the irresistible renewing work of the Holy Spirit, we would all continue to reject Him.

The Holy Spirit makes room in hearts for this promise. He teaches us that we are totally corrupt and deserve God’s wrath. By His work, it becomes a personal reality for us what we read in Galatians 3:10. Has the Spirit brought you to see how astonishing it is that a sinner deserving hell receives a gospel message?

This promise flows directly from the cross. Jesus Christ, by His offering, merited the proclamation of the gospel. If there were no manger, there would be no cross, and if no cross, there would be no gospel.

It was God the Father who, when His Son cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30), demonstrated His satisfaction by rending the veil of the temple, showing that the blood of the Lamb of God removes the wall of separation.

When, by the grace of God, a renewed, guilty, needy, lost, and condemned sinner takes refuge in His Son and trusts in Him, God is honored. The Lord Jesus affirms that the Father receives such sinners (John 6:40).

My friend, if you perish, it is not because the gospel excludes you but because you rejected His Gift through unbelief. It is because you do not believe who God is, in all

His attributes, nor do you truly believe that you are a sinner deserving wrath, nor do you believe your desperate need of the precious Gift of the Father. It is your guilt, and you are under wrath now already.

However, those who believe, by God’s grace, are not under wrath (John 3:18). Therefore, oh, lost sinner, repent of all your sin and flee to the Saviour; forsake all and trust only in Him, and you shall receive eternal life (Canons of Dort II.5-6). There is urgency, my friend; you do not know if you will be given the gift of life tomorrow. You cannot die in peace if you do not receive the unspeakable Gift before your earthly life ends. I do not have the power to give it, but I know my Master. He will not turn away any who come to Him in spirit and in truth, guilty and lost in self, begging for the unspeakable Gift.

I pray the Holy Spirit renews, strips, empties, and reveals the beauty of the unspeakable Gift to your soul (John 16:14) and draws you to the manger and the cross (John 6:44). Those who believe with true saving faith love the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is precious to them—more precious than anything. “*Unto you therefore which believe He is precious*” (1 Peter 2:7).

It becomes and remains a wonder—an unspeakable Gift—“*Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift*” (2 Corinthians 9:15). ◻

*Jesus Christ, by His offering, merited the proclamation of the gospel. If there were no manger, there would be no cross, and if no cross, there would be no gospel.*

He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith.

—Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

# The Offices of Christ Glorious

Isaac Watts

Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love, and power,  
That ever mortals knew,  
That angels ever bore;  
All are too mean to speak His worth,  
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.

But O what gentle terms  
What condescending ways,  
Does our Redeemer use  
To teach His heavenly grace!  
My eyes with joy and wonder see  
What forms of love He bears for me.

Arrayed in mortal flesh,  
He like an angel stands,  
And holds the promises  
And pardons in His hands;  
Commissioned from His Father's throne,  
To make His grace to mortals known.

Great Prophet of my God,  
My tongue would bless Thy name;  
By Thee the joyful news  
Of our salvation came;  
The joyful news of sins forgiven,  
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.

Be Thou my Counsellor,  
My Pattern, and my Guide;  
And through this desert land,  
Still keep me near Thy side;  
O let my feet ne'er run astray,  
Nor rove, nor seek the crooked way!

I love My Shepherd's voice;  
His watchful eyes shall keep  
My wandering soul among  
The thousands of His sheep;  
He feeds His flock, He calls their names;  
His bosom bears the tender lambs.

To this dear Surety's hand  
Will I commit my cause;  
He answers and fulfils  
His Father's broken laws.  
Behold my soul at freedom set;  
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.

Jesus, my great High Priest,  
Offered His blood and died;  
My guilty conscience seeks  
No sacrifice beside.  
His powerful blood did once atone,  
And now it pleads before the throne.

My Advocate appears  
For my defense on high;  
The Father bows His ears,  
And lays His thunder by.  
Not all that hell or sin can say,  
Shall turn His heart, His love away.

My dear, almighty Lord,  
My Conqueror and my King,  
Thy sceptre and Thy sword,  
Thy reigning grace I sing;  
Thine is the power; behold, I sit,  
In willing bonds, beneath Thy feet.

Now let my soul arise,  
And tread the tempter down!  
My Captain leads me forth  
To conquest and a crown.  
A feeble saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.

Should all the hosts of death,  
And powers of hell unknown,  
Put their most dreadful forms  
Of rage and mischief on,  
I shall be safe, for Christ displays  
Superior power and guardian grace.



## Bible Study

### The Names of the Mediator (25)

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

#### Truth

*"I am...the Truth"* (John 14:6).

In the gospel according to John, we read the so-called "I am" texts. These words were spoken by Christ. In each case, He declared who He was. Familiar words are "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the Door," "I am the Life." The Lord Jesus revealed and declared who He Himself was. When the disciples were in great distress during the storm at sea, their Master spoke, "It is I." This word was enough to take away their fear. Christ revealed His mediatorial glory which was a divine glory. When John was allowed to see something of this, he exclaimed, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory,

the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Oh, how great it is when we may behold God in Christ. The virtues of God are revealed in Christ. John received special light in this, also when it comes to God's truth. In his first letter, the apostle wrote: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Christ is the One that is true. The Word of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. The certainty of the Word has been confirmed in Christ. He is the Truth and demonstrates to be the One that is true.

By nature, we are in the bonds of our lying existence. We voluntarily have torn ourselves away from the God of truth. There is no truth within us because, by nature, we do not know God. John wrote in deep wonderment, "And we know that the Son of God is come..." to reveal God's truth, to take away our lying existence. There is room in Christ, who is the Truth. He is true in His Word. What came

from His lips is firm and unbroken. He is true in His way. The fruits from the way of humiliation and exaltation are sure. This truth, too, is declared in the hearts of those for whom Christ has become precious in commencement and in continuation. In Christ is an eternal truth. Have you found rest in it?

—December 9, 2010, Rev. C. Neele

(To be continued)

## Godly Contentment

Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

—Jeremiah Burroughs (1600-1646)

## From the Editors True Happiness

***"Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD"***  
(Psalm 144:15).

On behalf of *The Banner of Truth* Committee, we want to wish you, our readers, the Lord's indispensable blessing for this newly begun year. The year 2025 has swiftly come to an end. There have been joyful days; there have been sad days. Each one, no matter who we are, young or old, looking back will have his/her own thoughts. What the year 2026 will bring us is unknown. We cannot look ahead one moment. For some of us it will be the year that we have to appear before God. If we die for our own account, then the door of grace will be closed forever. This must give an urgent need in your life. If the life of grace is not strange to us, it would be the year of our release. Then the weary night will be past. There is no third way. May the God of all grace bind this upon our hearts.

When we meet each other at the beginning of the year, we often hear, "Happy New Year." This wish is not wrong, but the question may be asked, "What happiness do we mean?" In Psalm 144, David gives thanks to God for the blessings he had received. The Lord had spared him in all that had come upon him. He confessed that all blessings come from God. Here we can think of our families, the church, our work, our nation, and we can extend the list. We must not despise these blessings,

but we cannot meet God with them. Without God's blessing, what must become of us?

At the end of this Psalm, David still wanted to say something. It is as if he said, "I forgot something that may not be forgotten: 'Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.'" Is it not true that especially those people are richly blessed whose communion with God is restored? Can you think of a greater happiness than having God for your portion and to experience His favor? God in Christ is the Fountain and Source of this blessing and happiness. This is the highest good we can receive.

May this happiness be experienced through the operation of Word and Holy Spirit for young and old. This is the hope and prayer of our committee. May our *Banner of Truth* continue to have a place in your homes and your hearts this year. May it be used as a tool in God's hand for the edification of the Church. There are many who labor faithfully to make these publications possible. We want to acknowledge all those who contribute to fill *The Banner of Truth* each month. May the Lord bless His Word unto the saving of all of our souls for the first time and by renewal.

We may be busy with many things, even with many good things, but always remember, "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD." Then we have enough for the time and for eternity.

On behalf of *The Banner of Truth* Editors,  
Rev. P. Kleijer



## Church History

### God's Word in the Life of Martin Luther (3)

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

#### Translation

We have observed how the Lord used His Word in Luther's life by converting him, by making him wise unto salvation. It was life unto his soul. Moreover, for understanding the Scriptures, Luther was entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit. Is this not the experience of all God's people? We ended the previous article with the earnest warning of the Reformer of Wittenberg: "No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people, than to have God's Word taken from them, or falsified, so that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant that we and our descendants be not witnesses of such a calamity."

During the many centuries preceding the Reformation, God's Word had become very unknown for it was found only here and there in a library of a monastery or university and, besides this, it was in the Latin translation known as the Vulgate. It was a treasure kept hidden from the people. Thus, it was no wonder that when Luther himself was blessed by the light of God's Word in his own soul, he wanted others to hear and read the Bible. "I hope," he wrote, "that in due time every city will get a translator of the Bible, because the heads, tongues, eyes, ears, and hearts of all Christians should be busy with this one book." He himself did his utmost to make the Scriptures known to others. That is why he preached so often but also why he translated the Bible into German.

#### Worms and the Wartburg

In 1521 Luther was summoned to appear before Emperor Charles V, the six Electors of Germany, the princes and rulers, the cardinals and archbishops. He had to give an account of his teaching. This Diet was going to be held in the city of Worms, and Luther had received a safe-conduct from the emperor. Many friends warned him not to go, pointing to John Hus who had to appear before the Council of Constance in 1414-1415. Even though Hus had also been promised safe-conduct by Emperor Sigismund at that time, the Bohemian forerunner of the Reformation was soon imprisoned after his arrival, suffered much, was condemned, and ended up on the stake.

