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The Official Periodical
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to an Ungodly King

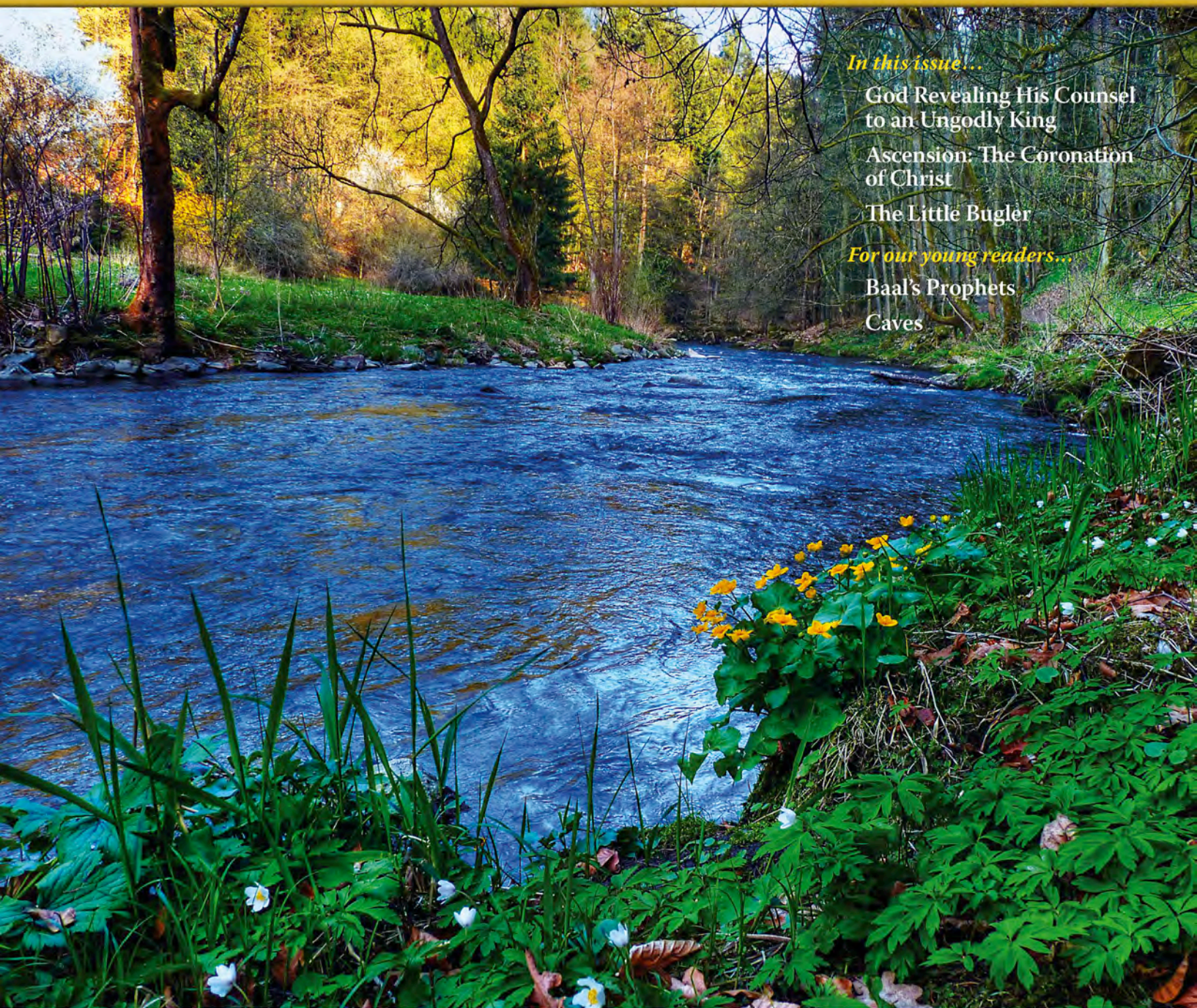
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Meditation

God Revealing His Counsel to an Ungodly King

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Brant County, ON

We read in Isaiah 7 that a severe threat has come in Israel. Rezin, king of Syria, is making war against Judah. Pekah, the king of Israel, has joined forces with him. These two kings are confident of the victory. Under such a threat one could expect that the doors of God's house would be opened and that prayer would be made for deliverance and peace. What a blessing that the United States still proclaims a National Day of Prayer; how sad that in Canada this is missed.

Ahaz is king in Judah. He had a converted father, Jotham. However, grace is not hereditary; Ahaz is unconverted. The scriptural testimony in 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28 reveals Ahaz's reign. He made Israel to sin and had his son walk through the fire and copied an Assyrian altar for the temple in Jerusalem. During this time period Isaiah prophesies.

Under this severe threat King Ahaz is moved (verse 2); the conscience begins to speak, and he feels his situation is dire. In these moments Isaiah is commanded to meet Ahaz with Isaiah's son who has a revealing name, Shearjashub. When Ahaz sees them, he meets two testimonies without a word being spoken: Isaiah, meaning "Jehovah is salvation," and Shearjashub, meaning "A remnant will return or shall be converted"—testimonies by which the government of Ahab was not living.

The Lord is using the threat to bring across a message. Dear reader, what is our life? Ahaz was religious in his own way (2 Kings 16:12-16); notice everything outside of regeneration has no ground in "Jehovah is salvation." We can make it sound nice and look nice, and can be patted on the back by others, but the fact remains that our salvation needs to be in the Triune God, Jehovah. The Lord yet gives a message today, too. I may proclaim that to you, my unconverted reader: a remnant will return or be converted. That is God's sovereign will, and no matter the threats or the departures, God's power will be revealed in the fulfillment of the conversion of elect sinners. There lies the hope, in your departure from the Lord, in your unconverted state: I declare Jehovah is salvation; a remnant shall return.

Under these circumstances one would think Ahaz would be humbled. Are you? Under the preaching of law and gospel and the possibility of conversion from God's side, are you humbled? There lies an uncovering lesson in this; by nature, we will put on our cloak of religion instead of converting ourselves. Listen.

Isaiah has a message in the verses 4 and 5 which I conclude with verse 7: "Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." God declares His

counsel to Ahaz; Rezin and Pekah will not prosper against Me, Jehovah! It's a clear message. The message ends with a warning: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." God's Word is true, but the truth of it can only be a comfort if you believe it. Ahaz does not know what true faith is; he does not know the experience of the power by faith to receive union—not to the promise—but to the God of the promise! Therefore, the Lord says to Ahaz in such condescending mercy, "Ask thee a sign." Then Ahaz backs up; in some false piety he says he will not tempt the LORD to give a sign. Oh, how uncovering! How many, because they do not know by true faith who God is in His attributes of grace and truth, righteousness and mercy, reveal some emotional piety that they are not worthy of a sign.

Deep down Ahaz makes this all about himself. How many in desperate situations, under great threats, know how to make it all about themselves. Ahaz acts so humble but really does not want a sign because, the fact of the matter is, He does not know Jehovah. He truly does not know what bowing in humility before Jehovah is—in His grace and truth, righteousness and mercy. He has only bowed before a religion wherein he can save himself. This becomes clear in 2 Kings 16:7&8; there you read honestly what he did, and he seeks to cover it by a cloak of religion—he went to Tiglathpileser, King of Assyria, for help. He disregarded the power and knowledge of the Lord and turned to human strength. The Lord will uncover it! Everything that is not of God will not exist before God.

What was the power of the Lord? The sign will reveal that. A type of the Lord Jesus will be born in Ahaz' house. Hezekiah will be born. Here he is, in prophecy, a type of the Lord Jesus. "O Israel, thou has destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help." Immanuel, God with us, will not be hindered in His personal coming, nor in His mediatorial purpose, by all the false religion and false piety. Also, today! Before Hezekiah will know to refuse evil, the enemies will be destroyed, but Ahaz, in his unconverted state with all his false piety, will also stand before his Judge.

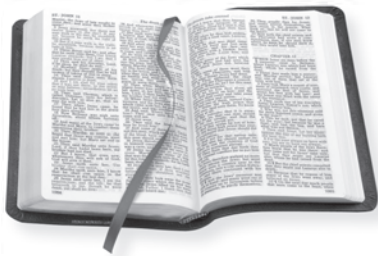
Weak one in the faith, in Jesus your enemies will be destroyed. Here in Isaiah 7 is the sign, a given truth from Jehovah. He desires to come to His Church in their weakness but also in their uprightness and give them a sign by which their enemies are conquered. God desires in Christ to reveal Himself present in the strife of His people: Jehovah is salvation, a remnant shall return! Behold God's honor and your salvation in this conception. Here you have the truth that all the enemies will be destroyed. In this concep-

tion the grace of God is personified in Christ; He will draw by Messiah's power a remnant unto Himself. Behold here God's mercy in His wrath-demanding and wrath-executing righteousness over that which is conceived by the Holy Ghost.

How do I know I am not Ahaz? You will hate falsehood, especially your own falsehood that can so quickly come up out of your flesh. You do not hide behind false pretenses or traditional statements of "ach" and "oh." On the contrary, your speech is pure and undefiled, sincere from the heart. Your faith is not based only on some promise or statements of truth; it is based on the fact that by faith you, in your unworthiness, receive union to the God of Promise. In those moments you experience truly what God promises. Your enemies are destroyed because of who God is, and you believe the promise because God is the Promise.

God is a simple being, not a complicated long story to make your conversion a bestseller with all kinds of remark-

able events and people; then man is in the center, not God. It is simple and it is a wonder! God comes over, and He reveals Himself in Jesus Christ; faith takes hold of Him and receives all His benefits, and for as long as faith is strong, you and God in Christ are one by faith in those moments. The Promise is God and God is your Promise. Oh, the wonder of the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ our LORD. Does it stay that way? No, it is attacked by Satan, world, and flesh, but God instituted the means of word and sacrament to strengthen and confirm true faith and to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Dear reader, seek this God who gives signs either as a savour of life unto life, or as a savour of death unto death! Keep courage, striving inheritance, He will not forsake the works of His own hands, no matter where on earth you live, or who is your president or prime minister; He is Lord of lords, King of kings. Christ shall have dominion! □



Bible Study

The Prophet Zephaniah (4)

Rev. C. Van Dam (1893-1976)

(Translated from the February 4 through November 4, 1965 issues of *De Saambinder*)

The more the Lord has given to a people, the more severely they sin when God's law is violated by unrighteousness and apostasy from the truth. This applies not only to the seed of Abraham but, also, to our people and our country and to each of us personally, or do we think that we in the Netherlands are better than Judah and Jerusalem were in the days of the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah? Did Zephaniah perhaps take things too seriously and paint too black a picture of the situation in Judah and Jerusalem, as many in his day undoubtedly thought? Is there any evidence to suggest that Zephaniah was not guilty of exaggerated and gloomy pessimism? Yes, if we compare his statements with those of his contemporary Jeremiah. Jeremiah prophesied for more than forty years with holy zeal and remarkable boldness under the kings Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah and Coniah), and Zedekiah. He knew the people of Judah and Jerusalem through and through. He rebuked the Israelites—who were only really called Jews after the exile—usually very sharply and vehemently because of the many sins they committed. The abominations committed against the law, by young and old, by great and small, became increasingly prevalent, which is why Jeremiah was sent to them by the Lord with a very serious admonition to repent.

