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Meditation

Good Instruction

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

“For the Word of the LORD is right; and all His works are done in truth” (Psalm 33:4).

The inspired poet of Psalm 33 has tasted God’s goodness and mercy, although he is unworthy and has forfeited everything. Having received the merciful kindness of the Lord, he stirs up God’s children to magnify Him: “Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous.” Why? For what reason? “For praise is comely for the upright.” The Lord is so worthy to be acknowledged. He takes delight in being praised by the sons of men. Therefore, the psalmist—most likely David, the sweet singer of Israel—exhorts from the fullness of his own heart: “Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.”

If we ourselves have tasted something of whom the Lord is and remains for and in His people, surely, then we shall rejoice because of such undeserved mercy, yes, we shall humbly rejoice in Him. Then our praise to God shall rise out of the dust. It behooves us to praise the Lord. His divine perfections, His unalterable counsel, His holy Word, His wise and mighty works are all so true, so glorious, so just, so precious. So it is in the realm of creation and providence but so much more in the realm of grace. Then our heart’s desire is to allure others as well to this delightful employ: “Come join with me and bless Him all our days.” What you have learned, you wish to teach to others.

Hear the poet exclaiming this in our text: “For the Word of the LORD is right; and all His works are done in truth.” Have we also experimentally learned what David had experienced? Have we received good instruction, and do we give good instruction?

By His Holy Spirit and His Word of truth, the LORD reveals Himself to sinners. “For the Word of the LORD is right.” He directs blind and foolish sinners to Himself. He instructs who He is. Oh, then God becomes God in our heart, and, at the same time, we learn who we are in His holy sight: miserable, guilty, rebellious, lost sinners. Our heart is *not* right before God. On the contrary! We have departed from Him already in paradise. We have no desire in the knowledge of His ways. We cannot and will not bow under God.

Is it, then, not a wonder that God gives His Word, which is right? It teaches the right and only way of salvation. It gives good instruction because it is *God’s Word*, and He is right. When that right Word penetrates our heart as an arrow in the heart of the King’s enemies, we shall know it is true. It is powerful; it is divine. Such is the Spirit’s testimony inwardly in our soul.

Then He begins to make our heart upright before God. No longer do we cover our sins with all kinds of fig leaves; trying to shift the blame to others comes to an end. Instead, we learn to say with David: “I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” The Holy Spirit shall give us good instruction by that right Word, teaching us to pray. Our transgressions are a multitude, it is true, but there is a far larger multitude of tender mercies to blot out our sins. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. What a precious, suitable lesson this is for a guilty, unclean sinner. How necessary does pardon become for such a one! As the publican he smites upon his breast and sighs, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

See, that is how the right Word of the LORD works truth within. Has this wonder taken place in your heart?

The poet adds another good instruction, and it is precious. These two parts of the text belong inseparably together. What do we hear from the psalmist’s heart and mouth? “And all His works are done in truth.” As God’s *Word* is right and good, likewise all the *works* which the Lord performs are enduring, firm, and sure. Truth includes faithfulness, certainty. After all, the LORD is eternal in His being, faithful in His promises, and almighty in the performance thereof. “I am the LORD, I change not,” He says, “therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

Poor, trembling soul, hearken to this. Neither shall the enemies prevail over you, nor shall your sins consume you, but God’s works are ever done in truth and righteousness. They endure for ever. It is true, God’s people must learn to their shame that they ruin everything time and again; they forfeit God’s gracious dealings in their souls because they sin it all away. Nevertheless, He never forsaketh the works of His own hands. “All His works are done in truth.” God’s children shall learn to sing, “The work Thou hast for me begun, shall by Thy grace be fully done.” His works endure for ever and for ever because He is faithful. The apostle wrote to your comfort and encouragement, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He is the First, and He is also the Last.

David gives us good instruction in our text. Have we experimentally learned these lessons that the LORD’s Word is right and all His works are done in truth? Fathers and mothers, as you are called to raise your children, do try to bring these lessons to their heart. May we live this good instruction before them. Do not criticize the Scriptures, but let it be evident that they are our guide, that we read and search them reverently and with a praying heart.

Office-bearers, soon the catechism season will start and the house-visitations begin. Are these lessons not necessary in our personal life? School teachers, likewise, you deal with souls on the way to eternity. It is such a responsible and beautiful task to teach them the Bible lessons from day to day, to pray with the children earnestly and simply. Beg the Lord that in dependence on Him you may be faithful to God's Word. Oh, where are the parents with grace and godliness? Where are the office-bearers with a tender life close to the Lord? Where are the teachers with grace and with gifts? Let it be a matter to examine our own hearts.

Should we forget the students? No, surely not. Bow your knees every day if the Lord will help the teachers, but also the ministers, elders, and deacons. May their labors be blessed to your soul. And, a very searching question: Do you pray for your parents?

Young and old, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." That is the good instruction of the Lord Jesus. Once

more: "For the Word of the LORD is right; and all His works are done in truth." Then you shall learn that "praise is comely for the upright." □

Scripture to Consider

*Then said the lord of the vineyard,
What shall I do? I will send my beloved son:
it may be they will reverence him when
they see him. But when the husbandmen
saw him, they reasoned among themselves,
saying, This is the heir: come, let us
kill him...*

LUKE 20:13&14



Bible Study

The Prophet Zephaniah (8)

Rev. C. Van Dam (1893-1976)

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

The ministry of the prophets was not passed down from father to son, nor were they allowed to choose a successor without divine authorization. God called them and filled them with His Spirit. Their personal character was not always the same; it retained its own characteristics. Nor were the gifts and the power of testifying the same in all of them. They did not possess the ability to read the future, discover secrets, and perform miracles at all times, but only from time to time. God made His deeds, including those of the future, known to His prophets in various ways: through divine revelation (Genesis 18 and Numbers 12), in ecstasy (Isaiah 6 and 1 Kings 22), through dreams and their interpretation (Daniel 2 and 4), and also through divine revelation, a working of the Spirit of God upon the human spirit (Isaiah 1:9). The prophets did not always have a clear understanding of what they were announcing. They saw the future from afar; they saw what remained hidden to others. They were, so to speak, the eyes of the people; they were Israel's watchmen, and Israel's glory, because the Gentiles had only false, deceitful prophets. The prophetic style of the prophets is generally allegorical and symbolic and, therefore, requires careful study to understand them.

Of course, we no longer have such prophets in the present day. We have a more sure word of prophecy. It can happen that a child of the Lord sees something of the future judgments and punishments, although one must be very careful to prophesy without having an essential revelation from God. Many have stumbled in this regard. For example, when a minister is called by a congregation, there are often people who say that he is coming, while shortly after, the call is declined. There are many other examples that could be mentioned. However, God's people are a prophetic people, just as they are also called a royal priesthood. Thus, the congregation of the Lord, if all is well, has a prophet in the minister of the Word, just as the elders hold the kingly office and the deacons hold the priestly office. As for the question of whether a child of God can see the judgments approaching in this present time, it depends first of all on whether one possesses personal grace and whether one receives exercises in the life of faith. Of course, the Lord is free to reveal things to one of His children that remain hidden from another. Those who are deemed worthy of this usually first receive impressions of the situation, in general, and that national sins must necessarily bring about national judgments, as happened with both Ephraim and Judah.

If we now honestly assess the situation of our country and our people, should we not tremble for the future, also? Just as Judah and Jerusalem relied on Egypt to help them fight the Chaldeans, so, in recent years, the Netherlands has relied on the United Nations and the Atlantic Pact. It went wrong with the support from Egypt; it was a reed on which Judah leaned, and it pierced his hand. The same could happen to us if we rely on the United Nations. Our fathers trusted in the Lord, who time and again delivered the Netherlands from the hands of those who were so much stronger than they, but God's Day and God's law are no longer regarded. No, the leaders of the world government are now able to do without God and meet quietly on God's Day. No blessing can ever be expected upon this for our country.

"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Zephaniah 1:15). The capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is described as something terrible, which would be very distressing, but also very close. Those heathens would rage like devils, attacking their prey like tearing animals. Even though it was referred to as a day, it did not necessarily have to be a 24-hour day, because in Scripture the word day is used in different meanings. For example, Scripture speaks of the day of eternity and the day of the New Testament, but also of the day of judgment. The destruction of Jerusalem would

(To be continued)

be a picture of that. After all, it is also a day of God's wrath upon all who have rejected Christ in their lives. Just as Jerusalem would echo with cries of despair, so will the cry of despair be heard on the last day: "Mountains fall on us and hills, cover us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." The inhabitants of Jerusalem were warned in advance by the prophets and also by Zephaniah. Few paid attention and allowed themselves to be persuaded.