Luther, however, though sorely assaulted, was strengthened by the Lord so that he said, "I will go to Worms even if there are as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs." While he was traveling to the Diet, it was told him that his books were condemned and his lot was decided. Still, he did not waver: "Unless I am held back by force, or Cæsar revoke his invitation, I will enter Worms under the banner of Christ against the gates of hell."

We pass by many things which took place at this momentous meeting at Worms, but in the end, when put to the test whether he would take back his books and the errors they supposedly contained, Luther replied. Speaking in German, he declared, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right or safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen." Upon request Luther repeated the statement in Latin.

This testimony meant that Luther's excommunication by the pope a year earlier was not lifted but still in force, while his safe-conduct from Charles V would soon expire.

On the way home, as Luther and his few companions were riding through the Black Forest, they were suddenly captured by a band of armed and masked men. This was, however, by the order of his friend and protector Duke Frederick III, Elector of Saxony. He was called Frederick the Wise—and how wise this "capture" proved to be! Luther was brought to the Wartburg and kept hidden in that castle. Luther called it his Patmos. The world did not know where he was, for he seemed to have vanished. However, God kept him in safety, sparing him for the church, because Luther's work on earth was not yet finished.

At first Luther suffered much from the attacks of Satan. However, after some rest, he began to translate the Bible because the Germans had to be acquainted with the Word of God. Within the space of three months, he completed the New Testament, and soon it was published. Three thousand copies were sold in a few days. In twelve years' time, 200,000 New Testaments had found their way to castles and homes and cottages and beyond. The recent invention of the printing press made rapid distribution of the Bible possible, compared to having to transcribe the entire Bible by hand. By the end of 1521, Luther returned to Wittenburg, eagerly resuming his work of preaching and teaching. Over the course of the following years, Luther, with the help of friends, translated and published the Old Testament as well. By 1834 the entire Bible was available in German.

Luther's translation is lively and striking. He said himself: "I have endeavoured to make Moses so German that no man would suspect he was a Jew." This did not mean that Luther compromised the truth, although he may have translated somewhat less literally than we would desire. What counted for Luther was this: "Translating is not an

art that everyone can practise. It requires a right pious, faithful, diligent, God-fearing, experienced, practical heart.” And with this we cannot but wholeheartedly agree.

Until the end of his life Luther continued to labor. The last printed pages he looked at on earth were the proofs of the latest revision and improvement of his Bible translation. It was a monumental work and proved to be a blessing to thousands in the years following. His translation work also stirred up men elsewhere to translate the Bible into their own language. The Scriptures, which had been blessed to his own heart, had to be made known to all men. This was a burden to Luther, a desire, his life’s task, for by the application of the Holy Spirit, God’s Word is the chief means of salvation as he had experienced himself.

### Searching our heart

One more time before we close, let us search ourselves. We ought to examine our own heart! Is this same love for God’s Word of truth found in us? Do we know the experimental profit of the Scriptures in our soul? Do we see the need that the Bible should be preached and taught in all its fullness? Do we desire that God’s Word should be distributed in all its purity?

Surely, if the Lord has been pleased to shed abroad His love in our heart, then there is a returning love to God. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” Then the ardent love of His Word is found in us. David sang, “My soul hath kept Thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.” But then there comes also love for the souls of our children and

*(This installment marks the end of this series.)*



## *For Young and Old*

### “If Thou Wilt, Thou Canst Make Me Clean” (1)

(The following is a chapter adapted from *The Bible History Told to Our Children, Volume 2* by John Vreugdenhil)

*Matthew 8:2-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-16*

Boys and girls, isn’t it a great privilege when a person is healthy? Most of us do not realize this. Why no, we play and romp to our heart’s content. However, should you ask a weak girl or a sick boy who has been lying upon his bed for years if he would like to play with you, you would see a sadness in his eyes, a sadness and desire which can be understood very easily.

Just consider within yourself, boys and girls, if you had to lie ill for weeks...months...probably years, wouldn’t that be terrible? Do you ever think of this?

Why are so many boys and girls sick for years, and why are most of you healthy? ... Are you better than those

grandchildren, all who are dear and near to us. “And this commandment have we from Him,” wrote John, “That he who loveth God love his brother also.” Then we receive love to our neighbor and all our fellow-travelers on the way to eternity. We wish them to be instructed by God’s Word, and we desire that pure Word to be spread among all nations.

About this Word and about the God of this Word, Luther sang in his well-known hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. Apparently, he wrote this on his way to Worms, shortly before he was to enter through the gates of the city. Young and old, can we confess and sing with Luther the fourth stanza?

*That Word above all earthly pow’rs,  
No thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him Who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also;  
The body they may kill:  
God’s truth abideth still,  
His Kingdom is forever.*

Let us listen to Luther one last time and examine if our heart joins in with him. What a blessing that would be! “I have covenanted with my Lord, that He should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary both for this life and that which is to come.” ◻

afflicted children? ... Never think you are better, for then you are mistaken.

It is sad to be sick. Still there is a great difference what kind of sickness we may have. Besides, if you are sick, you are carefully taken care of by your father and above all by your mother. Many times, they prepare delicious dishes of food for you which your brothers and sisters do not get. However, a terrible sickness prevailed in the Orient; it is still there. This sickness is LEPROSY. This is the most dreadful of all diseases. We cannot think of a disease worse than leprosy. Leprosy is incurable. The best doctors cannot cure anyone who has this sickness. Slowly the entire body becomes covered with festering sores. The fingers, the toes, and finally, the hands and feet fester away. The teeth fall

out of the mouth. Most of the time the leper suffers severe pain. Sometimes the sufferer has an unbearable itch with his sores. That is why Job sat upon the ash heap scraping himself with a potsherd.

Saddest of all, lepers in Israel were not permitted to remain in their own homes. They had to dwell with other lepers among the rocks or in a cave all by themselves on the outskirts of the city or village from where they had lived. They were unclean. No one was allowed to come near them. No one was allowed to bandage their painful sores, for then those people would be unclean, too.

Leprosy was and still is contagious which means that when anyone came in contact with a leper, he also would become leprous.

These unhappy people never received visitors. If a stranger accidentally came near them, they had to warn that stranger. Each leper had a rattle in his possession, and he would shake this while, at the same time, he cried out, "Unclean! Unclean!"

When a healthy person heard this melancholy sound, he would flee as quickly as possible from this dangerous place.

This sickness became worse and worse. Finally, the afflicted person died, often amid extreme pain.

Most of the time, lepers begged, or they were maintained by their relatives. If their relatives provided for them, they would not bring the food to them; no, that was not permitted. They would set the food upon the ground far away from the leper. They would quickly return, and later the leper would come for it.

The lepers often visited together and, in this way, had companionship with each other. They could help each other which was the only comfort these unhappy people had.

There still are many lepers in the Orient, but doctors go and help these poor people. However, it was not so in former days. They dragged out their lives without medication.

I already have told you that leprosy was incurable. God only could remove this disease. If it should happen that God granted recovery to such a sick person, he had to go to the priest who would examine him thoroughly. If it proved the sickness really had left him completely, the cured person would bring an offering to the temple, and after that the priest declared him clean. He could then return to his home and to his family.

However, I must tell you this; such a thing scarcely ever happened. No, nearly everyone having this disease knew he had to die from it.

Boys and girls, this explains what leprosy is. I had to tell you this first; otherwise, you could not easily understand the story which will follow next month...

Do you know what can be compared to leprosy? We, too, are leprous, every one of us, without exception! No doubt you are thinking, "That is not true... but it is true!" We do not have common leprosy, but we are leprous through SIN. Leprosy is incurable. Sin is incurable, too. No person in the world, no matter how mighty, how rich, or how educated he may be, can deliver himself or us from sin. God only can do that. The leper had to die from this disease, so, also, every one of us must die because of sin. □

*(To be continued)*



## *Instructive Gleanings*

### **Onesimus, a Runaway Slave** (10)

*Rev. P. Kleijer, Lethbridge, AB*

*"Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say"* (Philemon 19b-21).

#### **Introduction**

Last time, we saw how Paul became surety for Onesimus. He did not want mercy at the expense of justice, but Onesimus' guilt needed to be paid for. He was willing to take it upon himself, so the guilt came for the account of Paul. We have seen a picture of how Christ became Surety for a people, guilty of death. He had said to His Father,

"Put that on Mine account." This is so necessary for each one of us shall it be well for eternity.

#### **Philemon's debt to Paul**

We read in verse 19b, "Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." Paul points out to Philemon that he has a debt also. He says, as it were, "You owe me more than Onesimus owes you." What is Paul saying here? "God used me as an instrument for your conversion and for your turning unto God." Therefore, such persons are great debtors to their spiritual fathers as we read in Romans 15:27, "It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have

been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” Of course, we must never forget that conversion is a work of God, and not of man. A minister, an elder cannot convert anyone, but it is a great blessing to be used for the conversion of others.

Perhaps we think, is Paul’s reasoning correct? Onesimus had committed a material offense; can you compare that to the spiritual offense that Philemon had committed? May God’s people not stand up for their rights? Must they allow everything to pass over them? God’s people may certainly ask for justice, but what this verse also points to is that God’s people must never forget from what misery they are delivered. If the Lord gives a little impression of whom we are and remain, we will become mild towards others. Will we then not say with the Church of all ages, “Why me, why me? Why such a wretch like me?” Each of God’s people will learn that all the seeds of wickedness live in them. People of God, you are on the wrong place if you secretly begin to think that you are a little better than an unconverted person. The wonder of grace must humble man. Do we not see this in the life of the thief on the cross?

“Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss (Luke 23:40-41).” The material goods we have received may therefore be used to offer a thank-offering to the Lord for the spiritual blessings we have received, but it must never be done without a broken heart and a contrite spirit. That is why Paul was not afraid to ask Philemon for material benefits in return for spiritual gifts he had received.

### Paul’s address to Philemon

Paul addressed Philemon in a tender way, “Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord” (verse 20). He said, “I am a spiritual father to you, and you are my brother.” This is an address of a brother to a brother and not of an apostle to one of the members. We must always keep in mind that all official relationships in the church on earth are temporary and will soon fall away. In eternity there will be no ministers, elders, deacons, and church members. We see that the communion of saints is perpetual. The duty of all believers is that they must minister to one another. The Lord restores in each one of His children the offices of prophet, priest, and king. How must we deal with one another? It says, “In the Lord.” It must be according to the will of the Lord. We must serve our neighbor in love.

We see more in this text. If Philemon would receive Onesimus, it would cause Paul great joy. He said, “Let me have a spiritual joy by consenting to what I desire from you.”

In the original, the word joy (*oninēmi*) is part of the name Onesimus. You do not see this in English. The annotation of the Dutch Bible reads, “Here he uses a Greek word from which Onesimus had his name, which is as much to say as profitable, or one from whom a man receives fruit, help, or joy.”<sup>1</sup> If Philemon would do what Paul asked, it would cause him an inward joy and refresh his spirit. Nothing could be more cheering and reviving to him. Thus, through the grace of Christ, Onesimus had truly become useful and profitable to Paul. May this joy also be found in our time. We must follow the footsteps of Christ who said, “And learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29b). Beloved reader, true joy can only be exercised in Christ and gives a denial of self. We need to examine ourselves as to whether we have these marks of grace. To bring joy to another child of God, we must learn to practice a dying life ourselves and learn to live to God’s honor and the welfare of our neighbor.

### Paul’s trust in Philemon

Paul trusted Philemon which comes out in verse 21,

“Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.” It is as if he says, “I have not written this without a confidence that you in this thing will do what I desire of you, but I write it because of my affection to poor Onesimus. I desire to help him, not doubting of your readiness

to do this thing.” He trusts that he will do even more. Does he mean Philemon will send Onesimus back or let him free? He lays the case of Onesimus in Philemon’s hand. Therein you see his trust in him; otherwise, he would have written a commandment.

### Closing

At the close of this portion, we may ask one another, “Do we do what God requires of us?” This command lies upon us. How many times have we promised the Lord to do so—when we made Confession of Faith, at our marriage, at the baptismal font, at the installation of an office. Are we not admonished of, and obliged unto, a new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God? How is that with us? A tree will be known by its fruit. Where that true life of grace is found, God’s service will become a service of love. Reader, is the service of the Lord lovely in your sight? □

*(To be continued)*

*Beloved reader, true joy can only be exercised in Christ and gives a denial of self. We need to examine ourselves if we have these marks of grace. To bring joy to another child of God, we must learn to practice a dying life ourselves and learn to live to God’s honor and the welfare of our neighbor.*

<sup>1</sup>Annotations mentioned refer to aligning text from *Authorized Version Annotated (including Dutch Annotations)* found on the website <https://bijbel-statenvertaling.com>



## *Among All Nations*

### **What Did William Teellinck Say About Israel?**

*Rev. J.M.D. de Heer, Rotterdam-IJsselmonde, the Netherlands*

(Taken from the book *What Our Fathers Said About Israel*, Chapter 10)

**W**illiam Teellinck (1579-1629) was a man who ardently desired to see the restoration of God's Church, in which many converted Jews would also have a place. At heart, this minister longed for the perfection of God's kingdom in eternal felicity. This yearning caused him to work with tireless zeal for the restoration of the visible church in the big city where he served. From 1613 until the year in which he died, he pastored the large congregation of Middelburg, the Netherlands.

Rev. Teellinck's preaching bears the hallmark of the Puritans in England whom he visited a few times. This hallmark is particularly evident in his attention for the sanctification of life. He defended the importance of a holy walk, not only on biblical grounds, but also upon the consideration that a sloppy lifestyle by church people hinders many Jews from accepting the Christian faith. For that reason, a "further reformation" (of church and state, of personal life and family life, and of the society at large) had to be advanced with power. Rev. Teellinck firmly believed that the Lord would add His blessing to this undertaking, precisely because in this way the threshold for the conversion of the Jews would be removed. The urge in his soul was strengthened by the conviction that the time for the ingathering of the Jews was "drawing near in an irresistible manner," as he himself wrote.

There was another hindrance for the conversion of the Jews. This hindrance—just as strong as the former one and probably even stronger—was the fact that the Roman Catholic Church practiced the worshipping of images. William Teellinck saw this as a reason that the Jews "are powerfully being stiffened in their stubbornness" and that they condemn the entire Christendom as a community of people who adhere to a false doctrine.

Rev. Teellinck was of the opinion that the Jews in the period after the Babylonian exile, as far as this was concerned, did a better job than the Church of Rome. There was no longer any need for the post-exilic prophets, nor the Lord Jesus Himself, to warn against idolatry among the Jewish nation, whereas the Church of Rome had sunk away in these practices. This is why Roman Catholicism was to be

held co-responsible for the lasting aversion to the Christian faith found among the Jews. Consequently, Rev. Teellinck was convinced that the Church of Rome would fall. The ingathering of the Jews would not take place before all external idolatry had been eradicated from the life of Christians.

It is obvious that the godly minister of Middelburg was fully confident that the Lord would convert the Jewish people as a nation. He writes that "very beautiful prophecies" have been issued concerning this conversion. He found another important ground for this confidence in Romans 11:25&26. In his book *Sleutel der Devotie* ("Key of Devotion"), he states his unwavering conviction that these texts do not refer to what can be called "the spiritual Israel" but that they refer to the Jews. According to him, it is a misunderstanding when these texts are applied to "the contemporary state of the Christians."

Having said this, Teellinck also believed that the Lord uses means in working out His purposes. Hence, he underscored the importance of sending out preachers of the gospel among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles.

The conversion of the Jews was an extremely important topic for Rev. Teellinck. This is evidenced by "a prayer of the Christians" that serves as an introduction to *Ecce Homo*, a book he wrote about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. We read, "Stir up the hearts of all who still have a certain influence, in order that they double their efforts to reach out with the gospel wherever they can and may so that the Christian name will increasingly be glorified; that Thy praise, O Lord Jesus, who art the crucified One, will be spread among the heathen more and more; that the perfect ingathering of the heathen and consequently the resurrection of the Jews may be promoted; and that Thy coming (Thy return) to restore all things may be hastened, for the inexpressible and everlasting comfort and joy of all who will appear to be in union and communion with Thee on that day."

Are these matters, which were so noticeable in this prayer of Rev. Teellinck, also items in our prayers? ☐

*(To be continued)*

Jewish infidelity shall be overthrown...the Jews in all their dispersions shall cast away their old infidelity, and shall have their hearts wonderfully changed, and abhor themselves for their past unbelief and obstinacy. They shall flow together to the blessed Jesus, penitently, humbly, and joyfully owning him as their glorious King and only Savior, and shall with all their hearts, as one heart and voice, declare His praises unto other nations...Nothing is more certainly foretold than this national conversion of the Jews in Romans 11.

—Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)



## Church Life

### Elements of the Worship Service (8)

Rev. P.D. den Haan, Rijssen, the Netherlands

(Translated from the June 10, 2021 issue of *De Saambinder*)

#### “Now Depart in Peace”

*For the Reformers, the liturgical blessing at the end of the service was not a ritual without meaning. The decision of the Dort Synod in 1574 reads as follows: “One shall also conclude the sermon with the blessing from Numbers 6.”*

They saw the ground for this blessing in the Holy Scriptures. After all, it is the LORD Himself who instituted this blessing at the end of every morning and evening sacrificial service in the Old Testament. Thus, God formulated this blessing word for word. With the blessing, the LORD also made a promise. We read in Numbers 6:27, “And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” Therefore, the Synod explicitly pointed to the blessing from Numbers 6. (Numbers 6:24-26 —*Ed.*) The Reformers wanted to stay as close as possible to the command of the LORD that we can find in the Old Testament. Our congregations also use the blessing at the end of the Apostle Paul’s second letter to the church of Corinth, 2 Corinthians 13:13.

#### The content

“And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel” (Numbers 6:27a). These words make it clear that the priest pronounced the blessing in the name

of the LORD. After the priest had approached God with the sacrifice and prayed for the people on the basis of the sacrifice, the name of God was to be laid on the people. The priestly blessing from Numbers 6 consists of three precepts.

The first blessing precept is, “The LORD bless thee, and keep thee.” The word “bless” indicates the bestowal of good, both for this temporal life and for spiritual and eternal life. The word “keep” indicates preserving from or protecting against evil.

The second blessing precept is, “The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.” These words point to the kind, beneficial, and merciful presence of God in the midst of His people, so that the people would feel and taste the sweetness of God’s goodness and His compassionate mercy in the Promised One, who was portrayed in the sacrificial service of the Old Testament.

The third blessing precept is, “The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” As the sun climbs higher and higher in the sky and illuminates and warms the earth, so the LORD will have communion with His people. There will be peace between God and His people.

Various expositors see an indication of the three persons in the divine Being in these three precepts..

#### No wish

“And I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27b). The blessing at the end of each morning and evening sacrificial service was not simply a good wish from the priest for the people. It was a command from the LORD for Aaron and his sons with a promise attached. The LORD promised to bless the people by virtue of the sacrifice of His beloved Son. Calvin writes in his explanation of these words, “And hence we gather, that whatsoever the ministers of the Church do by

God’s command, is ratified by Him with a real and solid result; since He declares nothing by His ministers which He will not Himself fulfill and perform by the efficacy of His Spirit.”