Because those admonitions bore no fruit, he, like Zephaniah, had to announce all kinds of severe plagues and judgments of God upon them—in particular, the

capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and even the whole country by the king of Babylon, also called Chaldea. Jeremiah, like Zephaniah, clearly prophesied the seventy years of exile, with all the misery that was involved. Both were inspired by the Spirit in their prophecies; they did not express their own opinions but conveyed the words of God to the people. There was no human exaggeration, nor was there despondent pessimism, but they stood, so to speak, on God's side, that is, they stood firm under God and His justice. They did so with heartfelt compassion and pity for that rebellious people, even weeping bitterly and lamenting, interceding for them in prayer before the Lord. Jeremiah himself experienced the literal fulfillment of his prophecies. No, Zephaniah was free from melancholic exaggeration, for we could just as well think that of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had to suffer greatly for his godliness and boldness. He was imprisoned in the court of the guard when the word of the Lord came to him a second time; see Jeremiah 33. What did the Lord reveal to him, and what message did he have to convey to the people of the Lord? Verses 4 and 5 read: "For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword; they come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in Mine anger and in My fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid My face from this city."

Jeremiah 34:20 also speaks the same as Zephaniah testified, for there we read: "I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth." It all fits in with each other's prophecies. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established." When we describe the condition of the times in which we live, we must not exaggerate and we must keep an eye on the good things that the Lord, in His longsuffering, has left us. However, that does not mean that a comparison cannot be made, whatever the outcome. If we sincerely look at everything, there is, indeed, reason to be concerned about the future. We do not want to be pointed to the increasing decline concerning spiritual matters; we would like to discuss spiritual revival and prosperity, but it is first necessary to face the facts and then carefully draw a conclusion. If it turns out that there is a similarity between Judah at the time of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and our country and people in the present time, then may each one of us need God, if it may please Him, through His Word and Spirit, to cause us to return, with confession of sin and guilt, to the God of our fathers who has performed so many miracles since ancient times, as our national and church history amply recounts.

In Judah, wickedness was widespread, and after the death of the godly King Josiah, David's faithfulness was completely lacking by the royal house, which is why one ruler after another led the people into sinful folly and abominations.

In comparison, how are things going with our Royal House? Although we owe a debt of gratitude to the venerable House of Orange, and although we therefore owe love to our respected queen and her family, are there not, on

the other hand, actions that sadden us greatly and make us fear the worst for the future? If Judah and Jerusalem were covered with idols, who does not know that in our country too, the situation is sad with regard to idolatry and the worship of images? How many thousands among our people bow down to the god of this age and have abandoned God and His Word, or worse still, dare to mock them. Hideous pride is the result of false prosperity, which will end in chaos due to the devaluation of our currency. Incomprehensible frivolity can be seen everywhere, while we live on a volcano that could cause the most terrible situations at

any moment. The masses live only for bread and circuses.

"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" is the meaning of life for thousands.

Seeking the Lord and asking for the Lord is becoming a great rarity. Many others are halting between two opinions—occasionally going to church on Sundays, if one is plastered with so-called words of comfort, and all the other days fully participating in the world. Are there not masses of people who want to give something to God and something to the world? There is still religion, perhaps as much or even more than in Jerusalem, but it is a religion tailored to the corrupt tastes of humanity that has fallen

away from God. For people no longer know what sin is; everything seems permissible. The brakes on conscience are increasingly lacking, especially among the younger generation. Respect and fear for parents, employers, and the police seem outdated and therefore destined to disappear. We cannot foresee where this will lead, but it fills us with fear for the future. Despite God's longsuffering and kindness, there is no gratitude, but all the more rebellion and an attitude of having "rights." □

If we sincerely look at everything, there is, indeed, reason to be concerned about the future. We do not want to be pointed to the increasing decline concerning spiritual matters; we would like to discuss spiritual revival and prosperity, but it is first necessary to face the facts and then carefully draw a conclusion. If it turns out that there is a similarity between Judah at the time of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, and our country and people in the present time, then may each one of us need God, if it may please Him, through His Word and Spirit, to cause us to return, with confession of sin and guilt, to the God of our fathers who has performed so many miracles since ancient times, as our national and church history amply recounts.

(To be continued)

The Sufficiency of Scripture

The perfection and sufficiency of Scripture must needs be granted by all that understand it and that will believe the testimony which it gives concerning itself. It is profitable for doctrine and reproof (2 Timothy 3:16). It serves to inform and open the eyes of the ignorant; it serves to stop the mouths of gainsayers. Hence, we may be furnished with both offensive and defensive weapons, and the armor which is fetched from it is styled the armor or the weapons of light (Romans 13:12). Truly, sin and error being but discovered, that very discovery will have a great influence unto the mortification of the one and our preservation from the contagion of the other.

—Nathaniel Vincent (1639-1697)



A Word in Season

Ascension: The Coronation of Christ

Rev. P. Honkoop, Jr. (1928-1994)

(Taken from the May 1998 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart” (Song of Solomon 3:11).

These words belong to the most delightful song, the Song of Solomon. All through the centuries this song has been regarded as being a conversation between Christ, as the heavenly Bridegroom, and His bride, His Church. Sometimes the friends of the Bridegroom, His true prophets, are introduced while speaking. This song is a portrayal akin to Psalm 45.

In the first verse of this chapter, the bride informs us how that after she initially had sought her Bridegroom to no avail, she had finally found Him. Verse 6 causes us to be surprised about the Church coming up out of the wilderness towards the promised land. Verses 7 and 8 describe to us the glory of Christ, the King of His Church, surrounded by His angels. Verse 9 speaks about His triumphant carriage (also mentioned in Psalm 45), namely, His Word of truth. Finally, we find in the above-mentioned text, Christ, as Bridegroom and Head of His Church, at His wedding ceremony. The daughters of Zion must be aroused to behold the King in His beauty, “Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon.”

Sadly, God’s people repeatedly need to be re-awakened. For “going-out” towards Christ is not a matter of fact; it is an act of faith, and that depends on Christ Himself. We see this manifested very clearly in all the events around Christ’s ascension on high. He Himself must always take the initiative in leading His disciples: “And He led them out as far as to Bethany” (Luke 24:50a).

The life of God’s people always reflects that the Lord must continually arouse them. He arouses their love to Him, or He brings them into some special need, but it is always His radiating love that leads them. Even in regard to wrong expectations, it is the Lord Himself who must instruct them.

After all, even the disciples were entangled in a web of carnal anticipations regarding His earthly kingdom in this world. Therefore, God’s people always need Christ’s divine leadership. The Arminian does not feel his need for that, for he can always help himself, but God’s people know that everything has to come from their Lord. That is why this stimulus for the daughters of Zion is so indispensable and has such a special meaning for them, “Go forth, and behold.” “And behold”—this beholding of Him does not mean to have some kind of superficial imaginations about Christ or drawing conclusions from them, but it means to gaze upon

Him in amazement, worshipping Him. Thus, first of all, it means to look upon Him with spiritually illuminated eyes of faith. The result will be to worship and glorify Him by faith. This text presents to us a divine miracle in all its splendor and glory. For in Christ, God is not only manifested in our flesh, but Christ is also received up into glory, in our flesh. Thus, this text predicts what centuries later has been fulfilled on Ascension Day—the feast of victory. The battle is finished. Satan’s head is bruised.

We know that the disciples had been prepared for this marvelous event in order that they value the meaning of this feast of Ascension aright. They had been led through deep ways. The special administration of the Holy Spirit had set them apart from the world, called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The Holy Spirit had discovered to them their sins and guilt and made room for the only Sacrifice that must be offered to pay their ransom. However, that way had been so incomprehensible, yes, even so unacceptable for their human, carnal expectations. Often, they had barricaded His way with their feelings and hopes concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. But happily, Christ pervaded in the greatness of His strength.

After what they had experienced on Easter, the feast of His resurrection from the dead, His ascension had special meaning for them. Jesus parted from them, He was carried up into heaven, and still—they were happy! Luke says, “And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:52&53). This is different from what we would have expected. They did not weep, mourn, or grieve because He had left them. How different from the preparation they had made for Easter! At that time they were assembled behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews.

Now, on Ascension Day they beheld, gazed at, and worshipped Him. We stand in need of Christ’s leading. If His ascension into heaven should ever become a feast for us, if it will ever receive an illustrious meaning for us, Christ Himself must make room for it within our hearts, for it concerns beholding Him with eyes of faith.

“Go forth, behold King Solomon with the crown.” Christ, who is greater than Solomon, is presented here in all His glory. It concerns Him who always stands central in the heavenly messages coming to us. There is no greater wealth for Zion’s daughters than beholding their King. He has conquered all our enemies. From what else can a poor sinner get more delight than from beholding Christ’s glory?

When God discovers our sin and guilt, it becomes a reality that we have severed our ties with Him by breaking

His covenant in Adam. It becomes our personal guilt that we are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. God's curse rests upon us justly. Heaven is closed for us. God is "justice and judgment, and equity" (Proverbs 1:3). We have no right to even exist before God. All our prayers, sighs, and endeavors of trying to pay our debts that reach to the heavens cannot satisfy God.

Yet, what an abundance of wealth there is to be found in Christ when the Holy Spirit applies to our soul, heaven opened by Christ. Then we may behold Christ, the King of all kings who has performed this mediatorial work that was completely impossible to be performed by men or angels.

Now our text speaks about "the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him." What does this mean? Has not His Father crowned Christ? Was not the Father completely satisfied with His Son's sacrifice? Yes, but regarding Christ, who is greater than Solomon, the Bible often refers to His Church as being His "mother."

The coronation of Christ is also utilized by Zion, His Church. It has been said that Zion was in travail, and brought forth a Child, in the fullness of time.