God is doing the same with us, and even now He finds almost no one who will listen. Something else was added to make an even greater impression. Therefore, we read in verse 16, "A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers." The Chaldeans would bring destruction; even the strongest cities, the most defensible, they would claim with trumpets; and if they refused, they would destroy them and mercilessly kill the inhabitants, including the elderly and children. Against the high places, the watchtowers, from which the Chaldeans would be seen approaching, they would use their heaviest weapons of war to bring them down. No forts, walls, or towers would be able to withstand the wrath of the Lord. Who will survive when He appears in His great wrath? Having God against you is the worst thing that can happen to a people or a person. This applies to both Jews and Gentiles and to us, also, in the present time. Even God's people need to live and act in such a way that they do not provoke God. □



A Word in Season

Examine Yourself

Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

Civility is a very comely thing; but if it is not attended with sanctity, it only gilds a man over and is not true gold. A man may be civil and yet go to hell, but sanctity and purity are the beginning of heaven. The one is not above the sphere of nature; the other is supernatural. For as the earth naturally can bring forth grass but cannot bring forth corn except it is plowed and sown; even so, any man may naturally be civil, but he cannot attain to any life of grace or true holiness except if God plows up the fallow ground of heart and sows the seed of grace, and makes it take root downward and bring forth fruit upward.

Therefore, do not trust in common civility and sobriety, whatever external comeliness and excellency is in it, but rather be afraid of it, lest you mistake it for real grace. Why? Because the sober devil carries more to hell than the profane devil; for the profane man, being in an evil way to hell, is

sooner convinced of his filthiness and misery and more readily reclaimed. But the civil man, being in a more respectable way to hell, is so conceited with an opinion that he has grace already that it is harder to bring him to true repentance.

The civil honest man, when he compares himself with the swinish drunkard, the foul adulterer, the prodigious swearer, begins, in a manner, poor man, to saint himself, as if he were the only man that should be saved. Thus, the proud conceited Pharisee raises himself on his tip-toes by comparing himself with the publican; "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are...even as this publican." So says the civil man: I am not such a drunkard, such a swearer, as such a man is. And so, because they are not so bad as others that are worse, they conceive themselves to be wonderfully good. Yes, they are pure in their own eyes,

and, therefore, they will not come to Christ to be purified, justified, or sanctified; and so, no wonder that they are not washed from their filthiness.

One of the antidotes against this self-conceit is to think upon that exact and strict judgment and estimate that it must be taken of you at the great day of judgment. Then you must be judged not by what you judge yourselves to be but by what you are indeed. Meditate with yourselves, "Now I am pure in mine own eyes; I think I may be content with the purity I have. But am I now, and will I then be pure in God's sight, whose eyes are as a flame of fire to penetrate through and try all the most retired wickedness and hidden dross and corruption which lies in my heart and nature, thoughts and affections, as well as in my life and actions?" Will you be able to stand that searching trial of the impartial Judge? No, by no means.

One of the antidotes against this self-conceit is to think upon that exact and strict judgment and estimate that it must be taken of you at the great day of judgment. Then you must be judged not by what you judge yourselves to be but by what you are indeed.

The faith and meditation of this would mortify the elevated conceit you have of yourself. Remember you must come to judgment.

In a word, if you would not die of this disease, then do not trust your own judgment in your own case. He that would be wise, in the Scripture sense, must become a

fool, that he may be wise (1 Corinthians 3:18).

Let the Word of God judge you and judge yourselves not by your own understanding but by that Word of God that will judge you at the last day. Examine yourselves by the Word; self-examination would

bring down self-conceit. And pray that God would search and try you, saying with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." □

Backslidings Healed

Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

No national reformation can take place till there be a personal reformation: if personal returning to the Lord were general and universal, then there would be a national returning. Therefore, if you wish to see a national reviving, let every person put in for a share of gathering power and grace, saying, "Turn me, and I shall be turned; draw me and I shall run," and, under the conduct of drawing power, let us say, "Behold we come to Thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

Hath your personal backsliding, man, woman, been great and grievous? Hath this been your disease all your days, a backsliding heart, a backsliding nature, a backsliding practice, a bentness to backsliding in thought, word, and action? Is that your disease, that you are a backsliding heifer, a backsliding devil, that, it may be, thinks the disease is desperate and incurable? O let me assure you, that there is a Healer come here today that says, "I will heal your backslidings," and He will not say the thing that He cannot do. And while His mercy is saying,

Is that your disease, that you are a backsliding heifer, a backsliding devil, that, it may be, thinks the disease is desperate and incurable? O let me assure you, that there is a Healer come here today that says, "I will heal your backslidings," and He will not say the thing that He cannot do.

"I will heal your backsliding," let your heart be saying, Lord, I will come to Thee for that healing, for that is my disease, and there is none in the world needs it so much as I. The church and the nation need to have their backslidings healed, but I am the particular person that needs it most of all; heal me, and I shall be healed; behold, I come to Thee for that end.

Is your heart saying so? Then welcome be all comers;

welcome, welcome, welcome! "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"; nay, He will in no wise cast up your former backslidings but heal you without upbraiding you, for He gives liberally and upbraids not. "I will heal your backslidings": it is spoken without limitation, either of

former or future backslidings; therefore, the fear of backsliding again needs not discourage you from coming to Him; your former backslidings will not cast you out, and though you backslide again, He will not cast you off. He may visit your iniquity with the rod, but His loving kindness will He not take away; no, He "will in no wise cast out." □

The Christian soul is content that God should rule everything, not only the eye, or hand, or tongue—but the whole man.

—Isaac Ambrose (1604-1664)



From Our Inheritance

Upright in Heart

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

A man may be very upright in life and conversation, who has no uprightness of heart; therefore, the Holy Spirit seems to have put this mark upon it thus, “upright in heart.” Now if a man is not upright in heart, it matters very little how far he is upright in conduct. I dare say one of the most upright men in Jerusalem was the Pharisee who went into the temple. I have no doubt he paid tithes and anise, mint, and cummin to the last sprig; or if he weighed them, to the very turn of the scale within half a grain. Yet he was withal a whited sepulchre, an abomination in the sight of God, a stench in His nostrils, a smoke that burnt all day. And perhaps, the most crooked creature in all the town was his fellow sinner, who could only smite upon his breast, and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” He was a publican; and you know they were noted for their corrupt dealings, and hated by the Jews for covetousness and extortion, as the farmers-general of taxes.

Here we have, we will suppose, side-by-side, two characters—the most righteous man in Jerusalem, and the most crooked as far as regard to outward things. I do not say he was crooked after he was called by grace. When the Lord put that cry into his soul, it made him upright in heart; and I venture to say, afterwards he was upright in life. Let us mention a few particulars which seem to point out the man who is upright in heart.

1. A man who is upright in heart cannot mock God; everybody else can mock Him by false prayers. Presumptuous, superficial professors can mock God by saying one thing and meaning another. A man cannot do this who is upright in heart.

2. Another mark is that he cannot take to himself any thing but what God is pleased to communicate by a divine power to his soul—for the uprightness of his heart forbids this. This is a grand distinction betwixt the truly spiritually taught child of God, and a mere carnal professor.

The one can take nothing except what God Himself is pleased to apply with divine power to his soul; the other can take everything. Because he reads in the Bible about Christ, and the things of God, he can take them with a daring hand and claim them as his own, but time will prove him to be nothing but a thief and a robber. This being the case, the upright in heart will continually be the last in the race, for they can only speak as the Lord is pleased from time to time to bless their souls with His manifested mercy and love. When these favors are withheld, they cannot press forward and take them—their uprightness of heart forbids it.

3. Again, as the upright in heart are upright before God, so are they upright before man. They cannot take every

professor by hand and say, “My dear brother this, and my dear sister that,” upon a mere profession of religion. They cannot fawn on any one; they dare not give flattering titles to man. They may give offence—they will give offence; for no man can be faithful—in the pulpit, or out of the pulpit—by acts or words, without giving offence, and bringing down persecution. Nonetheless, the upright in heart cannot act deceitfully; there is a principle within them that forbids them to lie; they are upright in heart, and must be honest in life.

Take these three marks, and see whether you can find them in you. If you are made upright in heart, you cannot mock God; but you will have godly simplicity and sincerity as in the presence and before the eyes of a heart-searching Lord. Can you find that in you? Can you take any blessing or mercy and call it your own, except so far as God is pleased to speak and apply it with divine power to your soul? If you cannot, then you are one of those who may be said to be upright in heart. Have you a principle in your heart that cannot flatter; that you would sooner in your right mind die than deceive anyone; that you must be faithful wherever you go, as far as power is given to you? You do not wish to give unnecessary offence; you would rather be silent—but if you must speak, you must be faithful. Can you find these marks in you? I might add more, but these three may be remembered. Take them home, and see if you can lay them side-by-side with anything in your souls.

Now gladness is sown for these. What does that imply? That they are for the most part a sorrowful people; because if gladness is to be sown for them, it is very plain that they are not usually glad. Their uprightness of heart makes them sad, for they see what a God they have to do with, that cannot be mocked. They feel, too, that they are such poor, filthy, loathsome, leprous creatures. Also, if they are upright in life, they will have many persecutions—the opposition of wife, husband, parents, children, ministers, friends, and relations. All will be in arms against them, and this keeps them from gladness of heart. Their very uprightness brings them many trials because they cannot pass things lightly by. They see evil in this, and sin in that, something wrong here and something wrong there, so as to keep their minds pretty well exercised all the day long. This keeps them from gladness and makes them for the most part “a poor and afflicted people.”