This promise is rooted in God’s Covenant of Grace and is pronounced by the Covenant God. God is faithful to His covenant. What firmness and

assurance lie therein! God will bless His people. The personal application of this blessing is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a miracle of regenerating grace when a poor sinner may see by faith the “I will” of this faithful Covenant God.

#### Solemn moment

Thus, pronouncing the blessing is not just a ritualistic custom or tradition but it is the most solemn moment in the worship service. It is the LORD’s answer to prayer and the ministry of reconciliation that took place through the preaching. The blessing is inseparably connected to the preaching and the prayers. Have you ever received an answer through this blessing? □

*(This installment marks the end of this series.)*

*This promise is rooted in God’s Covenant of Grace and is pronounced by the Covenant God. God is faithful to His covenant. What firmness and assurance lie therein! God will bless His people. The personal application of this blessing is the work of the Holy Spirit.*

He that thus walks with Christ here, shall live with him forever hereafter. —*Thomas Hooker (1586-1647)*



## Commentary

### The Twelve Apostles (5)

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Brant County, ON

“...*have ye any meat...*” (John 21:5).

#### Peter (continued)

Peter, in John 21 says, “I go a-fishing.” These words reveal the determination of Peter to go forward during the time Christ was with them after His resurrection and before His ascension. In all ways God’s counsel shall stand. The Lord needs His disciples to be fishing at sea to learn to catch nothing, to learn after all the benefits received that “without Me ye can do nothing.” The Lord will always hold ways wherein He glorifies Himself. Then it will always be “I go a-fishing” ... “they caught nothing.” When the Lord glorifies Himself, then man has to be placed outside of it! How is that in our intentions to go forward? So often in the life of an almost Christian, it is “predictable” that in difficulties or afflictions they will receive something from “above,” but you do not hear that “they caught nothing.”

What a blessing when we catch nothing. Imagine if they caught one fish? Then the wonder would not happen. Do you see how the Lord preserves His Church? He preserves them by keeping their nets empty so that He can fill them. Do you hear that, tried and tempest tossed soul? Maybe you hear around you, this one and that one is again “visited,” but you still sit there in the dark with not one fish in the boat or net. It will change when He, the exalted, resurrected Mediator appears as a stranger on the shore. Do you experience the necessity for the Person?

Something has to be said here of a decision that was made on the water by the empty nets. That decision was to go back to the harbor. They were with seven people in the boat. Notice that there is an interaction between each other, “Should we go back to shore now?” Do you see how important this part of history is? Oh, what a humbling lesson—God’s people with all their talents and abilities have to go back to shore with nothing to show! That is the lesson in sanctification; to learn I remain unholy in myself. They had to go back to the shore, but that was no small thing.

The Lord Jesus hides Himself. From whom? The ones who know Him best. Three years they were with Him. They have received much instruction from Him, but He remains hidden! Some people do not like that expression; they think always to see Him and to have Him, but the Bible is very clear that He is a hidden Person—hidden to reveal Himself! How? “Children, have ye any meat?” The term rings out after the night of toiling and catching nothing. Notice, those who truly have nothing, He calls children. He asks if they have meat, He desires and seeks the interactions. He comes to His Church to ask for meat. Christ here needs no nourishment, but He desires the meat of

His children. The Lord seeks His own work and honor. This question often is interpreted as a common greeting, but we must see it in the context—Christ is coming to His disciples. Christ means it when He asks His disciples if they have meat. The meat which Christ longs for is not fish in general, but He desires to know how His Church fared in the night when they went fishing. I wrote that it was Peter’s determination to go forward. Now they have gone forward, and the question is, “have ye any meat?” Literally, did you receive something with which to go forward? Do you have some meat to show after a night of fishing?

The answer is clear, “No.” It is a short answer, but toiling people do not have long stories if it comes to the question of fruit. They also seek to avoid further questioning with this short answer. They hope no more questions come. It is hard enough to say no to this question with all the talent and experience they have. Do you see why this question was necessary? Do you ever get asked if you have meat in the way of sanctification? Do you ever have an interaction with One who is hidden, who asks in your toils if you have something to show as fruit? Normally, the conversation and the interaction would be complete after this, but from God’s side now there is room. “Messiah’s power shall be revealed.” In the way of sanctification, they will learn a lesson that He has toilers in His kingdom, that despite all their talents and abilities they need Him.

They receive instruction. The Stranger commands them to *cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find*. The One who stands on the shore has authority. He speaks and it is done, because they do as they are instructed. The toiling of the night made room to receive instruction. The toils gave opportunity to listen. Again, that is always necessary. “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” That statement is true also when you read these words. His command precedes the wonder.

His mouth is opened towards you in your toils. His command will glorify the presence of Himself in your life. Oh, the hardness of an unconverted heart when the command to come to Him is laid to the side. My dear reader, you do not know how close your salvation is. He testifies, “Seek and ye shall find,” and we do not seek Him and, therefore, remain dead in sins and trespasses. Do you see from God’s Word how close the emptiness and the fullness lay together? Some may say it feels like it is miles apart! On the contrary, here I read how close it is. Therefore, dear unconverted one, today your emptiness is not the hindrance for conversion! Your pride and disobedience due to our death state in our deep fall is the true hindrance. He gave the command to fishers whose boats were empty.

The toiling is also a guiding factor; the seeking and finding will not go without toiling. In those toils Satan seeks to keep them away from the shore, but a triune God has power to draw empty sinners to Himself. The sovereign good pleasure will prosper in His hand despite man's resistance. He is the Almighty who has power over death!

Church of God, remember that in Him your fruit is found. In your sanctification may you come to the conclusion to stop fishing, and to direct your empty soul to the

shoreline to give up on yourself. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The whole night they toiled. No, I have to state it differently; they did not go to shore, and that hindered them from bearing fruit! The quicker you may come to shore the sooner you may receive Him for the first time or by renewal as your fruit in sanctification. Are you in darkness? Are your nets empty? Are you toiling? Jesus Christ stands on the shore! ☐

*(To be continued)*



## Questions & Answers

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### “Christ Teaches Us That..”

*Rev. B. Labee, Veenendaal, the Netherlands*

*(Translated from the January 19, 2023 issue of De Saambinder)*

Dear readers, at the start of the New Year, we would like to encourage you, especially our young readers, to submit questions to be answered in this section. Criteria for questions should be to explain expressions heard from the pulpit or read in the Bible. We will do our best to answer each question which fits properly with these criteria. —*Ed.*

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

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***I regularly hear that the law precedes the gospel, but does not the knowledge of misery arise through Christ? Do we not read this in Lord's Day 2 of our Heidelberg Catechism?***

#### **The Teacher of the Law**

After Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism has taught us that three things are necessary to live and die happily, instruction follows on the first part: how great my sins and miseries are. The Lord wants to work that "much-needed" knowledge through the law of God. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin," Holy Scripture teaches us in Romans 3:20b. In Lord's Day 2, the sharp requirement of God's law is presented to us. Then, indeed, we hear with answer 4 "Christ teaches us that briefly in Matthew 22:37b-40 and Mark 12:29-31, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

So, it is true that Christ may be called "the Teacher of the Law," but it is a distortion of the truth when we attribute the knowledge of misery to Christ, separate from the Law. Theologians like K. Barth (1886-1968) and K.H. Miskotte (1894-1976), who have bewitched the hearts and minds

of many today, claim that the knowledge of misery arises *through* Christ. Then you must come to and believe in Christ and you have everything.... Then there is no place for the acting of God as Judge who, as Creator, has a *right* to His creature and with whom a lost sinner stands in account, let alone the expressions that "a man will make supplication to his Judge" (see Job 9:15) or that "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment" (Isaiah 1:27a).

Yet, Christ has summarized the law briefly! What does that mean? Being very God, Christ could not do otherwise. He did not come to destroy the law or make it of none effect. No, He maintains God's law—even in the face of the rich young ruler and of the lawyer who asked Him a trick question. He came to fulfill the law and to bear the curse of the law.

#### **The Fulfiller of the Law**

That Christ teaches the law, is the truth, but the law curses and Christ blesses. The latter can *only* happen after the fulfillment of the law for His own. God will have His justice satisfied. Full satisfaction must be made either by ourselves or by another. In true conversion Christ must deliver and redeem us from the curse of the law. Whom? Only sinners who, by the light of God's Spirit, have really come to know something of that law-breaking existence. These are sinners who have come to know something of the "godly sorrow." Our Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) says in his Bible commentary (on 2 Corinthians 7:10), "This sorrow Paul makes the cause and origin of repentance. This is carefully to be observed, for unless the sinner be dissatisfied with himself, detest his manner of life, and be thoroughly grieved from an apprehension of sin, he will never betake himself to the Lord."

Reader, God grant that we would not deceive our souls for eternity but beg for true repentance in truth. ☐



## Current Events

### Sudan Situation Escalated

In Sudan, on October 26, thousands of civilians were trapped and untold numbers died after Sudanese Rapid Defense Forces (RDF/RSF) captured the capital city El Fasher in an intensifying civil war. RDF has killed so many civilians in its capture of El Fasher that piles are believed to be present in satellite images. Christians, comprising 4.1% of the population in Sudan, have been especially vulnerable to heightened persecution in the civil war that broke out in April 2023. Sudan has now been ranked the fifth most dangerous place for Christians, compared to the ranking of eighth in 2024. “Both sides of the conflict (RSF and Sudanese Armed Forces) have seen an increase in Islamist extremism,” says one organization’s report. “These groups have capitalized on the chaotic security situation, leading to a sharp rise in attacks on Christian communities and churches.” According to comments from another organization, it is unknown how many Christians might have been trapped or murdered in El-Fasher.