Bathsheba was Solomon's mother. She brought him forth as the prince of peace. Read Christ's genealogical register in Matthew 1. We would have expected some other women's names as

Hannah, Sarah or Rebekah, but we cannot find them in His genealogy. It has pleased the Lord to use other women, as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and finally, Bathsheba. Yes, indeed, God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things of this world, and the things which are despised. Why? "That no flesh should glory in His presence."

Has Bathsheba crowned Solomon? Yes, you know the history. Adonijah tried, by means of Joab, to usurp David's crown because he was older than Solomon, but Nathan the prophet warned Bathsheba about this. She went to David, pleading upon what he had sworn to her with an oath. She said, "I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders." Thus, Bathsheba took care for her son's coronation. Likewise, the Lord's Church crowns Christ, the supreme Prince of Peace, according to God's good pleasure.

God's people want to honor Christ as their King. The disciples worshipped Him with great joy, praising and blessing God.

God uses His Church to crown His Son. When God's people, by faith, may look upon Christ their King in His

beauty, they will sing, "Christ shall have dominion, over land and sea. I will extol Thee, O my God, and praise Thee, O my King." When will this be done? The text says, "In the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart."

When Christ's ascension on high might be applied experientially, by grace, to our heart, God's people will sing:

*When Thou, O Lord, in glory bright,
Ascendedst in the heavenly height
Our captive-bonds to sever,
Rich gifts from those who did rebel
Thou didst receive, that men might dwell
With Thee, O LORD, forever.*

— Psalter 420:4

Christ is the unspeakable, yes, the unsearchable Gift of the Father. He, the heavenly Bridegroom, has bought His bride, His Church, with the priceless price of His precious blood, delivering her out of the inner prison of death.

And after accomplishing this, He was carried up and received unto celestial glory. To do what? To introduce His bride (His own body) to His Father. As the greater Joseph, Christ brings His brethren into His palace.

Paul wrote jubilantly, "and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6b). This is why he writes in Philippians 3:20a, "For our

conversation is in heaven," and also "your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3b).

Question 49 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?"

Answer: "First, that He is our Advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, as the Head, will also take up to Himself, us, His members; thirdly, that He sends His Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth."

Christ's ascension into heaven is His wedding ceremony. It produces gladness in His heart as our text says. The joy of His Church is tremendous. They shall worship Him, but it especially emphasizes His gladness of heart.

From eternity He has said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Once He told His disciples, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me...to finish His work." Thus, the gladness of His heart is a result of His coronation. □

Read Christ's genealogical register in Matthew 1. We would have expected some other women's names as Hannah, Sarah or Rebekah, but we cannot find them in His genealogy. It has pleased the Lord to use other women, as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and finally, Bathsheba. Yes, indeed, God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things of this world, and the things which are despised. Why? "That no flesh should glory in His presence."

If we do not perceive our wretchedness and poverty, we will never know how desirable is that remedy that Christ has brought to us.

—John Calvin (1509-1564)



From Our Inheritance

The Work of Faith, Patience of Hope, and Labor of Love

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

(Excerpt from a sermon as titled above)

Now look at the connection between faith and hope. Faith gives to things hoped for a subsistence, and then hope takes hold of the things that faith thus realizes, and anchors in them with tenacious grasp as if it would not, could not, dare not let them go, for to let them go is to be lost altogether. If ever you have had a promise applied to your mind with divine power; ever had a revelation of Jesus to your soul; a word from His mouth; an application of His atoning blood to your conscience; or any shedding abroad of the love of God in your heart; hope lays firm hold of the blessing thus communicated, and will not let it go. Just as the anchor lays firm hold of the ground, and by firm holding saves the ship; so the grace of hope saves the soul, (“For we are saved by hope” Romans 8:24), by not letting go any spiritual blessing that ever the Lord has dropped into the heart.

But hope has its *opposition* as well as faith, for as faith is opposed by unbelief, so hope is opposed by despair. Despair is a most dreadful feeling, but it is one whereby the family of God are often beset. We must seek relief against it by hope.

*To cause despair's the scope
Of Satan and his powers;
Against hope to believe in hope,
My brethren, must be ours.*

Here then we need the anchor. The storms of apprehended wrath that beat upon the soul; the strong current of guilty fear; the tide of unbelief rising higher and higher; the rocks of perdition that lie in sight, with breakers covering them with surf, and dashing against them so many wrecks; the fears of the mariner lest the cable should part or the anchor should come home—all this well represents what hope has to endure, and how by endurance it overcomes all opposition. So David encouraged his soul to hope in God when cast down within him, under the sweet assurance that he should still praise Him (Psalm 42:11). Hope of salvation is our helmet (1 Thessalonians 5:8), as faith is our shield, truth our girdle, righteousness our breastplate, and the word of God our sword. Let us, then, keep our helmet on, for to put it off is to go bareheaded into the battle.

But hope has its *end* as well as faith; and what end is this? All that we need and all that we desire—fruition or enjoyment; for as faith will be swallowed up in sight, so hope will be lost in fruition.

And not only has hope its end, but its *fruits*; for it would indeed be inconsistent with such an eminent grace of the Spirit as hope if it were a barren tree, or, like Ephraim, bore fruit only to itself. John gives no countenance to a barren, unfruitful hope—“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Now the fruits of hope are twofold, inward and outward.

Patient *expectation* is the chief *inward* fruit of hope, as the apostle speaks, “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is not seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24&25). To stand, then, upon its watchtower, looking out for the Lord’s appearing, who is “good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him,” is a special fruit of hope, as we read, “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD” (Lamentations 3:26).

To *submit* to God’s will; to sit alone and keep silence, humbly confessing sin, and putting the mouth into the dust, is another fruit of hope: “He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he has borne it upon him” (Lamentations 3:28&29).

To *take* the Lord as our satisfying portion, knowing that in His favor is life, is another inward fruit of hope: “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him” (Lamentations 3:24).

And to add another berry to the cluster, let me name one more inward fruit of hope—a humble *recollection* of past *miseries* and mercies: “My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope” (Lamentations 3:20&21).

And hope has its *outward* fruits also, such as separation from the world; a cleaving close to the family of God; a living not to sin and self but to the Lord; and a conduct and conversation becoming such as profess to be waiting for the Lord’s appearing. □

Oh, let us continually keep faith in exercise, till it be entirely swallowed up in the boundless ocean of beatific vision.

—George Whitefield (1714-1770)



Instructive Gleanings

Righteousness (3)

Rev. P. Kleijer, Lethbridge, AB

“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land”
(Jeremiah 33:15).

Branch of Righteousness

We read in the chapter before us that the prophet Jeremiah received a message in the prison, where he was held for the second time. It was a revelation from the Lord with very comforting content, namely, the restoration of Judah. The fulfillment would come through hardship and much prayer, as we read in verse 3 where the Lord called them to prayer, “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” It is as if the Lord says there, “Pray fervently, thou Jeremiah, who art here shut up in prison.” Jerusalem would be rebuilt. The LORD would remember His people with favor and would also forgive all their sins. The LORD promised more; He would give peace and happiness to such an extent that it would bring glory to God’s great name. All the nations of the world would see it and be amazed, and the honor will be given to Him. Is it not true that the LORD always seeks His own honor? He promised that He would fulfill the good Word that He has spoken. With the Lord is not “yea and nay”; He can neither lie nor alter that which He has spoken. Then we read in verse 14, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.” The restoration and return of Judah also typify the restoration of God’s people. Jeremiah saw further than only temporal deliverance; he saw the coming of the Messiah.

Jeremiah speaks of the time that the Branch of Righteousness would grow up, “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David.” Some say that Zerubbabel, who was instrumental in the restoration of Judah after the Babylonian captivity, is meant here. He was certainly a type of Christ, but here is meant none other than Christ, who is called a “Rod out of the stem of Jesse” (Isaiah 11:1b) and “The Branch of the Lord” (Isaiah 4:2b). He is a righteous Branch. The original word for branch points to something which is sprouting. It is possible to suddenly see a sprout, a growth coming out of a tree which is cut off.

This Branch of Righteousness is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God’s eternal and only begotten Son.

In the fullness of the time, by the incomprehensible operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ took our nature upon Him, sprouting forth from the virgin Mary. We all know that Mary was of the house of David. This Branch came forth from a stem or trunk, which seemed to be withered and dead. What was left of the glorious house of David? Satan and all his host had tried to cut down and to uproot that tree, but he was unable to do so. The LORD had watched over this trunk. Zacharias called the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in his song, “The Dayspring from on high.”

What kind of king would this Branch be? It speaks clearly “of righteousness.” The meaning of the word righteousness we have seen in a previous meditation. We are crooked, but God is right. When we see the lineage of David, we see many unrighteous kings. The law of the Lord was trampled underfoot, and justice and righteousness were disregarded. Dear reader, the question arises for you and me: Can we stand above these kings? There is a people whose eyes have been opened so that they may see what lives within. Such people also learn that the Lord will demand righteousness and justice from them, but that they do not have it. What a need for the Branch of Righteousness arises in such a heart. In a way of justice, they will learn that only Christ can be

their righteousness. Their own righteousness is nothing more than what we read in Isaiah 63:6b, “All our righteousnesses

are as filthy rags.” The annotators of the Dutch Bible say, “That is, all our best works, or whatever good we might have done. Understand additionally: If Thou wouldst examine them according to the rigor of Thy justice, beholding us in our own nature outside of Christ.” Then you learn to say with Paul, who lost all his own righteousness, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8). In a way where we lose everything, Christ as the Branch of Righteousness becomes everything. This made Paul to cry out, “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Dear reader, only if we may know the Branch of Righteousness and He may become ours, then we are safe. We read in verse 16, “In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.” We hope to come back to this name in the future. The Church

In a way where we lose everything, Christ as the Branch of Righteousness becomes everything.

is secure in Christ. Many storms will pass over you, but people of the Lord, take courage. He has overcome the world. The last day will come, and then this Branch of Righteousness will execute judgment and righteousness. Then all unrighteousness shall be removed from the earth, and God's people shall eternally be justified. Will we also

belong to them? Seek to be hidden in Him.

*Then shall Thy fear on earth be known
Long as the sun and moon shall shine;
While endless generations run
Kingdom and glory shall be Thine.*

—Psalter 198:3 ◻

(To be continued)



For Young and Old

The Little Bugler

(As told by a British officer)

(Adapted from the book Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume II)

During my service in India, in those stirring times, I had in my regiment a little bugler whom I had noticed was too fragile for the life he had to lead, but he was born in the regiment, and we were bound to make the best of him. His father, as brave a man as ever lived, had been killed in action; then his mother died six months later.