An upright man cannot enter into things, which others can, to deliver themselves. If a man without conscience be in business, he can do things to deliver himself; he can borrow money with little expectation to repay it; he can

make promises, “Send me this, and I will pay you next week!” when he knows the next week will bring no provision for the debt to be paid, or the bill to be taken up. He can enter, too, into trades and businesses of anything but a godly nature, and thus do many things to deliver himself, which a child of God cannot. Many things such an one dare not touch and, therefore, for the most part is kept down in a state of poverty and difficulty—and all connected with his uprightness in heart. If he were not upright in heart, how many painful things he would be delivered from, but, being upright in heart, he has little else but troubles and trials. Yet in his heaviest burden, and in his greatest troubles, there is gladness sown. Just as light was sown in darkness, so is gladness sown in sorrow.

Now gladness is sown in these very things because he is brought by uprightness of heart to confess, mourn, grieve over, and forsake sin; and when the Lord is pleased to speak joy and peace to his soul, gladness springs up. Gladness is also sown by the very circumstance that he is upright in heart so that he cannot mock God. So it is with respect to his not being able to take any blessing, or any mercy, except what God gives to him. When he hears others speak of their sweet enjoyment of Christ and the promises of the great manifestations they have received, of their gospel liberty—these things often trouble and burden his mind. Why? Because he is upright in heart and can take nothing but what God brings with divine power into his soul. Therefore, he is troubled and sorrowful, but gladness is sown in the very trouble he has about these things, and by and by it will spring up to the joy of his soul. So also, in dealing with his fellow men; he cannot lie, deceive, and cheat. And though he is brought into providential trouble often thereby, he knows he cannot mock God; that he must not put his hand to wrong courses; God sees all, and can bring out of all.

So, he continues in his worldly difficulties and troubles, and under the weight of trying circumstances, simply because he cannot and will not deliver himself. He is like Daniel. He might have delivered himself. “Why need Daniel,” some would have said, “make such a display of his religion? Why did he not shut his door, and pray upon his bed? Why need he open his window?” He might have saved his life thereby; but he felt it was necessary to make an open confession and to show that he believed in the God of Israel. That brought trouble upon him; but when God delivered him out of the lion’s den, was there not gladness? Also, was not that gladness sown in the very circumstance of being cast into the lion’s den? If he had not been upright in heart, he would have saved himself from the lion’s den; but he would also have saved himself from the deliverance from the lion’s den, and the gladness it brought to him.

So, that gladness is sown for the upright in heart in all their troubles, afflictions, castings down, sorrows, and exercises. There is gladness lodged at the root of all. The seeds of gladness were sown in sorrow; but when it springs up, it is true gladness; the joy which “a stranger doth not intermeddle with”; the “peace of God which passeth all understanding.”

Are you in trouble, sorrow, and darkness now? Light is sown in them. The seeds of light are in the trouble, in the affliction, in the temptation, in the perplexity; and you shall see light upon it; it will spring up in due time. Oh, these seeds of light in the soul! And the seeds of gladness and joy! Sweet smiles and heavenly favors! And for whom? “The upright in heart.” That is the character. Not great towering professors, but the upright in heart. These are the persons for whom the blessing is designed; and every one in this congregation who can come in with these two characters, “the righteous,” and “the upright in heart,” light and gladness are sown for them; and in due time they will bless and praise God for His wisdom, goodness, and love. ◻

Self Examination

Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

(Taken from *Heaven Taken by Storm*)

Self-examination is a duty of great importance. It is a parleying with one’s own heart. “I commune with mine own heart” (Psalm 77:6). David did put interrogatories to himself. Self-examination is the setting up a court of conscience and keeping a register there, that by a strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition, a bringing one’s self to trial. A good Christian doth, as it were, begin the day of judgment here in his own soul. Self-searching is heart anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection of the body, discovers the intestines, the inward parts, the heart, liver, arteries, so a Christian anatomizes himself. He searcheth what is flesh and what is spirit; what is sin and what grace, “My spirit made diligent

search” (Psalm 77:6). As the woman in the gospel did light a candle and search for her lost groat¹ (Luke 15:8), so conscience “is the candle of the LORD” (Proverbs 20:27). A Christian by the light of this candle must search his soul if he can find any grace there.

The rule by which a Christian must try himself is the Word of God. Fancy and opinion are false rules to go by. We must judge of our spiritual condition by the canon of Scripture. This David calls “a lamp unto his feet” (Psalm 119:105). Let the Word be thy umpire to decide the controversy whether we have grace or not. We judge of colors by the sun; so, we must judge the estate of our souls by the light of Scripture.

¹An old English coin worth approximately 3 cents

Self-examination is a great duty incumbent; it requires self-excitation. It cannot possibly be done without offering violence to ourselves.

I. Because the duty in itself is difficult:

1. It is a work of self-reflection; it lies most with the heart. It is hard to look inward. External acts of religion are easy. To lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer—this requires no more labor than for a papist to tell² over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to turn in upon his own soul, to take the heart as a watch all in pieces and see what is defective—this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others but hard to find out our own.

2. Examination of a man's self is difficult because of self-love. As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters. Every man is ready to think the best of himself. What Solomon saith of love to our neighbor is most true of self-love. It hides a multitude of evil (Proverbs 10:12). A man looking upon himself in the glass of self-love, his virtues appear greater than they are, and his sins less. Self-love makes one rather excuse what is amiss than examine it.

II. As examination is in itself difficult, so it is a work which we are very hardly brought to. That which causes a backwardness to self-examination is:

1. Consciousness of guilt. Sin clamors inwardly, and men are loathe to look into their hearts lest they should find that which should trouble them. It is little pleasure to read the handwriting on the wall of conscience. Many Christians are like tradesmen that are sinking in their estates. They are loathe to look over their books to cast up their accounts lest they should find their estates low. So they are loathe to look into their guilty hearts lest they should find something there which should affright them, as Moses was affrighted at the sight of the rod turned into a serpent.

2. Men are hardly brought to this duty because of foolish presumptuous hopes; they fancy their estate to be good, and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass for current. Many take their salvation on trust. The foolish virgins thought they had oil in their lamps as well as the wise (Matthew 25). Some are not sure of their salvation, but secure. If one were to buy a piece of land, he would not take it upon trust but examine the title. How confident are some of salvation yet never examine their title to heaven.

3. Men are not forward to examine themselves because they rest in the good opinion of others. How vain this is! Alas! one may be gold and pearl in the eye of others, yet God may judge him reprobate silver. Others may think him a saint, and God may write him down in His black book. Judas was looked upon by the rest of the apostles as a true believer. They would have been ready to have given their hands to his certificate, yet he was a traitor. Standers-by

can but see the outward carriage; they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run at the top of a river, but vermin may lie at the bottom.

4. Men are hardly brought to examine themselves because they do not believe Scripture. The Scripture saith, "The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon said there were four things too wonderful for him, that he could not know (Proverbs 30:18&19). He might have added a fifth, the way of a man's heart. The heart is the greatest imposter. It will be ready to put one off with seeming grace, instead of saving. The heart will persuade that a slight tear is repentance, a lazy desire is faith. Now because the generality of people do not believe that there is such a fallacy in their hearts, therefore they are so slow to examine them. This natural backwardness in us to self-reflection should cause us to offer more violence to ourselves in making a thorough disquisition³ and search of our hearts.

O that I might prevail with Christians to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination! Their salvation depends upon it. It is the note of an harlot, she is seldom at home. "Her feet abide not in her house: now she is without, now in the streets" (Proverbs 7:11&12). It is a sign of an harlot professor to be altogether abroad, spying out the faults of others, but never at home with his own heart.

O let us try our hearts as we do gold by the touchstone! Let us examine our sins, and finding out this leaven, burn it.

Let us examine our grace whether it be of the right kind. One went into the field to gather herbs, and he gathered wild gourds, and then death was in the pot (2 Kings 4:40). So many think they have grace, the right herb, but it proves to be

a wild gourd and brings death and damnation. That we may offer violence to ourselves in this great business of examination, let these few things be seriously weighed.