—BaptistPress.com

### U.S. Discussing Help for Crisis in Nigeria

On December 2, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee hosted a Congressional roundtable focused on the United States’ next steps for addressing the severe crisis of Christian persecution in Nigeria. Urgent legislative and diplomatic measures were discussed to respond to the mounting evidence of targeted violence against Christians. Nigeria remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to practice the Christian faith. Despite the scale of the atrocities, perpetrators continue to operate with impunity. “This is a real opportunity to stop in large measure one of the worst persecution situations in the world. We do not have to wait until it is too late. We can act, with a real chance of success, now,” one expert said in his remarks. Recommendations discussed include: (1) Increasing security, especially in the Middle Belt where Christians face the most persecution from Fulani militants, and effectively respond to early warnings; (2) Ending impunity by vigorously prosecuting individuals responsible for attacks against Christians and others, and investigating and disciplining officials who have turned a blind eye; (3) Facilitating the safe return of millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their communities, and prioritizing reconstruction of churches, schools, and homes destroyed in attacks; (4) Stopping enforcement of and repealing the blasphemy laws, as well as prosecuting mob attacks. In 2025 alone, according to one estimate, more than seven thousand Christians have been killed for their faith. Since Boko Haram launched its insurgency in 2009, estimates indicate that between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand Christians have lost their lives due to religiously motivated violence.

—ADFIInternational.org

### No Religious Freedom Rights in Indian Army

The Supreme Court of India on November 25 called a Christian Indian Army officer a “misfit for the Indian Army” while declining to interfere with a regional court order upholding the termination of his services from the defense forces. The Christian officer, a lieutenant, had allegedly refused to enter the sanctum sanctorum of his regiment’s “sarv dharm sthal” (place of worship for all faiths) on the order of his superior, citing

his Protestant Christian monotheistic belief. He was dismissed from the Indian Army in March 2021 without pension or gratuity for his refusal to participate in specific religious rituals during regimental parades. Subsequently, he approached the High Court challenging his dismissal, but the court upheld the Army’s termination in May. Now, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court came down heavily on the officer and called him a soldier who allowed his “religious ego” to override discipline, cohesion, and respect for his own men. The ruling underlined that soldiers cannot prioritize personal religious interpretation over the collective ethos of the armed forces. This case, splashed across the national media headlines, underscores the complex interplay between individual rights, especially faith practices, and institutional discipline within the armed forces. It drew massive attention across the country as the undercurrents of religious divide between the minority Christians and the majority Hindus in India continue to grow, fanned by Hindu nationalism.

—Persecution.org

### After Two Years of Trouble, Given a Prison Sentence

In Iran, three Christian converts began serving two-year prison sentences on November 16, on the charges of “forming a group or association [a house church] with the aim of disrupting national security” and “membership of a group or association with the aim of disrupting national security.” One is an Afghan convert and refugee who is a shoemaker and has lived in Iran for around twenty years and is married with three children. He was arrested on December 11, 2023, the same day as the two other prisoners. A fourth convert tried alongside the three was sentenced to one year in prison on the charge of “aiding and abetting” others in their alleged crimes. Two were arrested following a raid by thirty intelligence agents on a house-church gathering, where around twenty-five men, women, and children had gathered to pray, worship, and plan their 2023 Christmas celebration. The other two were arrested in separate incidents when their homes and workplaces were raided.

—ChurchInChains.ie

### Findings on Recent Car Crash Report

A fatal crash report from Ohio finds nearly half of deadly wrecks are tied to the illegal drug marijuana. THC levels in hundreds of crash victims far exceeded legal limits across all states. A growing number of users are driving while high—and it is costing them their lives. More than 40 %of victims of fatal vehicle accidents over the past six years have had elevated levels of THC in their blood, a new study shows. The drug screenings were performed during the autopsy process. Of 246 deceased Ohio drivers, the researchers found that nearly 42% tested positive for levels of THC at the average of 30.7ng/mL, which is ten times higher than what any state considers legal. “I was surprised to see that level,” said lead author of the study. He continued: “An average level of 30.7ng/mL generally means those people must have consumed marijuana at some time close to driving. This isn’t about residual use; it’s about recent consumption. The problem is that from a public health standpoint, there has not been enough emphasis on some of the down-sides and the dangers that can occur. People should treat smoking marijuana just like they treat alcohol: Don’t smoke and drive.”

—FoxNews.com

It is certainly true that hope withers and faith weakens when the window of the soul is not opened to heaven.

—Taken from *The Year with Goodness Thou Dost Crown* by Rev. J. Mijnders (1921-2021)



# Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

## A Boy from Stavenisse (8)

C. Visser-Sluiser

(Reprinted with permission from the book, *Leen Potappel, A Boy from Stavenisse*)

### Free of sin

(When Leen was eleven years old, he again became uneasy. Does he actually have a new heart? For the first time Leen sees that he is a sinner—that it is sin which has made a separation between God and him. Oh, those sins. The Lord did comfort Leen in the willow tree, but Leen knows his sins are not forgiven. We then read that a few people are praying for him, praying that he may soon learn to know Christ. —*Ed.*)

It is not going well with Leen. Father and Mother see it. The boy eats and sleeps poorly. The teacher at school notices that he doesn't pay much attention and always sits there dreaming. The teacher sometimes finds it difficult not to give the child a shaking, but the other teacher has said that he may never do this. They feel it—the Lord is working in this boy.

The Lord certainly is working in Leen, for He has elected this child. The Lord has never left a supplicant to himself. When Leen no longer knows how it will end up and doesn't know where to turn, deliverance is there. Leen is sad because he has sinned against God, against God who is righteous. He must be punished for his sins. He is guilty and must pay, but how?

This is how Leen lives from one day to the next. Sometimes the Lord comforts him. Then he believes he can still be saved. The Lord keeps him from too great a sorrow. His longing for the Lord Jesus constantly becomes stronger. He can think of nothing else he would rather have than that One, the Lord Jesus.

It is his birthday. He is now twelve years old. He doesn't want a present from his father and mother or from his sisters and brother. There is only one thing he wants, and they cannot give it to him. Nonetheless, he is happy with the book Grandmother bought him. He knows that she understands him without him having to say anything. Maybe the book will help him find Christ.

Three weeks go by in which Leen feels he is the unhappiest boy of Stavenisse. He can barely get a bite of food down his throat. He is more often at Grandmother's house than at home. She doesn't ask questions. She prays for him. Grandma feels that deliverance is very near.

That night Leen goes to bed. He almost doesn't dare to pray anymore. He certainly cannot pray as he should. His prayers insult the Lord. Then the Lord comes. He first shows him that he is a sinful boy and God a just Judge.

"I must punish all your sins," says the Lord.

Leen trembles; he has no reply to this. He is certain that he will now go lost, and he agrees with the Lord. However, now what the Lord says comes true; shortly thereafter the Lord Jesus comes and embraces Leen in His wide-open arms. Although Leen has innumerable transgressions and sins, Christ speaks to him, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions," (Isaiah 43:25).

"Yes, I was the One who bore the punishment for you, My child. I am willing to be your Surety. I suffered for you on the cross and have called out: It is finished! You need not add anything to it yourself."

A Surety! If Someone wants to be Surety, Leen doesn't have to do anything himself anymore. Then the Surety makes things right with the Judge.

Once and for all, the Lord now loosens the ropes binding Leen to the devil. Leen is freed and may be a child of God from now on. Leen does not have to perish, for the Lord safely and lovingly encloses him in His arms. Now Leen finally knows and loves the Lord Jesus Christ with his whole heart. All his cares, misery, sins, and longing disappear like snow melted by the sun. Great joy takes their place. He no longer needs to be afraid of God. No, He has punished His Son instead of Leen. God loves him and Leen may love God.

He speaks to Leen: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

*(To be continued)*

It sounds so clearly in Leen's heart that he thinks he will never doubt that it really was the Lord who spoke to him.



## Bible Stories for Little Ones

### King Asa

(Based on 2 Chronicles 13-16)

Jeroboam did not repent after his son's death. He remained wicked as long as he lived. Rehoboam had died, and Abijah was king of Judah. He and Jeroboam fought against one another. Abijah was not a good man, but when he saw the army of Jeroboam coming, he behaved very bravely and very uprightly. He stood upon a mountain and called to Jeroboam and to all Israel, and he told them of their great sins and idolatries in making and serving the golden calves. Abijah said, "The Lord is our Captain. He will fight for us and help us to conquer you." Then, who conquered? Judah conquered that day because they trusted in God for safety. It was not Judah's own power that gave them the victory, but God fought for them and smote wicked Jeroboam and his army.

Jeroboam did not live long after this battle. The Lord struck him, and he died. Abijah had died before him. The quarrels of these two kings were ended then. Their bodies crumbled into dust in the grave, and their souls went to appear before God, but we do not hope that, like good king David and king Solomon, they were taken to that happy world where only God's people go.

We now come to the history of a very good king. His name was Asa; he was the son of Abijah, and he became king of Judah. When Asa began to reign, he found his people very ignorant of God. They had learned to be idolators, to worship images and new gods, not their own God, the true God who made all things. As king, Asa knew it was his duty to teach his people the right way. So, he threw down all the idol altars and the images, and he commanded Judah to seek the Lord.

Did God bless Asa? Yes, and He gave rest and quietness to Judah. All went well, and Asa built many new cities with walls and towers. He and his people became rich, strong, and happy. Why did this happen? Asa told the people, "It is because we have sought the Lord our God."