She was the daughter of godly parents and a delicate, refined woman, who had brought up the boy in the right way. In spite of her religion, she was generally liked and respected, and the boy was an image of her. He liked going to prayer meetings with his mother rather than joining in the horseplay of the other boys. This made him unpopular with the boys, and he suffered from many coarse taunts and mocking jokes. After his mother died (I found this out later), his life was made miserable by the scoffing jeers and ribald jokes of the men, also.

About two years later, when Willie Holt was fourteen years old, the regiment was bivouacking (making temporary camp) for rifle practice some miles from our regular camp. I had intended to leave the lad behind, thinking him too delicate to go along (the ground was swampy and unhealthy), but my sergeant-major begged hard to take him along.

"There is mischief in the air, Colonel," he said, "and rough as they treat the lad, his pluck and patience help restrain 'em; for they see the boy is a saint, sir; and he is, indeed."

I had a rough lot of recruits just then, and before we had been out two weeks, several acts of disobeying orders had been brought to my attention. I vowed to make an example of the very next offense by having the culprit flogged. One morning it was reported to me that during the night the targets had been knocked down and broken, and the usual practice could not take place. This was serious, indeed, and on investigation the mischief was traced to a man or men in the very tent where Willie Holt was staying. Two of the worst characters in the regiment were staying in this tent.

When enough evidence was produced to prove conclusively that one or more of the men in this tent were guilty of the crime, the whole group was put under arrest to be tried by court martial. In vain we appealed to the group to produce the guilty ones.

At last, I said, "We have all the evidence that proves that one or more of you men before us committed the crime last night. If anyone who slept in No. 4 tent last night will come forward and take the punishment like a man, the rest will go free; if not, there is no alternative but to punish you all, each man in turn will receive ten strokes from the 'cat.'" For the space of a couple minutes, dead silence followed; then, from the midst of the men—where his small form had been completely hidden—Willie Holt came forward.

"Colonel," said he, "you have given your word that if anyone of those who slept in No. 4 tent last night comes forward to take the punishment, the rest shall get off free. I am ready, sir; please may I take it now?"

For a moment I was speechless, so utterly was I taken by surprise; then in a fury of anger and disgust, I turned upon the men: "Is there no man among you worthy of the name? Are you all cowards enough to let this lad suffer for your sins? For that he is not guilty you know as well as I."

Still, sullen and silent they stood with never a word. Then I turned to the boy whose pleading eyes were fixed on me, and never in all my life was I in such a painful situation.

I knew I must keep my word, and the lad knew it, too, as he repeated, "I am ready, sir."

Sick at heart, I gave the order, and he was led to the front for punishment. Bravely he stood with bare back, as one-two-three strokes fell. At the fourth a faint moan escaped his white lips; but ere the fifth fell, a hoarse cry burst from the crowd of men who had been forced to watch the scene, and with one bound Jim Sykes (the black sheep of the regiment) seized the whip.

With choking words, he shouted, “Stop it, colonel, stop it, and tie me up instead. He never did it, but I did,” and with convulsed, anguished face he flung his arms around the boy.

Fainting and almost speechless, Willie lifted his eyes to the man’s face and smiled—such a smile, “No, Jim,” he whispered, “you are safe now, the Colonel’s word shall stand.”

Then his head fell forward; he had fainted. The next day, as I was going to the hospital tent where the boy lay, I met the doctor.

“How is the lad?” I asked.

“Sinking, Colonel,” he said quietly.

“What!” I exclaimed, horrified and startled at the words.

“Yes, the shock of yesterday was too much for his feeble strength. I have known for some time his health was failing and it was only a question of time,” he added; “this affair has only hurried matters along. He is more for heaven than for earth, sir,” and with suspicious moisture in his kind, old eyes, he stood aside while I went into the tent.

The dying lad lay propped up on the pillows, and kneeling at his side was Jim Sykes. The change in the boy’s face startled me; it was deadly white, but his eyes were shining with a wonderful light, strangely sweet.

The kneeling man lifted his head, and I saw the drops of sweat standing on his brow, as he muttered brokenly, “Why did you do it, lad? Why did ye do it?”

“Because I wanted to take it for you, Jim,” Willie’s weak voice added tenderly. “I thought it might help you to understand how Christ died for His people.”

“Christ has naught to do with such as me, lad; I’m one of the bad ones; you ought to know.”

“But He died to save bad ones,” answered Willie. “He says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Though

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ Dear Jim, listen! He is calling you. He has poured out His life blood, Jim, for guilty, sinful men. He is knocking at the door of your heart; do heed His knock!”

The lad’s voice failed him, but he laid his hand gently on the man’s bowed head. Standing there in the shadow, I felt my own heart strangely stirred. I heard such things once long, long ago. Thoughts of my mother came floating back out of the dead past, and the words seemed a faint echo of her own.

How long I stayed there, I know not. I was roused by a cry from the man, and I saw Willie had fallen back on his pillow, fainting. I thought the lad was gone, but he was soon revived. He opened his eyes, but they were dim and sightless.

“Sing to me, Mother, ‘The Gates of Pearl,’” he whispered; “I am so tired.”

The words flashed back to my memory. I had heard them often in the shadowy past, and I myself repeated them softly to the dying boy.

“Thank you, Colonel,” he whispered. “I will soon be there.”

This confidence seemed so strange to me that I said, “Where?”

“In heaven, Colonel.” Then he repeated, “Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, And that Thou bid’st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God—I come.”

His voice rang out, thrilling the hearts of everyone who heard it. Then gradually the weak arms dropped; the light faded from the shining eyes, and the brave spirit of the martyr boy fled to God. □

Is it with us as with the rock?

“Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old” (Lamentations 5:21).

Are you not often destitute of the power to repent and confess your sins before God? Does not conscience often bring to view a melancholy retrospect of carnal thoughts, wicked desires, vain imaginations, foolish words, frivolous speeches, and all that catalogue of evils, that huge bill which godly fear sometimes files in the court within, as seen in all our departures from the life of God? But are you able to repent? Are you able to feel cut to the very heart? Are you able to mourn and sigh because conscience brings against you this long indictment? Can you always feel your soul melted down with sorrow on account of it? Are you always able to feel contrition because you are proud, worldly, covetous, everything that is evil, everything that is hateful in God’s sight? But, then, there are times and seasons when the Lord is pleased to work upon the conscience, to move and stir the soul, to touch the heart with His gracious finger—then repentance and godly sorrow flow forth. It is with us as with the rock that Moses struck. There was water in the rock; but it required to be struck with the rod before the waters flowed out. So we may have the grace of repentance in our souls; but it requires the divine hand to strike the rock, to cause the waters of godly sorrow to gush forth.

—J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)



Among All Nations

What Did Joachim Mobachius Say About Israel?

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

(Taken from the book *What Our Fathers Said About Israel*, Chapter 14)

Rev. Joachim Mobachius served the congregation of Den Bosch, the Netherlands, for more than thirty-five years. When this hardworking preacher died at the age of ninety-one years, an end came to a life well spent. It was his custom to devote a great deal of time to the preparation of his sermons. Not surprisingly, these sermons show the marks of a thorough exploration of the Scriptures. Red threads running through them are the following: the call to contrition and repentance, special attention for the biblical prophecies, and many pastoral instructions with respect to the life of grace.

Mobachius' interest in the prophecies raised a strong expectation in his heart. He was deeply convinced that the Jews would return to the land of their fathers and would be converted in the latter days. His heartfelt desire for these events was so strong that he wrote a voluminous book concerning this subject under the title *De langh gewenschte en vast aenstaende bekering van het volk der Jooden* (*The conversion of the Jewish people, long desired and sure to happen*). In this book Mobachius deals with the thirty-first chapter of the prophecies of Jeremiah. As it takes him 750 pages to explain this chapter, one needs a little patience to read through this entire book.

When commenting on the seventh verse of Jeremiah 31, the minister from Den Bosch asks attention for the joy about which the text speaks. As often as someone is converted, this must engender joy and thanksgiving unto the Lord. Mobachius calls it our duty to constantly pray not only for the welfare of Zion and for the rebuilding of the broken walls of Jerusalem in general but also, more particularly, for the conversion of the Jews. At the end of his sermon, he makes a statement that should also serve as a mirror for us: "When God will grant His children and servants a heart that in a special way perseveres in prayer, this may give us liberty to believe that the time has arrived in which He shall turn again to this people in tender mercy." A heart that perseveres in prayer—do I possess this?

Rev. Mobachius refers to "glad and joyful days" for the Jewish people, also in a sermon on Jeremiah 31:31. The

reason is that the text speaks about "the infinite goodness and grace of God shown by the fact that He is willing to re-establish His covenant with people who continue to break that covenant in such a faithless way, and that He stoops down to offer that covenant in the first place, to make it known, and to invite them to enter into it."

Will the Lord really deal with the averse and hardened nation of the Jews in this way? Joachim Mobachius responds to this question in a sermon on Jeremiah 31:32 by pointing to the past. "We see how graciously God dealt with Israel from the days of old in bringing them under the bond of His covenant and in magnifying His mercies among them." In other words, never did God look down in favor upon any people because of their merits. The same holds true for the Jewish people. God did not establish a covenant with them because they were worthy.

This one-sided, free and sovereign work of God led Rev. Mobachius to look to the future with hope. It also led him to act. "From this follows that we, knowing these things, must acquaint the Jews with these promises and continually exhort them to repent and to return unto the Lord, saying, 'Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.'"

Is there more work that needs to be done? Yes, there is. "Let us show them the right way by walking in an edifying manner and thus provoke them to jealousy. Let us, above all, intercede for them without ceasing. Let us believingly point the Lord to His great and glorious promises, plead on them, and beseech Him to fulfil them. Furthermore, let us take care that we do not deal with the Jewish people in a disdainful manner, as many are doing, but let us regard them as beloved for the sake of their fathers, as God's ancient and well-beloved nation, and let us attempt to convince them with the utmost humility and meekness, showing them that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah."