- a. Without self-examination, we can never know how it is with us. If we should die presently, we cannot tell to what coast we would sail, whether to hell or heaven. It is reported of Socrates, when he was going out of the world, he had this speech, "I am now to die, and the gods know whether I shall be happy or miserable." That man who is ignorant of the state of his soul must needs have the trembling at the heart, as Cain had a shaking in his flesh. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to what prince we belong, whether it be to the "Prince of peace, or the prince of the air."
- b. If we will not try ourselves, God will try us. He will examine us as the chief captain did of Paul, "by scourging" (Acts 22:24). He will ask that question as Christ, "Whose image and superscription is this?" And if we cannot show Him His own image, He will reject us.
- c. There is a secret corruption within which will never be found out but by searching. There are in the heart

²count

³examination

(as Austin [Augustine of Hippo] saith) hidden pollutions. When Pharaoh's steward accused Joseph's brethren of having the cup, they durst have sworn they had not the cup in their sack. Little doth a man know what atheism, pride, and uncleanness is in his heart till he searcheth.

d. The great advantage which will accrue to us: the benefit is great which way so ever things turn. If upon examination we find that we have not grace in truth, then the mistake is discovered, and the danger prevented. If we find that we have grace, we may take the

comfort of it. How glad was he that had "found the pearl of great price." He that upon search finds that he has but the least degree of grace is like one that has found his box of evidence; he is heir to all the promises and in a state of salvation.

And that we may go on the more successfully in this work, let us desire God to help us to find out our hearts. "That which I see not teach Thou me" (Job 34:32). Lord, take off the veil; show me my heart; let me not perish through mistake or go to hell with hope of heaven. □



Instructive Gleanings

Righteousness (7)

Rev. P. Kleijer, Lethbridge, AB

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God"
(Philippians 1:11).

Fruits of Righteousness

The Apostle Paul was led to Philippi by the Holy Spirit. It was the Lord who wanted a congregation there. In Acts 16 we read how Paul came there: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia" (verse 6). What must it have been for Paul, not being able to preach while being called to do so. It was in the Lord's counsel to direct him to another field of labor. Then we read in verse 9, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Paul and Silas immediately went there. They did not find a church there but had to look for a place where they could bring the Word. The Lord gave fruit upon their preaching. In this chapter we read of two who were converted, namely, Lydia and the jailor, though both were led in very different ways. A congregation was instituted, and a bond of love was laid between Paul and the congregation.

Paul traveled farther, but his love for the congregation remained. It was true for Paul what we read in 1 Corinthians 15:58b: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." If the work of God's servants may be in the Lord, it will never be in vain. This is one of the last epistles Paul wrote. There are some who called this epistle "The heart of Paul" which you can already see in the verses that precede our text. God's Word bound them together. We can be disappointed with people. We can have expectations of each other, which will never be fulfilled, but when the Lord lays a bond, we can bear each other's shortcomings and weaknesses.

Much instruction is given throughout this letter. Here Paul speaks of sanctification. Justification and sanctification are closely connected, yet still different. Justification is, as Rev. Hellenbroek teaches our children, "to be acquitted from guilt and punishment, and to be entitled to eternal life." He also asks what the differences between these two are. The answer is clear: "(1) Justification is an act without, but sanctification within us. (2) Justification removes the guilt and sanctification the pollution of sin. (3) The act of justification is complete, but sanctification during this life is not complete." For both, the work of justification and of sanctification, we need Christ. When we speak of "fruits of righteousness," we must think of Christ who said to His disciples, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Then it becomes so true what the late Rev. P. Blok so often said, "In the way of sanctification a poor and needy people become poorer in themselves and learn that they can only bring forth fruit through Christ."

We see in verse 9 that the Apostle Paul prayed that not only love would more abound in the Philippians but also knowledge and judgment. Love is important, but it must go together with knowledge and discernment. How much that is missing in our days, also among God's people. The leading of the Spirit is so necessary; otherwise, we flow along with all kinds of doctrine. In verse 10, Paul points to a sincere walk and without offence till the day of Christ. Dear reader, do you see that doctrine and walk must go together? When we begin to stray from the doctrine according to God's Word, the result is that we also begin to stray in our way of life. You can see the results: then I wear the clothing and jewelry of the world; I do not have to observe God's Day so closely anymore; I might as well participate in sports, too—after all, what is wrong with that? If you say

‘no’ to all of this, you are considered legalistic. If that is so, then Paul was, too!

Our text says that fruits must be brought forth. It is written in the plural, so not one, not a few, but many. Elsewhere they are called the fruits of the Spirit, “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9). This is a life in the fear of God. To bring forth fruits of righteousness, we must be cut off from the old stock Adam and be engrafted into Christ.

Shall I mention some of the fruits? The first one is “faith.” It can be great faith, or it can be weak faith, but it is a necessary fruit. To exercise faith, we need the planting of faith. Young and old, beg the Lord to grant you that faith, for without faith we cannot bring forth any good fruit. Without faith, we cannot please God. The second fruit is “hope.” This hope is different from the common hope which we all have more or less. Without hope, only despair remains. We may not despise this hope, but it is not saving. True hope has God in view. True hope is when we lose all hope of being saved of self, and our eyes are directed to the only Hope, which is in Christ Jesus. If this may take place, there comes a different direction in our life. Then the anchor of our hope is cast within the veil, “Which hope we have

as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Hebrews 6:19). The third fruit is “love.” In the hour of regeneration, love is poured out into the soul. We begin to love what God loves and to hate what God hates. It is this love which drives us out to the feet of Christ. We can regret sin, but without love shed abroad in the heart, it will drive us away from God, like Cain and Esau.

From these three fruits, all the other fruits will flow forth. Dear reader, we all bring forth fruit. Do you bring forth good fruit or stinking fruit? How little fruit do God’s people find within themselves. This must drive one into the inner room, for Christ says, “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2).

*The righteous man shall flourish well,
And in the house of God shall dwell;
He shall be like a goodly tree,
And all his life shall fruitful be;
For righteous is the Lord and just,
He is my Rock, in Him I trust.*

—Psalter 250:5 ■

(To be continued)



For Young and Old

A Widow’s Son

(Taken from the November 1963 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

Some time ago, there was a pious widow living in the northern part of England, on whom, in consequence of the loss she had sustained, devolved the sole care of a numerous family consisting of seven daughters and one son. It was her chief anxiety to train up the children in those virtuous and religious habits, which promote the present happiness and the immortal welfare of man. Her efforts were rewarded so far as the female branches of her family were concerned. But, alas! her boy proved ungrateful for her care, her scourge, and her cross. He loved worldly company and pleasure till, having impoverished his circumstances, it became necessary that he should go to sea. When his mother took her leave of him, she gave him a New Testament, inscribed with his name and her own, solemnly and tenderly entreating that he would keep the book and read it for her sake.

He was borne far away upon the bosom of the trackless deep, and year after year elapsed without tidings of her boy. She visited parts of the island remote from her own residence and, particularly, the metropolis; and, into whatever company she came, she made it a point to inquire for the

ship in which her son sailed, if she might possibly hear any tidings of the beloved object who was always in her thoughts.

On one occasion, in London, she met a sea captain of whom she made her inquiries. He informed her that he knew the vessel and that she had been wrecked; that he also knew a youth of the name of Charles, and added, perhaps with too little reserve and caution, that he was so depraved and profligate a lad, that it were a good thing if he, and all like him, were at the bottom of the sea. Pierced to her inmost soul, the unhappy mother withdrew from the house as soon as she could compose her agitated feelings. She was resolved to a future in which she might indulge and hide her hopeless grievance. “I shall go down to the grave,” was the language, “mourning for my son.” She made her residence at one of the seaports on the northern coast.

After the lapse of some years, a half-naked sailor knocked at her door to ask relief. The sight of a sailor was always interesting to her and never failed to awaken recollections better imagined than described. She heard his tale. He had seen great perils in the deep, had been several times wrecked, but said he had never been dreadfully destitute as some

years back, when he and “a fine young gentleman were the only individuals of a whole ship’s crew that were saved. We were cast upon a desert island, where, after seven days and nights, I closed his eyes. Poor fellow, I never shall forget it.” Here, the tears streamed down his weather-beaten face. “He read day and night in a little book, which, he said, his mother gave him, and which was the only thing he saved. It was his companion every moment. He wept for his sins, he prayed, he kissed the book; he talked of nothing but this book and his mother, and at the last he gave it to me, with many thanks for my poor services. ‘There, Jack,’ said he, ‘take this book, and keep it, and read it, and may God bless you—it’s all I’ve got.’ Then he clasped my hand and died in peace.”

“Is all this true?” said the trembling, astonished mother.

“Yes, madam, every word of it.” Then, dragging from his ragged jacket a little book, much battered and time-worn,

he held it up exclaiming, “And here’s the very book, too.” She seized the Testament, recognized her own handwriting, and saw the name of her son coupled with her own on the cover. She gazed, she read, she wept, she rejoiced. She seemed to hear a voice which said, “Behold, thy son liveth.” Amidst her conflicting emotions, she was ready to exclaim, “Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

“Will you part with that book, my honest fellow?” said the mother, now anxious to possess the precious relic.