Was there rest in Judah all the years that Asa reigned? No! Because of sin all countries and people have trouble sometimes, and also Asa had his troubles. Enemies came to fight against him with very large armies. They came with chariots and horses, and they made ready for battle. Was Asa frightened? Perhaps he was at first, but he knew where to find help. Did he place his trust in his soldiers, in his armor, and in his strong cities? No, Asa knew that all these things could not help him. There was no power in them. The good king went to God and asked for His help. He prayed, and said, "O Lord, we trust in Thee to help us; we have no power in ourselves, but we know that Thou art able to help us and to fight our enemies for us. Then we shall have the victory. Thou art our God; in Thy name we go to fight against this army of our enemies." Then Asa and his people felt safe and happy. They knew that God would hear and answer their prayer. So, He did. God smote their enemies and gave Asa and his people the victory.

God is always ready to hear His people's prayers. They also have many troubles and many enemies. Sometimes they have pain and sorrow and sickness. Always they have to fight against sin and against Satan. What must they do when they are in trouble? They must do as Asa did. They must go to God for comfort, help, and strength.

Often it is very hard to fight against enemies. Our own wicked hearts, sinful tempers, and Satan's temptations give us trouble every day. We must ask God for help, and He hears the cry of the needy. He will fight for them as He fought for Asa. He will conquer evil, subdue iniquities, and give them the victory. Then they shall be "more than conquerors," not by their own strength, wisdom, and goodness, but by Him who keeps them and fights for those who put their trust in Him alone.

God did give peace to Judah for many years. He sent a prophet to Asa to encourage him to go on

and serve the Lord. This prophet brought a message from God. He said, "If you will still love and serve the Lord, then He promises to be with you and to bless you in all you do. But if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. Now be strong and put your trust in God, and all shall be well with you."

Asa and his people listened to what the prophet said. They met at Jerusalem, and there they offered sacrifices and made a covenant with God. They promised to seek Him with all their heart and soul. That was a joyful day in Jerusalem. The people shouted and sang praises to God. They prayed to God and asked for His help and blessing. Did God hear them? Yes, God was pleased to hear His people's prayers, praises, and promises. He sent His Holy Spirit among them and gave them His blessing. God made everything quiet and peaceful in the land.

Asa became an old man. He had had many happy and peaceful years, but trouble came again. The king of Israel and his army fought against him. Did Asa remember the kindness of God in past times? Did he go to Him again for safety? No, this time Asa forgot to do this. He did not put his trust in God, but he went to the king of Syria and asked help from him. The king of Syria was very willing to help Asa. He sent captains and soldiers to fight for him, and soon the Israelites were conquered.

Asa had displeased God because he had trusted more in the king of Syria than in the Lord. Therefore, a prophet was sent to Asa to tell him how angry God was. Asa had sinned, and God must punish him. The prophet said, "You have done foolishly. You have trusted in the king of Syria and not in God. Now you shall have wars, battles, and fighting in your kingdom all the rest of your life." This was sad news for Asa. He had been foolish and wicked. When we are in trouble, God alone can give us true help and comfort. How foolish and ungrateful we are when we forget this!

The rest of Asa's life was not happy as it had been before. When people forget and disobey God, they cannot be happy. Asa was not humbled when

he heard God's message to him. He did not, like David, confess his sin directly and ask for forgiveness. No, Asa was very angry with the prophet who had told him what God had said. Also, in this, Asa did wrong. The prophet spoke as God commanded, and Asa should have attended humbly to the message he brought. He should have prayed for forgiveness and guidance to be enabled to do better in the future.

In his anger, Asa put the faithful prophet in prison where he could speak to him no more. However, God's message was true. Asa suffered from wars all the rest of his life.

When Asa was an old man, God sent a new punishment upon him. God must always punish His people when they sin against Him, to make them repent and return to Him. Asa was troubled with a disease in his feet. It gave him much pain and suffering. He could not walk about as he had before. Did he humble himself before God? No, the Bible tells us that "in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians." He wished to be well, and he called all his wise doctors and asked them to take away his pain and to make him strong again, but Asa forgot who sent the disease and who alone could take it away.

When we are sick, we should be patient in all our pain and submit humbly to God's will. It is not wrong to send for physicians when we are ill. We ought to be very thankful for kind and wise friends who will visit us in our sickness, try to comfort us, and help make us well. We ought to attend to what they say and thank them for their advice, but it is very wrong to trust more in physicians than in God. This was what Asa did. Physicians and medicine can do us no good without the blessing of God. He alone can take away our pain and make us well. When we are sick, let us lay all before Him. He is the good Physician and the best Friend we can have. He alone can cure our soul as well as our body. He can take away our sin, which is the worst of all diseases, for His dear Son's sake. Then, we need not be afraid of bodily pain and sickness.

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## Seek the Lord While Young

*J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)*

Experience tells me that people's hearts are seldom changed if they are not changed when young. Seldom indeed are men converted when they are old. Habits have deep roots. Once sin is allowed to settle in your heart, it will not be turned out at your bidding. Custom becomes second nature, and its chains are not easily broken.

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# Bible Quiz

## Mire

Dear Boys and Girls,

Jess heard a soft, delighted nicker behind her. She froze in her tracks. "Please don't tell me she did it again..." she thought to herself. Dreading what she might see, she turned slowly. She let out a groan at what she saw, and at the same time, someone giggled next to her.

"You knew she would," a little voice sounded next to her, and Jess looked down at the little girl who had just finished her riding lesson.

Jess nodded slowly, and a smile began to curl up the corners of her mouth. "Yeah," she acknowledged with a little sigh that ended in a chuckle. "They always do."

She watched the horse she had just put back to pasture a moment longer. She was a beautiful, glossy dark brown, with three white socks and a white blaze on her forehead. As soon as she had trotted through the gate, she had stopped and dropped to the ground. With pure joy, she was rolling around, from side to side, in the dusty earth. Snorting, she rolled further and plowed her back into the cool mud created by last night's rain shower. Her feet kicked in the air, and she was a picture of happiness.

She was also a picture of dirt. Not much was left of the glossy sheen which Jess had worked so hard to achieve, brushing and currying her for an hour before the lesson.

Horses need much care, much different from some animals, such as cats or pigs or chickens. Jess liked to spend time on the farm of her neighbor and often helped where she could. This meant hours of brushing and currying the horses with various sized brushes, bathing them, then rubbing them down with a soft cloth. She also must never forget to pick their hooves, check to see that they were not overheating or becoming too cold, and be sure that they had the exact right amount of grain and hay. Some horses needed medicine and others needed special exercises. Some horses had special boots or leg wraps. Each horse was different, but each one needed excellent care in order to thrive and even to survive.

The picture of the care of a horse was once used to portray the care which the Church, God's people, need. God's people have been stopped and led out of

the broad way that leads to hell. They have been placed on the narrow way which leads to salvation. On that way, they do not simply go on and on without any problems, nor can they walk in their own strength.

Throughout the ages, God's Church has been attacked from all sides. The devil uses all his tricks to harass and weaken God's people. One of the ways he has used against this living Church is persecution. Long ago, many people were killed by lions or burned to death, but the Church seemed to grow only larger. In some countries, there is still persecution even today. Other ways the devil uses are to bring in errors, false teachings, splits, and differences. This can bring much sadness into the Church, but again, the devil has not succeeded in destroying that Church. Why not?

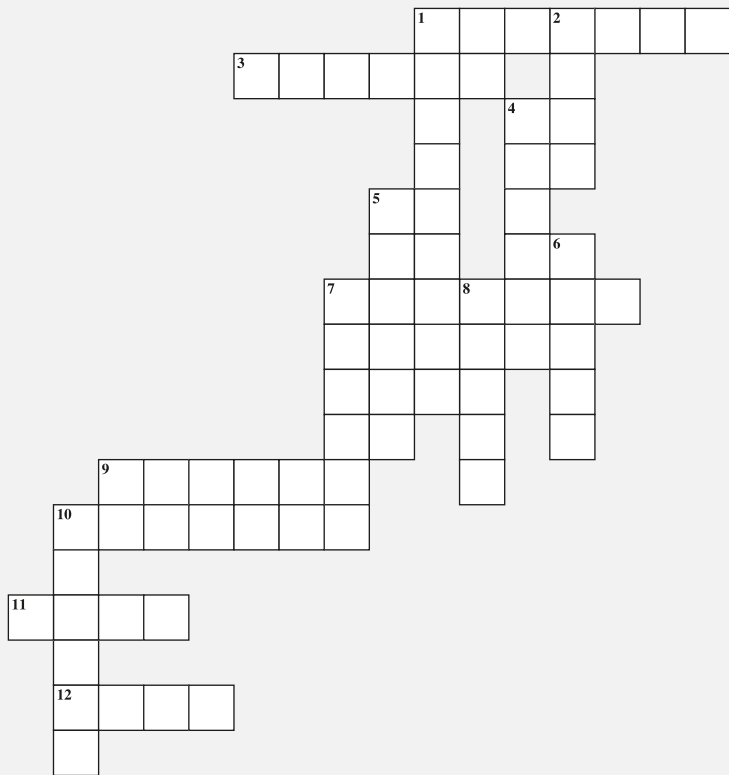
If the Lord had not cared for His people, and if He did not continue to do so, those people would have been overcome by all these attacks long ago. Throughout the years and centuries, God has continued to preserve His Church, caring for them in a special manner. He has often turned the evil which comes against them into good.