Thus far, Joachim Mobachius. The task laid out for us by this old divine is not an easy one! □

(To be continued)

Keeping a Distance from Sin

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

—Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)



Commentary

The Twelve Apostles (7)

Rev. H. de Leeuw, Brant County, ON

The Wounds of the Past

The disciples have sat by the Lord Jesus in His state of exaltation on the sea shore of Galilee. The Bible reveals places where Christ in His exaltation not only met them but also sat with them. The blessed communion which here is experienced is known by those who are not strangers to Him as their resurrected Lord and Saviour. It is a communion to which they may enter by an invitation, “Come and dine.” The desire of the resurrected Saviour is to both meet and also to feed His purchased possessions. Therein lies a lesson, Peter clearly showed his desire to be with the Lord. He left the fishing boat and his garment and cast himself into the sea to be with Jesus. The desire comes from the wonder that he also could yet be saved. The fruit of his justification by faith is that he longs to be with Christ. The lesson becomes clear—with the knowledge of justification, there comes a life of desiring and experiencing communion with Christ in the power of His resurrection. That, in essence, is sanctification.

Peter may have his place by Christ there on the shore, the wonder of that is inexpressible in words, but how must he be led further? Christ appears the third time to His disciples, but for Christ the days are counting down to His glorious ascension. Do you ever sit with riddles and questions concerning the unknown future, especially when you look at your past? The sin of Peter was forgiven, but how could he continue to be profitable after such a denial? Fishing was his trade, that was something which he could do, but was he not separated to apostleship? On Easter you may read in Mark that there was a special message to him concerning Christ’s resurrection, but further? There Peter sits in the communion with his Redeemer, and something reveals itself. As long as Peter was in this direct communion, the future was not a question, but Christ in the communion is going to give instruction about the future. From this I learn, that in the sweet communion God also will reveal a pathway forward. He is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Christ questions Peter three times. In the communion Christ points back in Peter’s life to when this number three had an effect in his life. It was during his weakness; in communion, the past comes back! Wounds are opened here. The Healer will do a perfect work! Among us there are those who have deep wounds: wounds which have been suffered because of sin, wounds which give great shame, wounds which have been suffered in deep darkness and riddles, wounds which are carried with you in silence,

wounds which now as you get older only hurt more! Here I may give direction from His Word; your deepest wounds the Lord desires to open in the sweetest communion—not to hurt you but to heal you! He opens them to give an answer to that antagonizing question when the communion and sweetness of Christ’s presence fade away again; how it must go further? Do you see that the Lord knows the past—every detail? He has seen it, and now He desires to bring it up in Peter’s life so that it can be dealt with, that it may be healed. The way forward is to uncover it. So, that also means in the practice of life that the way forward is not by maintaining self, by lying, or covering up.

These three questions seem as if Christ would be doubting Peter’s love. This points out that the way of healing in the life of Peter seems to contradict everything. Yet, notice that the Lord has a right to ask this. He does it in a specific and revealing pattern. Simon, son of Jonas. That is his father’s name and his birth name. This reveals Peter’s origin—now his new name “Peter” is not asked about, but whether as a Simon, son of Jonas, he loves Christ in His resurrection. Here you have to observe that in sin and its consequences God points to the origin. Then here, by Peter, the origin needs to be owned or rejected in the reply. How does he answer that? “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” This time I lay the emphasis on “I.” I, as Simon the son of Jonas, love thee. There the opened wounds are owned, that is who he is—a wounded man who three times over denied His Master. Here is owned I am a wound that in self will never heal, I am a person who does not know how to go forward with my wounds.

Three times over, there is a reply concerning those wounds. Three times it is a reply about the same purpose on how to go forward. The key lesson here is that the wound is opened so that Peter knows where the origin of his burden lies. It is because of sin. Still, Christ reveals: I am Lord and Master over that sin; therefore, feed my lambs. Those lambs all know what wounds are, the one bigger than the other, but all because they have the same origin as you, Simon, son of Jonas. So go forward to feed them according to the power of the gospel which heals! So, it is also with the sheep who have developed in the knowledge and grace of Christ but...wounded! Feed them.

Lessons, dear reader, may come to the foreground here! Christ is Lord and Master over the wounds of His people, and He desires that they go forward in the power of His resurrection with the purpose to be serviceable to others in their struggles, strife, and impossibilities. 1 Corinthians 15 also reveals the wonder of Christ’s resurrection; He appeared

to Cephas, that is, Peter. The key part to 1 Corinthians 15 is that He is the first fruits of them that slept. This means that He, for Peter and all His wounded ones, is the first one that was raised with a glorified body, with no more limitations

of the past origin of sin—a hope, therefore, that the way forward for His whole church is in the prospect of a blessed resurrection where in all the wounds are healed! ☐

(To be continued)



Questions from Our Readers

A Savour of Life or Death

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

We hear in sermons and prayers sometimes the words from 2 Corinthians 2:16 “the savour of death unto death...or the savour of life unto life”; can you explain the meaning of this?

This is indeed a familiar but also biblical quote, often used in church in public prayer and referring to the Word that will be preached, namely, that it will be blessed. We read in 2 Corinthians 2:16a, *“To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.”* The direct context of this text refers to the triumph of the gospel of Christ, which in the midst of many ministerial trials in the life of Paul encouraged him to continue in the labor of that gospel. Often God’s servants can be discouraged when they wonder if they are plowing upon the rocks. Or must conclude that upon their lamenting there is no mourning and upon their piping (playing the flute) there is no dancing (see Matthew 11:17). Then they will, as it were, remind the congregation that there is nevertheless a solemn result, which they have not in their hands. The preaching of Christ is to them that believe the savour of life unto life, and to them that perish the savour of death unto death. This is a very solemn thought which all of us ought to take to heart. Actually, it is rather more a warning than a prayer.

I will try to explain the figurative sense Paul uses here by means of a scene I once read. During the Roman Empire many battles were fought. After such a battle was won, the Roman generals would return from the battlefield and enter the city or village. Often the conquered enemy would literally be tied to the chariot, stumbling and being dragged along. From there the entire procession and train of soldiers would head to the temples of their gods: Jupiter, Neptune, Venus or Apollo, you name them. Upon arrival of the chariots of victory, the door of the temple would be thrown open and the scent of fresh-cut flowers as well as the sweet odor of frankincense fell upon the arriving guests. The sensors filled with this odor clearly were a

sweet savour unto the people! The battle was won; the victory had been obtained.

Observe now! As the people were shouting and their sensors were filled with sweet-smelling savours which already filled the crowded streets, do you suppose these sweet-smelling savours were also sweet to those prisoners of war tied to the chariots? I doubt it. That very *smell* was unto them the savour of death unto death! For soon, as was often the case, they would be executed! The very smell, then, was unto the General and his victorious soldiers the smell of life, while for the conquered enemy it was—as it were—the smell of their pending death. The very smell of life for the one was the very smell of death for the other!

My dear reader, Paul now applies this to the victory of Jesus Christ. Christ whose victory over sin, death, and hell we recently commemorated at Easter is, as it were, a scent that disperses itself in the midst of the congregation where the Word of God is preached. The same message of His resurrection was by the enemy quickly turned into a lie. Thereby the Word of life became to them the savour of death unto death. This happens when we call the blood of Christ an unclean thing. It happens when we trample underfoot the blood wherewith we were sanctified, that is, set apart.

Paul writes in the next verse, *“But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”* Readers, how is that Word received? The victory chariot of Jesus Christ still goes through our towns and congregations! What was true in the days of the exaltation of Joseph over Egypt is applicable here: *“Bow the knee”* (Genesis 41:43). That is the solemn matter here. It is the same Word of the Lord that either saves or condemns. It causes a bowing or a hardening. It is to our advantage or condemnation. It is a sword that pierces asunder and divides soul and spirit and is a discerner of the hearts. Therefore, submit, bow and confess, harden not your heart but rather let it be healed. ☐

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



Current Events

Persecution in Yemen

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control northwest Yemen began a campaign of arbitrary detention against Christians in November 2025, and by February 2026 dozens had been arrested or had disappeared. Authorities raided Christians' homes, broke doors and arrested them by force, without showing arrest warrants or stating any reason. Other Christians were taken from the streets. Some are reported to be in Houthi-run prisons, but others have disappeared without trace. The number of Yemeni Christians who have been detained or disappeared is impossible to verify given the chaotic security situation in the war-torn country, but local sources and rights groups report more than fifty Christians missing, with some stating that over fifty Christians were detained in January alone. It has been reported that Christians, and other faiths, have been denied aid and medical treatments in hospitals. A Yemeni Christian who believed he was about to be arrested, said: "I will also be taken. There were vehicles with agents asking about me only a few days ago...I know it's coming. In the meantime, I'm trying to memorize as many Bible passages and verses as possible. I want to be a walking Bible, so that wherever I'm taken, I can share about Jesus." He went on to explain, "In my country, especially in this region when someone is taken, they could vanish for months...and we might not know anything about them until they're released...May God use me. Just like He was with Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi, I know that He will be with me, and if He is with me, who can be against me? They can kill the body, yes, but I pray that the ministry does not stop... May God intervene, amidst the problems and pain, and may He comfort us." Days later, he disappeared.

—*ChurchInChains.ie*

Iranian Christians Cling to Faith and Hope

Fear mixed with hope—that is how Christians who had left Iran described their feelings after the first wave of attacks on their homeland by the United States and Israel. A diaspora of Iranian believers worship in churches across the globe. Many stay in touch with family and friends back in Iran. They described massive anti-government protests in recent weeks—followed by brutal retaliation. In a way the U.S. attacks are almost an answer to prayer, several Iranians said. One said, "I have personally heard from people who were in the streets in the past month when security forces stood in front of them with guns and opened fire," as they fled, some of the protestors "looked up at the sky, searching for drones and waiting for help." The attacks also do threaten lives in Iran, including families of the estranged Christians. "It's very mixed feelings right now, because of all their loved ones involved, not knowing about the outcome of all this," one church member said. Her congregation is praying for safety and freedom for the Iranian people. "Given the last few minutes of news, there is a lot of hope that the future of peace and freedom may be soon," a member of another church said shortly after reports that key figures in Iran's government, including the supreme leader died in the attacks. One Iranian Christian who is personally familiar with the events leading to that supreme leader's rise to power said, "I pray for safety, peace, and the wellbeing of Iranian people. My faith motivates me to seek freedom, human rights and justice. I have seen how faith and freedom are intertwined. I pray for a safe, just, and democratic Iran where all citizens can practice their beliefs freely."