“No, madam,” was the answer, “not for any money—not for all the world. He gave it to me with his dying hand. I have more than lost all I had since but without losing this treasure, the true value of which, I hope I have learned, for I will never part with it till I part with the breath out of my body.” □

Thomas Shepard’s Admonition to His Son

On the 7th of February, God gave thee the ordinance of baptism, whereby God is become thy God, and is beforehand with thee, that whenever thou shalt return to God, He will undoubtedly receive thee; this is a most high and happy privilege, and therefore bless God for it. And now, after this had been done, thy dear mother died in the Lord, departing out of this world to another, who did lose her life by being careful to preserve thine; for in the ship (traveling to America) thou wert so feeble and froward both in the day and night, that hereby she lost her strength, and at last her life. She hath made also many a prayer and shed many a tear for thee; and this hath been oft her request, that if the Lord did not intend to glorify Himself by thee, that He would cut thee off by death rather than to live to dishonor Him by sin. Therefore, know it, that if thou shalt turn rebel against God and forsake Him, and care not for the knowledge of Him, nor believe in His Son, the Lord will make all these mercies woes; and all thy mother’s prayers, tears, and death to be a swift witness against thee at the great day. (*Thomas Shepard wrote this and more to his son Thomas II, who also, with two other brothers, became a minister —Ed.*)



Among All Nations

What Did Solomon Duytsch Say About Israel?

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

(Taken from the book *What Our Fathers Said About Israel*, Chapter 18)

When God converted Solomon Duytsch (1734-1795), he did not forget his fellow Jews. It was particularly in view of them that he wrote a discourse entitled *Israëls verlossinge en eeuwige behoudenis* (“Israel’s deliverance and eternal preservation”). The title spells out the purpose of this publication: “For the exhortation, conviction, and conversion of the people of Israel presently scattered in the four corners of the earth.” This was the ardent wish of Duytsch, as appears from the text quoted by him on the back of the title page: “O LORD, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:7b). The book is dedicated chiefly to the rabbis of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, at that time the city where Christiaan Solomon Duytsch was living. He considered it his solemn duty “to apply, as much

as possible, all means for the salvation and eternal preservation of my brethren according to the flesh as I see them straying as wandering sheep on ways of death.” Evidently, one of those means was the writing of a book, intended as a token of “special brotherly love.”

The book clearly resounds with the message of sin and grace. Despite this, the author nowhere mentions the name of the Lord Jesus, apparently to prevent Jews from immediately laying the book aside—if they would take it to hand in the first place. When Duytsch writes about “a special kind” of washing needful for man, he significantly adds, “This special and only means by which one must be washed and purified from all his sins is something I currently pass by for cogent reasons.”

Appealing to rabbinical writings, Solomon Duytsch portrays the seriousness of man's fall in sin and the consequences thereof. A certain Rabbi Bechai once wrote, "Due to Adam's death the whole world has died." The aim of this and similar quotations, which can be found throughout his book, is obvious—Duytsch wants to show his fellow Jews from their own writings, too, that they cannot live and die without grace.

The book amply demonstrates that this converted Jew loved the scriptural truth of guilt and grace. When he attempts to prove that conviction of sin and guilt is necessary, he quotes a certain Rabbi Isaac: "There are people who do not have the slightest sense of the sick condition of their soul; they believe that they are healthy and have not sinned." With the Ten Commandments as his starting point, Duytsch proves at length that all of us have sinned. The reason for this is clear: The former rabbi ardently desires that in the heart of his people room will be made for God's mercy in Christ. "If you knew these things, you would understand

me and give your soul no rest until you had found Him who is not only mighty but also willing to grant you the true rest of your soul." Apart from this Mediator and Redeemer it is "utterly hopeless" for man because, as the Catechism says, God will have His justice satisfied.

It is perceivable from the tone of this book that the heart of Duytsch began to burn with love when he reflected on the salvation of the Jews. "The Lord still opens His arms widely," he assured his readers; "He offers His infinite mercy and free grace to you." How ardently he hoped that his discourse be used for the conversion of a Jew. "Even though that would be the case with few among you; yea, even though only a single soul would be drawn out of darkness to the light, by means of this book, my labor would not have been entirely in vain."

May the ardent love and hope of Christiaan Solomon Duytsch stimulate us to use all means in bringing the gospel of free and sovereign grace to the Jewish people! □

(To be continued)

Lovers of the world are much more afraid of losing their earthly substance than they are of losing their immortal souls.

—Nathaniel Vincent (1639-1662)



Guidance

Why, Lord?—A Divine "Why" (1)

Rev. A. Schreuder, Beekbergen, the Netherlands

(Translated from the book *Waarom Heere...?* [Why Lord...?], Chapter 1)

Foreword

When something unexpected or incomprehensible happens, the question "Why?" soon escapes us. Asking "Why?" means asking for an explanation.

Many times, in life, the question "Why?" is asked by different people, in different states of mind, and in different circumstances. This means that one "Why?" differs from another. These questions, and their answers, sometimes take on very different meanings in the situation itself.

In the Bible, the question "Why?" is asked many times. We want to discuss some events in God's Word in which "Why?" is asked. These questions were previously published in *De Saambinder*, the weekly denominational church periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. Each time we see who it is that asks the question, from what state of mind, under what circumstances, and whether there is an answer to the question. It may possibly give a helping hand in many circumstances of life.

—Rev. A. Schreuder, Rijssen, August 2002

The first time the question "Why?" is asked in God's Word is found in Genesis 4:6. That is not where a human being is speaking, but that is where the Lord is asking the question! In Genesis 4:6 we read, "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" The first why in the Bible is a divine "Why?" to man who has fallen into...pride.

The two brothers, Cain and Abel, had brought an offering. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." Exactly how that was, God's Word does not tell us. "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." What caused Cain to be so angry and enraged? The only reason was that he felt he was made inferior to his brother Abel. It was offended pride.

In this, Cain, Adam and Eve's first son, showed to be a true child of Adam. Because of his parents' fall, their son fell into pride, also. That very pride is the cause that the Lord did not accept Cain's sacrifice, but we do not read he

(continued on page 215)



Questions from Our Readers

Objective and Subjective

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

I hear from the pulpit “objective” and “subjective” as they pertain to faith and other aspects of religion. I don’t understand these terms; could you please explain them and what they mean in relation to our doctrine?

This is again a very good question. A simple school or office dictionary will not be of much help in explaining the difference, but it may help a little in pointing us in the right direction. Subjective refers to something “resulting from the feelings of a person,” while objective refers to the object or fact independent of the mind. So objective is related to a fact that is presented while subjective relates to the personal experience or application of the fact.

In search for an explanation regarding the religious difference between these two terms, I found a clear and to-the-point explanation in the Dutch denominational periodical *De Saambinder* by Rev. G.H. Kersten, written in 1920. I gladly made use of this article for our English-speaking *Banner* readers. Rev. Kersten writes, among others:

“For our salvation, two miracles of God are necessary: a wonder of God **outside** of us and a wonder of God **within** us. By the miracle of God outside of us, I mean the wonder of God’s eternal love in giving His only-begotten Son who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross—who afterward arose again and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father for the good of His elect. In Him His people have been brought unto salvation; in Him His own are glorified. In Him the Church of God lacks nothing.

“Now, when preaching speaks almost exclusively of what Christ has done for His people, we call that objective preaching. Objective and subjective belong together. They must never be separated. In the objective lies the foundation of salvation—in Christ alone, in the redemption accomplished by His precious blood. Yet that redemption profits our soul only when, through the subjective way, we are brought into communion with Christ. The miracle of God within us alone enables us to know the miracle of God outside of us, and that experience which works hope is precisely the subjective ministry of the Holy Spirit within us, whereby Christ is formed in us; our soul comes to know Him, learns to trust in Him, and seeks salvation in Him—yes, in Him alone. May our souls, through the subjective work of the Spirit, come to know the objective work of Christ, and then all shall be well.”

One-sided, merely objective preaching, then, Rev. Kersten continues to warn, can lead to minimizing the necessary and indispensable work of the Holy Spirit as it considers it

sufficient that Christ obtained salvation while little or nothing is said of the application of that purchased salvation. This is no fictitious danger today. Therefore, we always stress: it is scriptural, experiential preaching—in short: what it is and how it goes.

It is striking that the Bible itself as well as our Doctrinal Standards show this distinction on many an occasion. For instance, in Ephesians 6:10-18, where Paul speaks about the spiritual armor, he first speaks about the fact of the need for it. Put on the armor of God in order to stand. There are wiles of the devil everywhere; there is spiritual wickedness all over. That is objective, but what is that spiritual armor in the practice, or *subjectively*? Keep reading: it is to gird the loins with truth, using the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, etc.

The Canons of Dort, with respect to the promise of the gospel, state that it “ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel” (Canons of Dort, II, Article 5). Is this enough? Are the matters in question now personally revealed and made known in a saving way? No, they are to be subjectively experienced, that is, received by a true faith. Therefore, continue reading in the same Canons, III & IV, Articles 12-14. There you will read how the Holy Spirit works subjectively what is revealed objectively in those promises. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Further, the difference between objective and subjective is also clearly laid out in Lord’s Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism, where the first question asks in how many parts the true conversion of man consists. In the following questions and answers it is explained what in true conversion subsequently happens and how: the mortification of the old and the quickening of the new man *and what that is*.