The Lord also cares for each individual in that Church. God's people are not strong. Their heart often trembles in fear. How will such a heart ever persevere until the end? Their old nature also often gains the upper hand. Like a horse who shines for a few moments but is soon muddy again, so God's people often find themselves falling into sin. They see how black with sin their heart is and remains. They feel how dull and cold their heart sometimes is. How will this ever turn out in the end? Will they yet be cast away?

The Lord, however, knows their nature and knows that they are frail. He knows they need that extra care, every day, and He knows just WHAT is needed. Perhaps they need comfort in God's house or while reading God's Word. They need the Holy Spirit to dwell in their heart, to renew it, and to work grace in it. They need to be given daily courage to go on. They need to be given a prayer to pray when they cannot pray. They need to be taught—sometimes by His goodness and sometimes by crosses, silence, or chastisements. They need to be shown who they are

and who God is. They need to be washed—washed in Jesus' blood and righteousness.

In their own eyes, they see themselves as nothing but sin—as a horse wallowing in the mire—but the Lord will not let them go. They often fear they will one day perish. They need much care, but the Lord pities them as a father pities his children. He will continue to care for His Church, and each individual will receive what is needed.



### Across

1. They let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the \_\_\_\_\_ there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire (Jeremiah 38).

3. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was \_\_\_\_\_ to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2).

7. To take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Isaiah 10).

9. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded (Zechariah 10).

10. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy \_\_\_\_\_ have set thee on, (Jeremiah 38).

11. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine \_\_\_\_\_ as the mire of the streets (Zechariah 9).

12. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like \_\_\_\_\_ and ashes (Job 30).

### Down

1. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be \_\_\_\_\_ from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters (Psalm 69).

2. Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag \_\_\_\_\_ without water? (Job 8).

4. But the \_\_\_\_\_ are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57).

5. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose \_\_\_\_\_ cast up mire and dirt (Isaiah 57).

6. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did \_\_\_\_\_ them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad (2 Samuel 22).

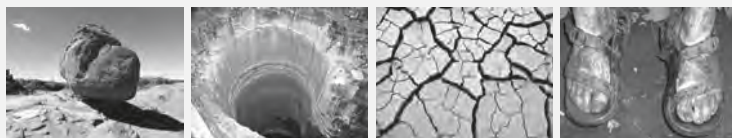
7. Sharp \_\_\_\_\_ are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire (Job 41).

8. Then she that is mine \_\_\_\_\_ shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets (Micah 7).

10. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the \_\_\_\_\_ overflow me (Psalm 69).

### For the Older Children

13. Use the words for the pictures below to complete this text.



“He brought me up also out of an horrible \_\_\_\_\_, out of the miry \_\_\_\_\_, and set my \_\_\_\_\_ upon a \_\_\_\_\_, and established my goings.”

### For the Younger Children

14. Fill in all the vowels to complete this psalter verse.

“I w\_\_t\_d f\_r th\_\_ L\_\_rd M\_\_st H\_\_gh,  
And He inclined to he\_\_r m\_\_ cr\_\_;  
He t\_\_k m\_\_ fr\_\_m d\_\_str\_\_ct\_\_n's pit  
And from the m\_\_ry cl\_\_y;  
\_\_p\_\_n a r\_\_ck H\_\_s\_t my f\_\_t,  
And steadfast m\_\_d\_\_ my w\_\_y.”

Answers to December's "Family Tree" quiz:

1. See Matthew 1
2. Genesis 3, Isaiah 9, Luke 1, Luke 2
3. Jorim
4. Zerubbabel
5. two
6. David
7. Abraham, patriarchs (Acts 7:8), Jesse, Jesse (Ruth 4:22), war (2 Samuel 3:1), Sara (Hebrews 11:11)

Answers to previous quizzes were received in November from:

- |                   |                    |                      |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Blaire Bakker     | Kendra Groen       | Brogan Spaans (2)    |
| Paige Bakker      | Jadon Kievit       | Jake Spaans (2)      |
| Aryanna Breeweg   | Micah Kievit (2)   | Brandon Ten Hove     |
| Julian Breeweg    | Carissa Mans       | Hannah-Jo Ten Hove   |
| Brooklyn DeJager  | Travis Mans (2)    | Grace Timmermans     |
| Laurel DeJager    | Abe Mol            | Ava Van Manen (2)    |
| Mitchell DeJager  | Teddy Mol          | Alana Van Manen (2)  |
| Janae DeKorne     | Madeline Mol       | Evan Van Manen (2)   |
| Madeline DeKorne  | Zachary Mol        | Travis Van Manen (2) |
| Melanie DeKorne   | Andrew Murphy      | Hanna Van Wyk        |
| Elsie DeLeeuw (2) | John Murphy        | Eli Vande Waerdt     |
| Eva den Bok       | Blake Pannekoek    | Joelle Vande Waerdt  |
| Hudson den Bok    | Cassadee Pannekoek | Sophia Vande Waerdt  |
| Zoey den Bok      | Lauren Pannekoek   | Wyatt Vande Waerdt   |
| Alyssa Driesse    | Andrew Remijn (2)  | Levi Vander Waal (2) |
| Jordan Driesse    | Daniel Remijn (2)  | Sara Vander Waal (3) |
| Kailyn Driesse    | Lauren Remijn (2)  | Caleb Vogelaar       |
| Lindsey Driesse   | Lynne Ruissen      | Matthew Vogelaar     |
| Allison Ekema     | Lydia Ruissen      | Jayden Weeda         |
| Ronna Geuze       | Collin Rus         | Keegan Weeda         |
| Samantha Grisnich | Kaela Rus          | Nathan Wesdyk        |
| Kaylia Groen      | Lakia Rus          |                      |



Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth  
 180 Jacobs Road  
 Newfoundland, NJ 07435  
 E-mail: [auntlenabeth@gmail.com](mailto:auntlenabeth@gmail.com)

### Proper Prayer

The prevailing idea seems to be, that I come to God and ask Him for something that I want, and that I expect Him to give me that for which I have asked, but this is a most dishonouring and degrading conception. The popular belief reduces God to a servant, our servant: doing our bidding, performing our pleasure, granting our desires. No, prayer is a coming to God, telling Him my need, committing my way unto the Lord, and leaving Him to deal with it as seemeth Him best.

—Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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.**

### ■ ■ ■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

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

# News & Announcements

## ■ Ministerial Calls

### Extended:

To Rev. Al-Chalabi of Hilversum, the Netherlands, by the congregations of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, and Kalamazoo, Michigan.

To Rev. E. Hakvoort of Norwich, Ontario, by the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

To Rev. J. Slingerland of Corsica, South Dakota, by the congregations of Markham, Ontario, and Clifton, New Jersey.

To Rev. H.A. van Zetten of Nieuw-Beijerland, the Netherlands, by the congregations of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

To Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Grand Rapids—Covell Avenue.

### Declined:

By Rev. Al-Chalabi of Hilversum, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

By Rev. J. Slingerland of Corsica, South Dakota, to the congregations of Nobleford, Alberta, and Sunnyside, Washington.

## ■ Obituaries

DENBOK, Theo Ryan – Age 6 days, November 27, 2025; Lethbridge, Alberta; Parents – Allan & Colinda; Siblings – Chad, Ella, Nora, Drew, Aria; also mourned by grandparents, great-grandparents, and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. (Rev. P. Kleijer, Malachi 3:17.)

GROENEVELD, Frans – Age 86, November 19, 2025; Vineland, Ontario; Wife – Pia (nee Sterk); Children – Elbert & Joyce, Marian & Nick Koppelaar, Art & Tanja, Rob & Jen; 24 grandchildren, 45 great-grandchildren; Sister – Wilma; In-laws—Eva, Amande, Ingeborg, Truus & Ad, Teun & Ans, Mark & Wilma, Arjan. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Matthew 13:30.)

OKKEN, Joanne (nee Hoogmoed) – Age 82, November 30, 2025; Wayne, New Jersey; Husband – Jacobus (“Jack,” deceased); Children – Laura & Jake Van Dalen, Craig & Cathy, James & Andrea, Joseph & Christene; 11 grandchildren; Siblings – Lena (“Winkie”) Southway, Elizabeth (“Betty”) Okken, Arthur & Chris Hoogmoed; predeceased by 2 brothers, 2 sisters, and 5 in-laws. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Matthew 5:4.)

POLDERMAN, Ardith (“Marie,” nee Timmer) – Age 89, November 14, 2025; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Husband – John M.; Children –

Laurie & Ken Klett, Ellen Maxwell (John Anema), Janice & Ken Ahrens, Elise & John Van Zweden, Mary & Jim Balkema, Denise & Jeff Bryce, John & Wanda; 32 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Nelson & Joann Timmer, Bill & Linda Timmer, Gerald & Pauline Timmer, Cora DeBat; Sisters-in-law – Alberta Timmer, Leona Timmer; predeceased by brothers Henry Timmer, David Timmer, Arthur Timmer, Adrian Timmer, and Len Timmer, and son-in-law Andrew Maxwell. (Rev. H. Hofman, Revelation 14:13a.)

POWELL, Albertha (“Betty,” nee Schelling) – Age 88, November 23, 2025; Sioux City, Iowa (previously Corsica, South Dakota); Husband – Frank (deceased); Son – Marvin & Lois; 9 grandchildren, 10 step-grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, 10 step-great-grandchildren; predeceased by daughter Sharon Watkins, 3 sisters, and 4 brothers. (Rev. J. Slingerland, Ecclesiastes 12:5b.)