—*ChristianChronicle.org*

Iran's Prisoners

The family of an imprisoned Iranian Christian convert who was due for release prior to the war are concerned for her safety, having not heard from her since the conflict began nearly three weeks ago. Her sentence was recently reduced to three years and six months, after which it was agreed that she could serve the remainder of her sentence outside prison, with an electronic tag. Then the conflict began, and all contact with her was lost, as has been the case for other prisoners of conscience. Prior to the conflict, there were at least forty-eight Christians serving sentences in prisons in Iran on charges related to their religious beliefs or activities, including at least sixteen in Evin Prison. Conditions at prisons including Evin have reportedly worsened, with suggestions that guards have abandoned their posts and counter-terrorism forces have taken charge. Family visits and hospital appointments have also reportedly been cancelled, while prisoners have been denied medical care. It has been reported that in some facilities prisoners are being fed just one small, low-quality meal a day.

—*ArticleEighteen.com*

Indonesian Church Forced to Close

Authorities closed a Christian church in Teluknaga, Indonesia, after services on Good Friday, over a "building permit issue," forcing the congregation to worship elsewhere on Easter. The authorities there carried out the closing after receiving pressure from several clerics (kyai), Islamic students (santri), and representatives of the surrounding community following Friday Muslim prayers. The crowd began approaching the foundation's office area around 1:00 p.m. after Friday prayers. They demanded the sealing because the building lacked a building permit. A leader of the church explained that they had attempted to soundproof the building to avoid disturbing residents, given that the building permit application they had submitted had been stalled for the past three years.

—*Persecution.org*

Swedish State Take Daughters

Christian parents in Sweden have lost a final appeal after Swedish state took their daughters following a false abuse claim. Swedish authorities labeled the family religious extremists for frequent church attendance. The children have been separated from their parents since December 2022. The case began after the couple's eldest daughter, then eleven, made a false abuse report at school following a fight with her parents over not being allowed to have a smartphone or wear makeup. The girl quickly retracted the allegation, and prosecutors found no evidence of abuse, but the Swedish state refused to return the children, who were seized on allegations of "religious extremism." According to a legal group, the state cited the family's habit of attending church three times a week and their parenting choices as evidence of "religious extremism" and justification for keeping the children. The girls have pleaded to be reunited with their parents and have suffered worsening mental and physical health. Their parents reported that both girls attempted suicide while in state care. The parents have completed state-mandated parenting courses and were later deemed fit to parent, but they still have not been reunited with their daughters. The European Court of Human Rights "deemed the case inadmissible on the grounds of failure to exhaust legal remedies in Sweden," despite the Swedish Supreme Court refusing to hear the family's case in 2025.

—*FoxNews.com*



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

A Boy from Stavenisse (12)

C. Visser-Sluiser

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

Leen becomes a soldier

Leen's greatest joy is going to visit the people of God. He has many friends among them, even though he still is a boy.

The years go by and Leen becomes a young man. Most boys his age have to go into the military service. One day Leen goes to an old friend. "I think that I do not have to go into the service, Van Oeveren," he says.

This man looks at him. Could the boy be right? "Why do you think this, Leen?"

"The Lord told me this. I received the words that I must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

It remains quiet for a little while after he says this. Van Oeveren gives him a long and intent look.

"Did I not experience many tribulations?" Leen asks. "You must know how everything went in my life? I already had a difficult time as a child. Doesn't the Lord want to tell me with this that I may soon go Home? Oh, I firmly believe this."

The man still looks silently at the young face across from him. He reads the longing for the Lord in Leen's eyes. Then he slowly shakes his head. "Shall I tell you something? You will soon go to be conscripted, and then you will become a soldier."

Leen gets up. "Oh no, you don't know anything about it. The Lord Himself told me that I may enter in. I have already had my tribulations."

Van Oeveren continues to shake his head. He does not believe that Leen will die soon. He does not believe a word of it.

Leen goes away. He has to talk to Sammarina about this. She has been like a spiritual mother to him for all those years. She knows him inside and out. Yes, that is what he will do. He will go on to Sint Maartensdijk tonight.

Sammarina is always happy when he comes. As soon as he sits down, she pushes a cup of tea across

the table. "Here, have a nice drink and tell me what the matter is. You look so restless."

Leen sighs. He feels uncomfortable. It is not nice of his old friend to treat him like that.

"The Lord gave me a promise," he says at last.

Sammarina patiently waits for him to continue speaking.

"Yes, the Lord promised me that I must go through much tribulation before entering into the kingdom of God. I was so wonderfully happy. Soon there will be a draft for those who must enter into the military service. I do not have to go into the service. The Lord will take me up into His glory."

Sammarina squints her near-sighted eyes to little slits and stares at the boy while thinking deeply. She has known him since he was a child. She knows how much he loves the Lord and how he fears the sinful life of a soldier, but she believes that he does not understand the Lord's intention at this point. It could very well be that he still has to undergo many tribulations before he may go to the Lord in heaven. The more she thinks about it, the clearer it becomes. Leen is mistaken. He will have to go into the service, and she will have to carefully tell him about this. "Sometimes a person thinks incorrectly, Leen," she begins. "There are things our sinful minds understand mistakenly. This is what you are doing now. You think that the Lord will keep you from the rough life as a soldier because He spoke to you."

Leen looks sad. Does Sammarina doubt as well? "He has spoken; I had many tribulations. Now I may enter."

Sammarina grasps his hand, which is lying on the table. She softly presses his fingers. "You are going to be a soldier, my boy," she says seriously.

They look intently into each other's eyes. Leen slowly feels his certainty ebbing away. Are there still many tribulations to come? Does the Lord still have work for him to do here on earth?

“You know that He is faithful. Entrust yourself to His wise guidance.”

Leen bows his head, turmoil within him. Must he live among those rough, oftentimes wicked soldiers? That will be so difficult.

Sammarina sees him struggling. The boy must bow, bow before the Lord. When the names are drawn a few days later, it indeed appears that Leen is among the boys that must become soldiers.

He feels alone between the boisterous fellows. They curse and rage. “They cannot miss me at home for the work,” one rages.

Another clenches his fists: “It’s a waste of my time. I want to build a house. I’m getting married next year.”

Others think it will be nice to be a soldier for two years. They accompany each other to the bar at the corner of the street to drink and to celebrate.

Leen silently goes home. He now understands what the Lord meant: He must first suffer tribulations and then enter the kingdom of God. When he gets home, he goes to a quiet place to pray. If the Lord wants him to go into the service, he will go obediently and full of trust, because he does not doubt that the Lord will go with him.

Leen leads a life totally different from the other soldiers. The rougher the boys are, the more Leen misses God’s people. They soon notice that he prays for his food and before he goes to sleep. Sometimes his plate of food has disappeared by the time he opens his eyes, or else they play silly pranks while he is kneeling in front of his bed. These are the tribulations, and they last for two years.

One day the corporal threateningly stands in front of a group of soldiers. They did not polish their rifles

properly and the corporal looks angry. “You are a bunch of lazy rascals,” he scolds and follows this with a few very coarse curses.

Leen stands between the young soldiers. He cringes when he hears these curses. This man constantly curses, and this always troubles Leen, but the soldiers are definitely forbidden to criticize a superior. Leen knows this, but he cannot restrain himself any longer. His King is being offended, and he cannot tolerate this any longer. He strongly feels that the Lord is now demanding him to speak. He straightens up and looks at the corporal kindly, but seriously.

“Corporal, it is a very great sin to curse. My most-high King in heaven forbids it. With all love, I urge you not to curse anymore.”

It becomes deathly silent on the square in front of the barracks. The soldiers rigidly stand at attention. So does Leen, but he does not look down. He openly and honestly looks at the corporal. That man has never experienced the reprimand of a soldier. His mouth falls open in amazement, and he momentarily does not know what to say or do.

At an angle behind him stands a non-commissioned officer. He heard what Potappel dared to say to the corporal. He furiously takes a step forward and snarls at Leen: “You shut your mouth immediately. I command you to keep quiet.”

Leen cannot keep quiet. His King commanded him to speak. It concerns His honour.

“We will make up a report about this,” decides the corporal, “Private Potappel will hear more about this.”

(To be continued)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Baal’s Prophets

(Based on 1 Kings 18)

Many days passed, and then God told Elijah that very soon He would send rain on the earth. God commanded him to go and tell this to Ahab. Was Elijah afraid to go to the wicked king? No, the prophet obeyed God without fear, for he knew God could keep him safe if that were His will.

Because there had been no rain for many months, there was a dreadful famine at this time in the land

of Samaria. All the people and animals were dying because there was no food. The king called Obadiah, the governor of his house, and said, “Go now and look for grass by the brooks and fountains; perhaps there may be a little to save our poor horses and mules alive.” So, Obadiah went in one direction and Ahab in another, traveling through the country in hopes of finding grass.

Obadiah was a good man, not like his wicked master. Obadiah served the Lord. When he was very young, he began to love God, and he prayed to be kept from all the wicked idolatry he saw in Ahab's house. God heard the prayer of Obadiah. He taught him to do right and to serve and honor Him. When Jezebel tried to kill all God's holy prophets, Obadiah took one hundred of them and hid them in two caves. He fed them with bread and water and kept them safe from the cruel queen. Obadiah often felt very unhappy when he saw how wicked the king and queen were. It was sad for him to live in such a family, but Obadiah had another Master and King in heaven. God helped him in all his difficulties. If at any time we are with wicked people, we should try to be like Obadiah and ask God to help us to do right and to honor Him in all things.

As Obadiah went through the country in obedience to Ahab's command, he saw a man coming to meet him. When the man came near, Obadiah looked at him and remembered him immediately. Who was it? It was Elijah the prophet. When Obadiah saw him, he fell down respectfully before him and said, "Art thou my lord Elijah?"

The prophet said, "I am; go and tell Ahab, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'" Obadiah was afraid. He thought that perhaps Elijah would go away again while he went to find Ahab. He told Elijah how Ahab had been looking all over for him, also in other countries. Obadiah was certain that if he told Ahab that Elijah had been found, but then was nowhere to be seen, Ahab would be very angry and kill Obadiah. He also told Elijah what he had done for the prophets of the Lord whom Jezebel tried to kill, and how that he himself had feared the Lord from when he was a child.

Elijah said, "Do not fear; I will not go away. I will show myself to Ahab today."

So, Obadiah went and told the king, and Ahab came to meet Elijah. Ahab hated Elijah very much, and when he saw him, he said, "Are you the man that troubles Israel?"

Elijah answered, "I do not trouble Israel. It is you and your father's house who are troubling the country. You have disobeyed God's commands and have served Baal. Now send and gather together the prophets of Baal, four hundred fifty of them, and the four hundred prophets who eat at Jezebel's table, and also all the people of Israel. Let them all come to Mount Carmel."