In closing, we are not saying that objective preaching is unsound. Perhaps it is better to say that merely an objective preaching is incomplete. God’s Word also lays out the way salvation is obtained, the way in which the Mediator becomes precious and the soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness (Psalm 63:5). Simply remember this: something has happened, something is happening, and something has to happen. □

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



Current Events

Russia Labels Pastor a Terrorist

As of May 28, a seventy-four-year-old Russian pastor is considered a terrorist and extremist on Rosfinmonitoring, Russia's Federal Financial Monitoring Service. The pastor, former head of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians in Russia, is known for speaking on social media against the war in Ukraine. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation launched a criminal case against him in August 2023, claiming he was spreading false information about military actions. During the investigation, his home was raided, but he managed to escape. "They are looking for me to put me in prison because I've spoken the truth that Russia waged war on Ukraine," he said at the time. "People are dying, and everything is being destroyed. It's criminal, and they should not be doing this." A World Watch Research analyst noted the increasing pressure the government is putting on Christians. Unconfirmed reports say the pastor has now left Russia. The analyst said, "His case remains an indication of how careful Christians in Russia need to be in what they say and do.... Making critical statements or questioning the 'special campaign' (i.e., the war in Ukraine) can lead to severe consequences.

—Persecution.org

Appeals Failed Without a Hearing in Iran

The sentences of five Christians condemned to a combined over seventy years in prison for ordinary Christian activities, such as praying, performing baptisms, taking Communion and celebrating Christmas, have been upheld by an appeals court. The five Christians, including an Iranian-Armenian pastor and his wife and three Christian converts, have now been told that their appeals have failed, though no hearing took place. The five include two former prisoners who previously spent a combined six years in prison on charges related to their involvement in house churches. Under the amended Article 500 of the penal code, the charges were "gathering and collusion" and "propaganda." In practice, the Christians must serve a combined forty-eight years in prison, as when there is more than one sentence, only the highest is enforced. On top of the prison sentences, the Christians' personal property, including Bibles and other Christian literature, was confiscated by the state for the "research" purposes of the Ministry of Intelligence—as happened in another case last year involving two Christians sentenced to twelve years each in prison for "smuggling" Bibles into Iran.

—ArticleEighteen.com

Again Arrests in House Church in China

Sixty to seventy police and government officials raided a worship service being held by a long-persecuted house church in a hotel on Sunday, June 14. Church members, including several families, had arrived at the hotel on the previous day, and video footage posted on social media shows happy scenes of families' weekend away. The church members held a meeting at which they elected two new elders and one assistant deacon to the church leadership. The Sunday morning service began around 9 A.M., and video footage shows police officers, including SWAT teams, surrounding the hotel conference room and then entering it at 11 A.M. and halting the service, conducting identity checks and demanding that church members sign a "guarantee letter" before being released. However, the text of the letter is not known as officials refused to disclose its contents unless individuals first agreed to sign it. Most church members refused to sign the letter. Police took away thirty-three church members, including two elders, to a local detention center. The remaining members of the church were held at the hotel until around 7 P.M. and were only released after a further recording of identity documents. The elders were sentenced to weeks of administrative

detention. These families have faced many persecutions in recent years. On Monday, June 15, the church issued a public statement in which it described the events of the raid and reflected: "We thank the Lord for using this trial once again to bear witness to the Christian faith before many who have not yet heard the Gospel..." The church also called for prayer for the new elders and assistant deacon and the two detained elders. They specifically requested, "Pray also that the Lord would comfort and heal those who were frightened during the raid, especially the children who cried amid the chaos and confusion."

—ChurchInChains.ie

The Persecuted in D.R.C. Now Also Face Ebola

Persecuted Christians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have already endured months of ongoing attacks from the radical Islamic groups. But now they face yet another challenge: an Ebola outbreak. According to a Red Cross official, the Ebola epidemic has not yet peaked and could last for a year. In the part of DRC where the Ebola outbreak is happening, more than 95% of people are Christians. These believers face severe pressure amid violent conflict. The Ebola outbreak began in April; early deaths were overlooked by health workers, but now it has spread much more widely. Today, almost 300 people have died from the virus. The Ebola outbreak is also hindering church activities. Authorities require strict disinfecting operations and barrier measures to curb the spread of the virus. These include one-meter social distancing, no more than fifty people in attendance at services, and strict measures for all burials. Funerals have been replaced by the government with a one-minute prayer at the burial grounds. Churches are responding with prayer and public health messaging. Pews that once held nine worshippers now seat only five, while Sunday school classes have been suspended. A displaced resident said, "We lack everything to survive, and now Ebola has arrived. Only God can help us."

—OpenDoorsUS.org

Venezuela Still Suffers After Earthquakes

Rescue workers continued searching through collapsed buildings across northern Venezuela after two powerful earthquakes struck the country on June 24, leaving thousands dead or injured and entire communities facing a long recovery. The twin quakes, measured at magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, hit within seconds of one another and were followed by more than 130 aftershocks. The disaster caused widespread destruction across Venezuela's central-northern region, including Caracas and the coastal state of La Guaira, one of the hardest-hit areas. Casualty figures have continued to change as crews reach collapsed buildings. Earlier official figures reported at least 1,430 deaths and 3,238 injuries, with rescue operations continuing around the clock, with many more thousands injured and even more still unaccounted for. (*Since then, newer reports estimate more than 5,500 people have lost their lives.* —Ed.) The disaster has also struck churches. A pastor survived the collapse of his apartment building, but his eight-year-old daughter died, and his wife remained missing at the time of the report. The pastor did suffer serious injuries requiring surgery, while his oldest daughter was also injured and his youngest son survived unharmed. Hours after there had been baptism in the congregation, the community was mourning. There were several more cases of deaths, injuries, and missing people in the community. International relief groups have warned that the humanitarian impact may stretch far beyond the initial death toll. "The news cameras will eventually leave," a missionary said, "but these families will continue rebuilding their lives for months and years to come."

—ChristianStandard.com



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

A Boy from Stavenisse (16)

C. Visser-Sluis

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

Waves over Stavenisse

Only an hour after the siren sounded its warning, danger comes from a totally different side. The people always feared for the dikes at the harbor. Now the tidal wave comes rolling in to the sea dike. Like a treacherous beast of prey, it pounces on the 1800-metre-long sea dike of the island Tholen. A towering wall of water breaks through the dike and sweeps into the polders. There are farms in the polder. Not all residents heard Stavenisse's siren. Some sleep, others have crawled into the attics. Suddenly the tidal wave is there. The farms are swept away like matchboxes. The ocean water takes the debris along and rams the village with it. The fields change into a seething sea. The people had always thought they were safe behind the sea dikes.

This night, from Saturday to Sunday, February 1, 1953, the sea enters the fields with a giant leap. The dikes don't mean a thing. The sea takes huge bites out of them. The salt water sweeps and swirls into the polders in wide streams. During this night, very many people and animals drown. Of all the villages in Zeeland, Nieuwerkerk and Stavenisse are hit the hardest. 153 people drown in Stavenisse.

Slager still wants to get some books downstairs. "Husband, come upstairs quickly!" shouts his wife.

Suddenly Slager sees the water pouring inside. He hurries to the stairs and runs up. The door bangs shut loudly behind him by the force of the foaming water. He is just in time! Together they see the water rising and crawl into an even higher attic.

At first there was not all that much water in the village. Some even thought the sirens had wailed because there was a fire somewhere. But now the tidal wave drives the sea water through the streets of Stavenisse. Somewhere in another house, a man tugs to open the hall door, but his wife is pulling with all her might on the other side. "Open up, open up," he screams in mortal fear. He drowns in his

own house. Animals perish in their stables. When the walls cave in, they drift along lifelessly with the debris and beams.

In the midst of the deafening roar of the hurricane, Slager and his wife sit close to each other. The water roars underneath them. The front and back gable ends are torn off the house. Only the sides are still standing. Through the window of the one side gable, Slager sees his furniture and books floating by.

"The omnipotence of God," he whispers, trembling with awe. They are waiting for death.

The night passes. With the dawn of day comes deliverance. When the storm has subsided somewhat, they realize how terrible the flood is.

People come by with boats to pick up the survivors from the roofs and attics. At two o'clock a boat comes by Slager's house. Finally an end comes to the many hours of cold and fear. They are carefully helped into the boat.

"Potappel? Where is Potappel?" asks one of the rescuers.

Slager and his wife stare at him. "He was not with us," says Slager. He was going to go into the attic of his own house."

"Is he not with you?" the other again asks urgently.

A deep silence falls among the occupants of the boat. Everyone looks at the place where Potappel's house stood.

There were four houses along the Molenpad. Two were washed away during the night. Nothing of Leen's house remained. A single beam protrudes from the water at an angle. Waves wash around a remaining piece of wall. The people look at each other in dismay. They can't believe it. Wordlessly, they shake their heads. Between the floating dead animals and all other kinds of debris, the boat finds its way to Tholen.