SPAANS, Pauline (nee Staal) – Age 97, October 24, 2025; Madison, South Dakota; Husband – Cornelius (“Cornie,” deceased); Children – Rich & Jan, Connie Wolbrink, Jim & Renee, Arleen Weerheim, Nancy & Vern Hill, Paul & Dawn; 21 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Dena & Milo Dewald, Marty & Connie Staal, Al & Mary Staal, Hugo Staal; In-laws – Joanne, Elizabeth (“Betty”), Cathy, Betty, Rosalie; predeceased by sons-in-law Gary Wolbrink and Dale Weerheim, 4 siblings, and many brothers- and sisters-in-laws. (Rev. J. Slingerland, Ruth 1:20.)

VAN VOORST, Raymond – Age 80, November 30, 2025; Sioux City, Iowa; Siblings – Jake & Hilda, Jeanette (“Nettie”) & Marv (“Buddy”) Van Beek; Sister-in-law – Rena; predeceased by brother John. (Rev. J.J. Witvoet, Psalm 72:12&13.)

## ■ NRC Clerk Contact Update

Updated contact for the Rock Valley NRC clerk:

Rich Van Den Brink  
709 18th Ave. SE  
Rock Valley, IA 51247  
Phone: 712-470-2859  
Email: nrcrvclerk@gmail.com

## ■ New Titles from Bible Truth Books

*An Exposition of the Last Words of David* by M. Luther—An Exposition on 2 Samuel 23:1-7 with particular emphasis on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was “made of the seed of David, according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3). Hardcover, 200 pages, \$13.00.

*Arminianism—Another Gospel* by Rev. W. MacLean—Published in 1976 by the Free Presbyterians, the roots of Arminianism are traced, as well as its manifestation contrary to the Five Points of Calvinism. “The Arminian does indeed stress man’s responsibility [but] to the exclusion of the sovereignty of God, and this is a fruitful cause of more than one error.” Paperback, 27 pages, \$2.00.

*Five Loaves and Two Fishes, Volume 4* by Rev. A.H. Verhoef—This volume contains 10 sermons preached by Rev. Verhoef in the St. Catharines congregation. There is one Advent sermon, a Passion sermon, a Preparatory sermon, a sermon for the Lord’s Supper, a Post-Communion sermon as well as five additional sermons. Hardcover, \$27.00.

*The Preachers of Scotland from the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century* by W. Blaikie—A reprint of the 1888 edition, focusing primarily on the ministers of Scotland and the contents of their preaching. Of particular note is a chapter entitled, “The Moderate School,” representing a sad turning point during the 1700’s in the doctrines and preaching of the Church of Scotland. Hardcover, 350 pages, \$21.50.

*The Life of John Brown of Haddington*—The Life of John Brown (1722-1787) is the autobiography of an orphaned shepherd boy who later became a much-esteemed minister in the Scottish village of Haddington. Also contains an account of his life together with several of his writings. Hardcover, 208 pages, \$14.25.

Perhaps our younger readers are a bit disappointed to see that there are no new children’s titles this time. Do not worry—more are coming. In the meanwhile, have you been reading along in *The Banner of Truth* about the life of Leen Potappel? The book that these Banner articles are taken from is indeed a very nice book and has recently been reprinted in hardcover. The price is \$18.25.

The prices above do not include postage.

Bible Truth Books  
P.O. Box 1290  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1290  
Phone / Fax: 616-776-2593  
BibleTruthBooks@igatweb.com  
www.BibleTruthBooks.org

The improvement of all afflictions  
should be to bring your soul to  
Christ.

—John Durant (1620-1686)

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

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill a full-time secondary teacher/administrator role. 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. Arthur Verhoef at 905-563-3077 or [principal@ecs.school.ca](mailto: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](mailto:gerry@ecs.school.ca)

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. *(Although this position has been filled on an interim basis, we are still in need of a permanent candidate.)* 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](mailto:tomv@plainviewgrowers.com), or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email [nrcs\\_office@nrcsnj.org](mailto:nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org)

### Teachers/Assistants

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications for elementary or secondary teachers to begin in January or August 2026. Applicants must be members of the NRC, or a closely-related denomination, and must be eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or [inquiries@ccschool.ca](mailto:inquiries@ccschool.ca). Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé with references to [inquiries@ccschool.ca](mailto:inquiries@ccschool.ca)

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications for elementary and middle school teaching positions. We would be gladdened by an inquiry and application of someone who is versatile and dedicated, who also loves the doctrine according to godliness. For more information on this position, please contact Mr. Arthur Verhoef, at [principal@ecs.school.ca](mailto:principal@ecs.school.ca) or call 905-563-3077.

Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1372 Gregory Road N., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Email: [gerry@ecs.school.ca](mailto:gerry@ecs.school.ca)

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, has an opening for a full- or part-time position teacher or coordinator to monitor, oversee, and assist the students with their homeschool curriculums. We have a range of students for 2025-2026 from grades 4 through 8. For more questions regarding this position, please contact Andrew Van Stelle at 920-452-1967 or email [amtrees@excel.net](mailto:amtrees@excel.net)

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LYNDEN, WASHINGTON, is accepting applications for the 2026-2027 school year. We welcome applicants at the elementary, middle, or high school level. To apply or request more information, please contact the administrator, Ms. Beth Bleeker, at 616-826-7663 or email [bbleeker@nrcslynden.org](mailto:bbleeker@nrcslynden.org) or the school board president, Mr. Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901 or email [jdebruin3797@gmail.com](mailto:jdebruin3797@gmail.com)

NERIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, has a unique opportunity for a full-time teacher to join our small school. While all applications are welcome, we are in most need of a teacher for our students in middle and high school. We are seeking an organized individual who is willing to learn, a team player, and able to transition between grade levels during a school day. While a certified teacher is preferred, we welcome all applicants who are passionate about teaching. For more information, please contact the principal, Darlene Dekker, at [darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca](mailto:darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca) or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or by email [visser.daniel@outlook.com](mailto:visser.daniel@outlook.com)

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CORSICA, SOUTH DAKOTA, is seeking applicants to fill a full-time teaching position for the elementary grades. The applicant should be highly self-motivated, versatile, and one who loves the old truths and paths. NRC membership is required. A teaching certificate is appreciated but not required. For more information on this position, please contact the school board president, Mr. Cornie Blom, at 605-680-0557. Applications should be sent to Cornie Blom, 37885 275th St., Corsica, South Dakota 57328, or emailed to clerk Brad Spaans at [kjspaans05@gmail.com](mailto:kjspaans05@gmail.com)

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROCK VALLEY/SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, is seeking to fill teaching positions in elementary, 7-12 math, and other secondary subjects. These positions are part-time or full-time and can be combined depending on qualifications and experience. For further information, please visit [www.nrcsia.com](http://www.nrcsia.com) or contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at [dan.breuer@nrcsia.org](mailto:dan.breuer@nrcsia.org) or call 712-476-2821.

PONATAHI CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CARTERTON, NEW ZEALAND, has an exciting opportunity for an upper primary teacher. We are seeking an enthusiastic and passionate Christian teacher to teach our

upper primary classes (one or more of grade 5-8). Please do not hesitate to contact us and discuss the options; we can be flexible as to which subjects would be taught. This is a full-time position, starting February 2026 (beginning of our school year). For more information, see <https://www.ponatahi.school.nz/our-people/teacher-vacancies/> or contact the principal. To apply, send a cover letter and CV to Jaap Reijersen van Buuren at [principal@ponatahi.school.nz](mailto:principal@ponatahi.school.nz)

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN invites qualified candidates to apply for elementary and middle school positions that may be open. For more information regarding possible openings or for application forms, please contact the administrator, Mr. Tom Kwekel, at [tkwekel@pcskzoo.com](mailto:tkwekel@pcskzoo.com) or call 616-644-2661.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is accepting applications to fill a full-time grade 4 position starting in mid-February 2026. For information about this and other elementary and middle school opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar, at [elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com](mailto:elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com) or 519-495-6629. For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit TenHove, at [secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com](mailto:secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com) or 519-536-3689. We invite inquiries about our locally developed teaching training program which provides a blend of paid teaching, mentorship, and training, making it a great opportunity for those new to the profession or those seeking to transition into teaching. Cover letters and resumé should be submitted to [hr@rcsnorwich.com](mailto:hr@rcsnorwich.com). Applications will be reviewed. Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is in need of middle school teachers. We are looking for teachers who are excited about teaching and are dedicated to nurturing the hearts of young people. We have a definite need in middle school for the upcoming school year but would encourage secondary and intermediate grade-level applicants. If you are such a teacher, please apply to join our team. Applicants need to be certifiable to teach in British Columbia. For information and/or an application form, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Doug Stam, principal, at [dstam@timothychristian.ca](mailto:dstam@timothychristian.ca), or Mr. Ken den Bok, school board president, at [kendenbok@timothychristian.ca](mailto:kendenbok@timothychristian.ca)

### Thinking About Teaching?

Visit [advertising.nrcea.education](http://advertising.nrcea.education) for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools. To access the job bank on NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

Name: [advertising@nrcea.education](mailto:advertising@nrcea.education)  
Password: **Schooljobs!**

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## Reigning Grace

Now may the Lord reveal His face,  
And teach our stammering tongues  
To make His sovereign, reigning grace  
The subject of our songs.

No sweeter subject can invite  
A sinner's heart to sing,  
Or more display the glorious right  
Of our exalted King.

Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,  
To melt the hardest hearts;  
And from the work it once begins  
It never once departs.

The world and Satan strive in vain  
Against the chosen few;  
Secured by grace's conquering reign,  
They all shall conquer too.

'Twas grace that called our souls at first;  
By grace thus far we're come;  
And grace will help us through the worst,  
And lead us safely home.

—John Newton

the  
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of Truth

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