Ahab did as Elijah said. All the wicked prophets came to Mount Carmel. Elijah was there, too, and so

were many of the people of Israel. Then Elijah spoke to the people, and said, "Choose today whom you wish to serve. If the Lord be God, serve Him; but if Baal is the true God, obey Baal." The people did not answer. Then Elijah said to the people, "We will try now to see who is the true God. Let Baal's prophets build an altar and offer a bullock in sacrifice, but put no fire under it. Then I, the Lord's prophet, will build an altar and offer a bullock in sacrifice; I also will put no fire under it. You pray to Baal, and I will pray to the Lord. The God who sends down fire on the sacrifice, He shall be the true God."

All the people said, "Yes, let us try this." So, Baal's prophets built their altar, put a bullock upon it, and prayed to Baal to send fire upon the sacrifice. However, Baal could not hear. He was only an idol, without any power to answer prayer.

Then the prophets of Baal cried louder and said, "O Baal, hear us." Still there was no voice, no answer. The foolish prophets cried again and cut themselves with knives until they were all covered with blood. They thought this might make Baal listen to them. Still no fire came, no answer, no voice.

When it was evening, Elijah called the people and said, "Come near to me." Then he built up the altar of the Lord, took a bullock, and put it upon the altar. He even poured a lot of water on the altar, on the wood, and on the bullock. Then he prayed to the Lord, the true God. He asked God to teach the people that He alone had the power to hear prayer and to send fire from heaven. Did God hear? Yes, fire fell from heaven when Elijah prayed. It burnt the sacrifice, the wood, and even the stones, and even licked up all the water. All the people saw it and cried, "The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God."

Then Elijah commanded that all the wicked prophets should be captured. They were brought to the brook Kishon and killed there. These wicked men had to die because they had taught Israel to sin.

There are many people in distant countries who even now worship idols such as Baal. They do not know the true God, for they have no Bible to teach them about Him. Let us be thankful that we have been given God's Word, so we may know of the true God, the God of Elijah, who will hear and answer the prayer of His people. Let us ask God not only to teach us of Himself but also to send His Word and His servants to the poor ignorant heathen, to teach them to know Him, too.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

(Psalm 119:105)



Bible Quiz

Caves

Dear Boys and Girls,

Have you ever been in a cave? Perhaps you took a tour there, and the guide showed you and your family the glistening stalagmites, the craggy crevices, the colorful rock, and more. Maybe you've explored, on a hike, in the woods, and you crawled into a small cave you discovered all on your own. "Come on!" you beckoned to your brother or sister. "Look what I found. It's really deep!"

That is how a cave is—it is dark, and you can crawl or walk deep into it. Maybe it made you feel afraid, but in the Bible, we read of caves which made people feel safe. Quite often, we read in the Bible of caves which were used as hiding places from danger and from enemies. Sometimes, caves were also used as burial places, and occasionally, we even read of caves as a place to live.

One such cave was the cave of Adullam. The cave of Adullam was in the country near the Dead Sea, about six miles southeast of Bethlehem. When David was fleeing from Saul, he hid in this cave with his men. After that, many more people came to stay in the cave with him. We read in the Bible that they were people who were "in distress, in debt, and discontented." They all fled to David. Did David say, "I really didn't want you here, because I have enough to worry about?" No. David became captain over them.

This history is often used as a picture of Christ. People do not flee to the Lord Jesus by nature, but... if they come to realize how much sin is in their heart, and how much they have grieved a good doing God, and that they are so far away from God, then they become distressed. Their sin becomes a debt they cannot pay. They become discontented with themselves, with the world around them, and with their inability to do any good or be holy.

They are sad. They cannot live as they did before. How did this change? It is because the Lord worked in their heart. He showed them that they were on a terribly dangerous way, and that they had never once had God in their thoughts ("The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts"—Psalm 10:4).

What can make them happy again? When the Lord leads them further, He shows them not only their sin

but also where to flee. Just like those discontented, distressed people fled to David, so these people come to see that Christ is the only remedy for all their trouble and great debt of sin. He is able to comfort them in distress, pay their debt, and give them true contentment.

What a wonder it is that, as David became captain over those distressed people, Christ becomes Lord over His people who flee to Him.

* * * * *

Caves as Places to Hide

Look up the verses to find your answers.

- In 1 Chronicles 11:15, WHO hid in a cave? _____ WHAT was the name of the cave? _____ Who was he hiding FROM? _____
- In 1 Kings 18:4, WHO hid in a cave? _____ WHO helped them? _____ Who were they hiding FROM? _____
- In Joshua 10:16, WHO hid in a cave? _____ WHERE was the cave located? _____
- In Judges 6:2, WHO made themselves caves to hide in? _____ From WHOM did they need to hide? _____
- In 1 Samuel 13:6, WHO hid in caves, thickets, rocks, high places, and pits? _____ WHY were they distressed? _____
- In 1 Samuel 22:1&2, WHO came into the cave to be with David? _____

- In 1 Samuel 24:3, WHO were quietly hidden in the sides of the cave? _____ Who ELSE came in? _____
- In 2 Samuel 23:13, WHEN did three chiefs come to David in the cave? _____ WHERE were the Philistines pitched? _____
- In Isaiah 2:12,19, to WHOM would the day of the Lord's majesty and glory be displayed? _____
_____ When they hid in caves and holes of the rocks, what would the Lord arise and do? _____
- In Hebrews 11:32,38, those who witnessed of their faith had to wander in _____

For the Older Children
Caves as Places of Burial

Fill in the blanks.

11. "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the _____. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11).

12. "That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his _____; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a buryingplace amongst you" (Genesis 23).

13. "And his _____ Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;" (Genesis 25).

14. "And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my _____: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite," (Genesis 49).

For the Younger Children
Caves as Places to Live/Stay

Complete the verses. Then find the words in the wordsearch.

N D U F S O H L A A D S O I H
 A U R L I W O R O D F R O Z D
 A W O R D N F E M J E E O O L
 I W A V C A G G O H V T H A L
 U U T V V T J A U N J H M R N
 E E O E O L R T N H R G R J E
 R O L R I Q W W T Z H U N T T
 E L T A G A O O A G N A E R S
 A R L O O L E Q I S E D T A E
 I G N O P D A D N N A D A R O
 W E H S C A V E D D T T S H D
 E E N N E O T A Z E C G E M H
 U J O C D E L I J A H T A A O

cave Zoar mountain word Lot cave
Elijah daughters doest

15. Genesis 19:30 – "And _____ went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the _____, and his two _____ with him; for he feared to dwell in _____: and he dwelt in a _____, he and his two daughters."

16. 1 Kings 19:9 – "And he came thither unto a _____ and lodged there; and, behold, the _____ of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What _____ thou here, _____?"

* * * * *

Answers to April's "Calm" quiz:

- 1. Dealt Psalm 116:7
- 2. Dwellings Isaiah 32:18
- 3. Patiently Psalm 37:7
- 4. Laden Matthew 11:28
- 5. Rebuked Matthew 8:26
- 6. Ceased Mark 4:39
- 7. Raging Luke 8:24
- 8. Great calm
- 9. Psalm 107:29
- 10. Wrought, tempestuous This means it was rough, the waves were working and tossing. Tempestuous means it was stormy.
- 11. His solution was to take him up and cast him into the sea.
- 12. God Because Jonah was not obeying Him.
- 13. Yes

* * * * *

Answers to previous quizzes were received in March from:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Bailee Bakker | Micah Kievit (2) | Lakia Rus (2) |
| Blaire Bakker | Jayda Klop | Sierra Spaans |
| Martena Blom (2) | Evanny Knibbe | Grace Timmermans (2) |
| Tiffany Blom | Rylan Knibbe (2) | Luke Van Grouw |
| Aryanna Breeweg (3) | Sienna Knibbe (2) | Ava Van Manen |
| Julian Breeweg (2) | Vera Knibbe | Alana van Manen |
| Carly Brouwer | Mea Korevaar | Evan Van Manen |
| Elsie de Leeuw (4) | Carissa Mans | Hanna Van Wyk |
| Melanie DeKorne | Travis Mans (2) | Eli Vande Waerd (2) |
| Eva den Bok | Abe Mol | Joelle Vande Waerd (2) |
| Hudson den Bok | Teddy Mol | Sophia Vande Waerd |
| Zoey den Bok | Andrew Murphy | Wyatt Vande Waerd 2 |
| Alyssa Driesse (2) | John Murphy | Levi Vander Waal |
| Jordan Driesse (2) | Carter Neels | Sara Vander Waal |
| Kailyn Driesse (3) | Larissa Oostenbrink | Shara Verhoef (2) |
| Lindsey Driesse (2) | Blake Pannekoek | Caleb Vogelaar |
| Allison Ekema (2) | Cassadee Pannekoek | Matthew Vogelaar |
| Kaylynn Ekema (2) | Lauren Pannekoek | Keegan Weeda |
| Samuel Fluit | Andrew Remijn | Jayden Weeda |
| Sawyer Fluit | Daniel Remijn | Nathan Wesdyk (2) |
| Samantha Grisnich | Lauren Remijn | Samuel Weststrate (2) |
| Kaylia Groen | Lewis Rivers | Josie Ymker (2) |
| Kendra Groen | Lilyana Rivers | Lane Ymker |
| Willard Groenendyk (4) | Lynne Ruisen (2) | Maddyn Ymker |
| Cheyenne Groeneweg | Lydia Ruisen (3) | Quentin Ymker |
| Lane Hoogendoorn | Collin Rus (2) | Whitney Ymker |
| Corina Jansen | Kaela Rus (2) | |

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
 180 Jacobs Road
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 E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Christ Cares for Young Children

The souls of young children are evidently precious in God's sight. Both here and elsewhere there is plain proof that Christ cares for them no less than for grown-up people. The souls of young children are capable of receiving grace. They are born in sin, and without grace cannot be saved. There is nothing, either in the Bible or experience, to make us think that they cannot receive the Holy Spirit, and be justified, even from their earliest infancy. The baptism of young children seems agreeable to the general tenor of Scripture, and the mind of Christ in the passage before us. If Jewish children were not too young to be circumcised in the Old Testament dispensation, it is exceedingly hard to understand why Christian children should be too young to be baptized under the gospel. Thousands of children, no doubt, receive no benefit from baptism, but the duty of baptizing them remains the same. The minds of young children are not unequal to receiving religious impressions. The readiness with which their minds receive the doctrines of the gospel, and their consciences respond to them, is matter of fact well known to all who have anything to do with teaching. Last, but not least, the souls of children are capable of salvation, however young they may die.