The rumor soon circulates among the inhabitants of Stavenisse who were rescued or had fled.

“Potappel is missing.” (*Children, this was Sunday morning. We call to mind what Leen had said to his friend in the last chapter, “I still do not know which sermon I have to read tomorrow,” and how they spoke about a coming judgment and the warning sermon of the Sunday before. —Ed.*)

At first there still is hope. Sometimes a person is found who has clung to a tree or sat on a pole for a day and a night. They do not give up hope and anxiously seek for their leader.

“Elder Potappel is a child of God. Would the Lord not want to spare him?” the people ask themselves.

Leen is found at last, together with his niece. During that night the waves had dragged him out of the house. The house had collapsed. Leen has drowned. The time had come that he may enter into the house of his Father after many tribulations. The Lord had promised that long ago. Leen had often longed to be with the Lord eternally. But Leen first had to finish his work. The Lord had used him to warn young and

old against sin. He never tired of saying that you are only truly happy when you know the Lord Jesus. Now his task is finished. In the dark night of February 1, 1953, he may finally come home to the Lord. He is delivered from care, sorrow, and sin.

Epilogue

Friends have buried Leen Potappel in Bergen op Zoom. In the night of the disaster almost two thousand people perished. Many casualties were found after the waters receded. Later, when the island had dried up, all the people from Stavenisse who had drowned and were buried elsewhere, were reburied in their own village. If you ever come on the island Tholen, you should go to look at the mass grave in Stavenisse. There you can find the last resting place of 128 drowned people. There you can also find the place where Leen and his niece, Maria Van Oeveren, are buried.

(This installment marks the end of this series.)



Bible Stories for Little Ones

Naboth's Vineyard

(Based on 1 Kings 21)

There was a man named Naboth who lived in the city of Jezreel. He had a vineyard there, very near King Ahab's palace. It was a very pleasant garden, and the king often looked at it and said, “I wish that garden were mine.” Was this right? No! It was coveting what belonged to another person. This is a great sin, for the Bible says, “Thou shalt not covet.” This is the tenth commandment.

At last, King Ahab called Naboth and said to him, “Give me your vineyard. I like it very much because it is near my house, and I want it for my garden. I will give you another vineyard, or I will pay for it in money.”

Naboth, however, would not sell his vineyard because it was the inheritance appointed for him by God. He said to Ahab, “I cannot give you my father's inheritance.”

When the king heard this, he was angry. When he went home, he sat sullenly without speaking. When food was brought to him, he sent it away and would not eat it. How foolish it is to be angry, discontented, and ill-tempered when we cannot have everything we want!

When Jezebel saw how displeased Ahab was, she asked, “Why are you so sad that you don't even eat your food?”

Then Ahab said, “Because I asked Naboth to let me buy his vineyard, and he will not part with it.”

Ahab was lying idly on his bed, for he was so angry he would do nothing. But Jezebel said to him, “Arise, eat, and be merry. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth.” Wicked Jezebel had no right to do this; the vineyard did not belong to her, but she was not afraid of doing wrong or of making God angry. So, she wrote letters, sealed them with Ahab's seal, and sent them to the nobles who lived at Jezreel. What did she say in the letters? She wrote, “Take Naboth and bring him out before the people. Let two men accuse him of saying wicked things against God and the king. Then carry him away and stone him, that he may die.”

This wicked command came to the nobles in Jezreel. After they had read it, they went to Naboth's house and brought him out before the people to be judged. Had Naboth done wrong? No, but the nobles sent for two wicked men who wrongfully accused him and said,

“Naboth has spoken wickedly against God and against the king.” These wicked men forgot the ninth commandment, which says, “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” But the nobles went along with what the false witnesses said, and they brought out Naboth and stoned him with stones till he died. Then they sent to the queen and said, “Naboth was stoned, and he is dead.”

Jezebel was glad to hear this. She went directly to Ahab and said, “Go and take possession of the vineyard. Naboth cannot take it away from you now, for he is dead.” Then Ahab was pleased. He arose right away and went to the vineyard of Naboth.

God had seen all this wickedness. He knew all Ahab’s selfishness and all Jezebel’s deceit and cruelty. He had heard the lies of the false witnesses and had seen Naboth die. Now He called Elijah and sent him with a fearful message to Ahab at Jezreel.

The wicked king was walking in the vineyard. He was happy to have it, and he thought he was safe now that Naboth was dead. But soon Ahab saw Elijah coming to meet him. He was not happy to see him, for he knew that Elijah was a prophet of the Lord. All his possessions could not make Ahab feel safe and happy now. He said to Elijah, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?”

Elijah answered, “Yes, I have found thee. God has seen thy sin, and He has sent a message to thee by me. All thy family shall be destroyed, like the families of Jeroboam and Baasha. In the place where Naboth was killed, the dogs shall lick thy blood and eat the flesh of Jezebel. All this shall come upon thee because of thine idolatry, wickedness, and rebellion against God.”



Bible Quiz

Hindrance

Dear Boys and Girls,

Delayne and Devon fidgeted in the back seat of the car and glanced at each other warily. They were on a short overnight trip with Mom, Dad, and little brother Matthew. They had all looked forward to it for weeks. The girls knew that Dad needed a break from stress at work and that it would be good for Mom to be away from all her tasks for two days. Except...again, the girls looked at each other. It didn’t quite seem to be working out that way...

As soon as they arrived in the small historic town, Mom had noticed that Matthew sat down on every step he could find and didn’t seem interested in anything around him. Mom had felt his forehead. Sure enough, Matthew had a fever. It probably wouldn’t be possible to go on a long bike ride, even if the Tylenol began to work.

Mom and Dad had bent over a brochure. “We could go on this train ride,” Dad had pointed out. It was only a few minutes to the station, but when they arrived, the entire parking lot was full. “You go ahead and get the tickets while I find a place to park,” Dad had suggested to Mom. The tickets were soon bought, but where was Dad? Anxiously, Mom

and the children had peered from the train window as the minutes ticked by. The train would soon be on its way! Mom’s phone rang. She bit her lip as she listened to Dad’s familiar voice. He had driven several miles in several directions, but there was not one open parking spot to be found. The train would have to go without him.

And now? Mom sat in the passenger seat, gritting her teeth and clenching her jaw. She was holding an ice pack to her ankle, which was swelling quickly. In her hurry to buy more Tylenol for Matthew at the gas station, she had stepped in a jagged hole in the pavement and twisted her ankle. She grimaced.

In the back seat, Delayne and Devon grimaced too. What else would go wrong? It didn’t seem as though this would be much of a break from daily busyness and stress—not with all these hindrances that kept coming in the way!

The girls suddenly heard a giggle from the front of the car. Despite the pain that glinted in Mom’s eyes, there was a twinkle which couldn’t be suppressed. Mom chuckled again. “Well,” she summed up, “we are certainly making memories, aren’t we?”

Sometimes, our days happen this way. We plan, we hope, we assume, but...all kinds of unexpected events hinder us from having the kind of day we thought we would have. In the story above, it led to some disappointments, but they were not terrible or lasting. In the end, they were able to laugh about it.

When we read the histories in the Bible, we see that there were people who met with much greater hindrances. Think of the man who lay by the pool of Bethesda. Day after day, he wished he could be the first one to enter the water so that he would be healed. Day after day, he was hindered because he was paralyzed and had no one to help him.

The man who was sick of the palsy did have friends to help him, but still, he was hindered. His friends could not bring him to Jesus for healing because the house where He preached was packed with people. There was no room to enter.

There were more who tried to come to Jesus and couldn't. They were hindered by others. Zaccheus wanted to see Him, but he was too short to see over the heads of all the people. Bartimaeus called to Him, but the people told him to be quiet. Jairus pleaded with Him to come, but a sick woman caused Jesus to stop, even though Jairus' case was urgent. Zaccheus, Bartimaeus, and Jairus did not just meet with small disappointments; no, they were unable to reach Jesus Christ Himself!

Even bold, confident Peter was hindered from coming to Jesus. He wanted to walk on the water to the Lord, but when he became afraid, his fear became a hindrance. Instead of reaching Jesus, he began to sink.

The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" He had been so confused and hindered before, and now he wanted to devote himself to the Lord as soon as possible. He did not want to put it off. He wanted to make sure that there was no hindrance in the way.

In each of these cases, the person needed the Lord Jesus, and something hindered them—and, in each case, the Lord Jesus Himself took it up for them!

Jesus knew about the man lying by the pool of Bethesda. He sought him out and healed him. Jesus knew about the man sick of the palsy too. He paused—all the people had to wait, and the Pharisees even grumbled—but Jesus focused on the man, asked him about his needs, and healed him.

Jesus told Zaccheus that He wanted to go to his house; He told the people to bring Bartimaeus to Him, and He made Jairus' little daughter alive again.

He took Peter by the hand and saved him from sinking.