—J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)



But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 19:14)

News & Announcements

Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. M.T. Al-Chalabi of Hilversum, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Clifton, New Jersey.

To Rev. H. de Leeuw of Brant County, Ontario, by the congregations of Chilliwack, British Columbia and Sunnyside, Washington.

To Rev. P.D. den Haan of Rijssen-West, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Kalamazoo, Michigan.

To Rev. W. Harinck, of Utrecht, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Waupun, Wisconsin.

To Rev. H. Hofman of Grand Rapids–Beckwith, Michigan, by the congregation of Capelle aan Den IJssel-West, the Netherlands.

To Rev. J.B. Zippo of Zoetermeer, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

Declined:

By Rev. H. de Leeuw of Brant County, Ontario, to the congregations of Chilliwack, British Columbia and Sunnyside, Washington.

By Rev. W. Harinck, of Utrecht, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Waupun, Wisconsin.

By Rev. H. Hofman of Grand Rapids–Beckwith, Michigan, to the congregations of Aalburg, Gorinchem, and Capelle aan Den IJssel-West, the Netherlands.

By Rev. P.C. Vlot of Krabbendijke, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

By Rev. J.B. Zippo of Zoetermeer, the Netherlands, to the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa.

Obituaries

BOESTERD, Peter – Age 70, March 10, 2026; Norwich, Ontario; Wife – Pat; Children – Melissa, Meaghan & Adam Hunter, Abbie & Brandon Whitehead; 4 grandchildren; Brother – Bill & Margaret; Parents – Abraham (deceased) & Tina. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Hebrews 9:27&28.)

DEKORNE, Jacob Jr. (“Jay”) – Age 68, March 20, 2026; Coopersville, Michigan; Wife – Kathie; Son – Jacob & special friend JoAnne Taylor; Siblings – Susan & Randy Neuman,

Timothy & Mary, Mark & Mandy, Daniel & Julie; In-laws – Agnes & Willard DeBraber, Ruth & Jeffrey Marshall, Jane & Michael Klaasen, Donna & Arnold VanVeldhuizen, Mary DeMeester, Daniel & Kathy DeMeester, Cornelia & David VanDyke; predeceased by parents Jacob and Phyllis. (Rev. H. Hofman, 1 Kings 17:8-16.)

OUDSHOORN, Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm (“Harry”) – Age 87, March 12, 2026; Picture Butte, Alberta; Wife – Engena (nee Middelkoop, deceased); Children – Martin & Wilma, Nel & Art Lindhout, Harry & Christina, Diane & Ken Slingerland, Els & Dick Veurink, Carla & Nathan Neels, John & Tamara; 50 grandchildren, 97 great-grandchildren; predeceased by granddaughter Jolene Oudshoorn and great-grandsons Landon Korporaal and Jordon de Kok. (Rev. P. Kleijer, Lamentations 3:21-25.)

STUBBE, Catherine Adriana Wisse (nee Kersten) – Age 81, March 10, 2026; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Isaac; Children – Gerrard & Marilyn, Martin & Margaret, Dave & Marianne, Chris & Johanna, Ben & Jesse, Jonathan & Carla, Leah & Garrett Otten;

31 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Shona & Pete Vanderwal, Evan & Ruth Kersten; In-laws – John Scholten, Wilma & Harry Jansen, Bertha, Cobie & Keith VanMourik, Alice Zandbergen, Annie Williams, John & Wilma, Dick & Anne, Don, Rhea & Ben Vandebrink, Bill & Corrie; predeceased by a sister, 2 sisters-in-law, 4 brothers-in-law, and grandson Garret Stubbe. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Psalm 42:11.)

ZEVENBERGEN, Martin – Age 94, March 17, 2026; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wife – Sharon (deceased); Children – Brian & Lil, Jane & John Kamp, Pete & Kristina, Ken & Karin; 13 grandchildren, 39 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren; Brother – Leen Zevenbergen; Brother-in-law – Kees Overgaauw; predeceased by a sister, a sister-in-law, and great-grandson Jordan Kamp. (Rev. H. Hofman, Ecclesiastes 11:3b.)

Classis East Youth Conference June 27, 2026

The Classis East Youth Conference date has been set for June 27, 2026, in Norwich, Ontario, D.V. Rev. E. Hakvoort and Student G. Rozeboom hope to present topics. All young people age sixteen and over, as well as young adults, are invited to attend. Registration and the itinerary will be found at www.ontarioyouthday.ca

In Memoriam

Mr. Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm (Harry) Oudshoorn

On March 12, 2026, it pleased the Lord to remove from the midst of his family, Mr. Harry Oudshoorn, at the age of eighty-seven years. Mr. Oudshoorn faithfully served the congregation of Lethbridge as a deacon for twenty-nine years (1978-2007). May the Lord remember the mourning ones and sanctify this calling to his family.

— *The Lethbridge NRC Consistory*

New AudioBook Recordings from Bible Truth Books

Some months ago, we noted that several audiobooks were available on our website (www.BibleTruthBooks.org). Since that time, several additional audiobooks have been added:

A Dying Man's Regrets
The Dairyman's Daughter
Ruth's Reward
The Young Huguenots
Pierre and His Family
Out of the Depths (the Life of John Newton)
The Autobiography of John Kershaw
The Young Cottager
Pilgrim's Progress by J. Bunyan, retold by A.C.H. vanVuuren

Christiana's Journey by J. Bunyan, retold by A.C.H. vanVuuren

Adult Bible Lessons by Elder VandeWende (former elder from NRC Clifton, recorded between 1961 and 1976)

In addition, our 2026 catalog has been published. To receive a free copy, please feel free to contact us at:

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

60th Wedding Anniversary (1966-2026)

"Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalm 77:20).

With this text, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, **Christiaan Neels & Maria Elizabeth Neels-Anker**

were joined in marriage on May 10, 1966, by Rev. C. Hegeman in Sioux Center, Iowa.

It is our heartfelt wish that the Lord will remember them in the evening of their life and grant them His indispensable blessings.

9760 McGrath Road
Rosedale, BC Canada VOX 1X1

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

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, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, is seeking a dedicated and people-focused elementary vice principal to join our leadership team next school year. This is a unique opportunity to make a daily difference in the lives of children in a positive environment, prayerfully seeking guidance

from God's Word. We are looking for an NRC, RCNA, or ORC member in good standing who shares this vision and who will serve as a dedicated presence in our school community. If you have a heart for children, a gift for leadership, and a desire to serve, we would be overjoyed to hear from you. Training and mentoring will be provided for the right candidate. Questions can be directed to Andrew Korevaar at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629. Interested applicants are invited to submit a resumé and brief letter of interest to hr@rcsnorwich.com

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, is seeking a principal as our principal prepares for retirement. We seek a leader with a calling to oversee the school in faithful submission to God's Word. One will provide spiritual, academic, and organizational leadership; cultivate strong relationships with board, faculty, students, and parents; and preserve/strengthen the culture of TCS. The successful applicant should be:

- Member of the NRC
- Eligible for a BC teaching certificate
- Demonstrate proven educational leadership

Applicants who are still completing qualifications are welcome to inquire, as a mentored transition may be considered. Direct your

inquiries to the principal, Doug Stam, at dstam@timothychristian.ca or school board president, Kevin Romeyn, at kevinromeyn@timothychristian.ca. Submit applications to the school board president.

Teachers/Assistants

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications for elementary or secondary teachers to begin in 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. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé with references to 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@ecschool.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@ecschool.ca

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, has an opening for a full- or part-time teacher or coordinator to monitor, oversee, and assist the students with their homeschool curriculums. We have a range of students from grades K-7. For more questions regarding this position, please contact Andrew Van Stelle at 920-452-1967 or email 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@nrclslynden.org or the school board president, Mr. Jerry DeBruin, at 360-224-0901 or email jdebruin3797@gmail.com

MOUNT CHEAM CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, anticipates an URGENT NEED for the next school years with multiple openings for teachers in elementary and secondary grades. Applicants must hold or be eligible for BC certification and subscribe to the faith identity of the MCCS Society and the Reformed Congregations in North America. Inquiries should be addressed to the principal, Mr. Jan Neels, at jneels@mccs.ca. Please send your application, along with supporting documentation, to Mr. Jan Neels and to the board secretary, Mr. Jacob Kerkhoff, at jkerkhoff@mccs.ca. See also www.mccs.ca

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 or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or by email visser.daniel@outlook.com

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CORSICA, SOUTH DAKOTA, is seeking applicants, initially, to fill a full-time teaching position for the high school grades and secondly, to possibly consider duties of a principal in the future. 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

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 or contact the principal, Mr. Daniel Breuer, at dan.breuer@nrcsia.org or call 712-476-2821.

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 or call 616-644-2661.

REHOBOTH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, NORWICH, ONTARIO, invites applications for several positions for the coming school year, including:

- Part-time middle school music teacher
- Part-time student counsellor (approximately one day per week)
- Part-time middle school shop teacher (with the possibility of more)
- Two high school teachers (strengths in math and/or science are an asset)

For information about elementary opportunities, contact Mr. Andrew Korevaar at elementaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-495-6629. For information about secondary opportunities, contact Mr. Gerrit Ten Hove at secondaryprincipal@rcsnorwich.com or 519-536-3689. We also invite inquiries about our locally developed teacher training program, which offers a blend of paid teaching, mentorship, and training. Cover letters and resumés should be submitted to hr@rcsnorwich.com. Applications will be reviewed, and applicants selected for interviews will be contacted by the school board.

TIMOTHY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, BRITISH COLUMBIA, is in need of a middle/high school teacher. 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/high 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, or Mr. Kevin Romeyn, school board president, at kevinromeyn@timothychristian.ca

To All Candidates for Education Positions

Please visit advertising.nrcea.education for an up-to-date listing of job openings in NRCEA schools as well as links to the school websites for more information about the positions and the schools. When accessing the job bank on the NRCEA SharePoint, please use the following:

Name: advertising@nrcea.education
Password: **Schooljobs!**

A False Hope

If you please yourselves in your own conceits and vain imaginations that are contrary to the wisdom of Christ, believing that it is an easy thing to go to heaven and that you hope to be saved in the end, although you are carried with the stream of the world, the tide of your lusts, the wind of Satan's suggestions and applause of the multitude, assure yourselves that you are rebels against Christ and are on the path to eternal destruction.

—John Maynard (1600-1665)

■ The Banner of Truth in Audio Format

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

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There Is a River

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

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

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

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

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

—*Samuel Medley*

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