He sent Philip to help the Ethiopian understand what he was reading. By sending Philip to teach him, the Lord opened the way.

Not one hindrance could ever stand in the way of the Lord Jesus. He was and is able to overcome them all!

When a sinner is turned from his wicked way and placed on the narrow way to salvation, much comes in his way. He begins to seek, but the way is not easy. The devil tries in every way to hinder him. "It is not for you," he says, and "you are too young" or "too old" or "too wicked." He tells them, "There is a much easier way," or, "the way is too hard; you will never make it." How easily they can become convinced that they will never be able to come to Jesus—the way is so narrow!

These hindrances are great, and yet...the Lord also takes it up for these people, just like He did for Bartimaeus and Zaccheus and others. He is stronger than the devil, and He will guide, lead, and heal them.

* * * * *

Fill in the blanks.

1. Genesis 24 – "And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath _____ my way; send me away that I may go to my master."

2. Ezra – "Moreover I make a decree...that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the _____, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered."

3. Job 9 – "Behold, He taketh away, who can hinder Him? who will say unto Him, What _____ Thou?"

4. 1 Corinthians 9 – "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of _____."

5. Galatians – "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the _____?"

6. 1 Peter – "Giving honour unto the wife... as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not _____."

7. Luke 11 – "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of _____: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

8. Acts 8 – "And the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be _____?"

For the Older Children

Look up the following verses. Place the correct hindrances and responses in each blank.

9. Nehemiah 4:8 – Jerusalem, _____,

10. Romans 15:22 – Rome, _____,

11. 1 Thessalonians 2:18 – Thessalonica, _____,

**Satan's intervention, patient persistence*

**the just priority of fulfilling other work, diligent labor*

**a plotted and armed conspiracy, prayer and watching*

Match the correct passage to the description.

12. Paul preached in chains, yet nothing hindered him from preaching the Gospel _____

13. The Jews hindered the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles _____

1 Thessalonians 2:16 Acts 28:31

For the Younger Children

Unscramble the answers.

14. Who climbed a tree because he was so short that he was hindered from seeing Jesus?

(hsuaczee) _____

15. Who called more loudly because he was blind and the people hindered him by telling him to be quiet, and he needed Jesus?

(euarbatimes) _____

16. Who was hindered from going down into the healing water because he was lame and others were always there before he was?

The man at (sdhbeta) _____

17. Who was hindered from coming to Jesus for healing because the house was too crowded?

The man who was sick of the (yplase) _____

18. Who needed Jesus to come and heal his daughter but the needs of another woman were hindering Jesus from coming quickly?

(uijars) _____

19. Who would have sank in the waves had not Jesus caught him by the hand?

(peert) _____

* * * * *

Answers to August's "Needy" quiz:

1. refuge

2. steps

3. destroy

4. tongue

5. wicked

6. verse 17: "But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God."

7. verse 5: "But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying."

8. verse 21: "O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise Thy name."

9. verse 4: "Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked."

10. verse 1: "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy."

11. judge 16. Isaiah 14:30

12. poor 17. Proverbs 31:20

13. souls 18. A

14. dunghill 19. C

15. forgotten 20. B

Answers to previous quizzes were received in July from:

Bailee Bakker

Blaire Bakker

Clay Bakker

Ember Bakker

Paige Bakker

Ashlynn Blom (2)

Emily Blom (2)

Tiffany Blom

Aryanna Breeweg (2)

Julian Breeweg (2)

Carly Brouwer (2)

Leanna de Jong

Ethan Driesen (2)

Alyssa Driesse (2)

Jordan Driesse (2)

Kailyn Driesse (2)

Lindsey Driesse (2)

Allison Ekema (2)

Eleanor Ekema

Kaylynn Ekema (2)

Jacob Ekema

Jordan Ekema (2)

Allison Fluit

Andrea Fluit

Willard Groenendyk (4)

Kate Hoogendoorn

Evanny Knibbe

Rylan Knibbe (3)

Sienna Knibbe

Gregory Koenen

Reuben Koenen

Shanelle Korevaar

Braylon Maassen

Rylan Maassen

Weston Maassen

Carissa Mans

Travis Mans

Abe Mol

Teddy Mol

Madeline Mol

Zachary Mol

Andrew Murphy (3)

John Murphy (3)

Carter Neels

Larissa Oostenbrink (2)

Blake Pannekoek (2)

Cassadee Pannekoek (2)

Lauren Pannekoek (2)

Daniel Remijn

Lauren Remijn

Rebekah Remijn

Lynne Ruissen (2)

Lydia Ruissen (2)

Collin Rus (3)

Kaela Rus (3)

Lakia Rus (3)

Emma Spaans

Sierra Spaans

Tessa Spaans (2)

Trysta Spaans

Brandon Ten Hove (2)

Hannah-Jo Ten Hove (2)

Ava Van Manen (2)

Alana van Manen (2)

Evan Van Manen (2)

Azlynn Van Ravenswaay (3)

Kiela Van Ravenswaay (3)

Lydia Van Ravenswaay

Winston Van Ravenswaay (3)

Hanna Van Wyk

Esther Vande Stroet

Eli Vande Waerdt (2)

Joelle Vande Waerdt (2)

Wyatt Vande Waerdt (3)

Levi Vander Waal

Sara Vander Waal

Corne' Verhoef

Helen Verhoef (2)

Joanna Verhoef

Caleb Vogelaar

Matthew Vogelaar

Jayden Weeda (2)

Karsten Weeda (2)

Keegan Weeda (2)

Nathan Westdyk (2)

Samuel Weststrate (2)

Maddyn Ymker

Whitney Ymker

Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth

180 Jacobs Road

Newfoundland, NJ 07435

E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

Welcome to our new members:
Braylon Maassen, Rylan Maassen,
Weston Maassen, Karsten Weeda,
Leanna de Jongs, Corné Verhoef

Love,
Aunt LenaBeth



News & Announcements

■ Obituaries

BAUM, Kenneth R. – Age 78, July 19, 2026; Pequannock, New Jersey; Wife – Carol (nee Van Der Weile); Children – Steven & Karen, Cathy L. & Craig Okken, Brian; 9 grandchildren; predeceased by brother Allan Baum. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Psalm 63:1&2.)

DEN HOLLANDER, Arielle Michelle – Age 53 days, July 2, 2026; Fort Macleod, Alberta; Parents – Bradley & Leanne; Grandparents – Rev. Henry & Ada, Bas & Sjanet Mourik; Uncles and Aunts – Dennis & Beth, Beverly & Arjan Jansen, Abe & Martina, Tim & Roselien, Lisa & Pieter Jansen, Lori den Hollander, Rosy & André Jansen, Chris & Connie Mourik, Carolien & Willard Vande Bruinhorst, Annemieke & Brad Howe, Joliek & Gideon Stoutjesdyk, John & Kate Mourik, Suzanne & Jaden Both, Lisa Mourik, Bas Mourik, Courtney Dunsbergen; Great-grandparents – Claire den Hollander, Cornelius VanderStad, Johan & Christina van de Bruinhorst. (Rev. H.D. den Hollander, John 12:26.)

GREENDYK, Augusta (nee Sweetman) – Age 101, July 29, 2026; North Haledon, New Jersey; Husband – Nicholas (deceased); Children – John, Leonard & Marianne, Audrey & Edward Malec, Nicholas & Laurel, Thomas & Maria, Robert, David & Judy, William & Marlene, Alida, Paul & Ellen, Alan & Sandra; 33 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren, 1 great-great-grandchild; predeceased by son Edward and 2 brothers. (Rev. H. de Leeuw, Luke 13:16.)

NOORDEGRAAF, Marinus (“Rien”) – Age 57, July 20, 2026; Fort Macleod, Alberta; Wife – Jody (nee deKok); Children – KariAnn & Henry Van Huigenbos, Darcy & Shalynn, Tacey & Brendan Kreft, Susan & Eric Arnoldussen, Cory; 13 grandchildren; Parents – Kees & Ans; Parents-in-law – Hank & Margaret deKok; Siblings – Marjo & Tony Van Herk, George, Janet & Darwin Babb, Tony & Emmy, Annemarie & Brian den Hertog, Ed & Cara, Sarah & Phil Scheurkogel; Sisters-in-law – Gwen & Ted Van de Lagemaat, Kim & Evert Vanee. (Rev. H.D. den Hollander, Psalm 40:2.)

In Memoriam

Mr. Kenneth R. Baum

On July 19, 2026, it pleased the Lord to remove Mr. Kenneth R. Baum from his wife, family, and the congregation of Clifton, New Jersey, at the age of seventy-eight years. With the help of the Lord, he faithfully served in the office of deacon eighteen years and as elder four years with the love of his heart and the gifts given him. May the Lord remember the mourning family and sanctify this calling.

—The Clifton NRC Consistory

OVERBEEK, Jonathan Peter (“Johnny”) – Age 27, July 10, 2026; Norwich, Ontario; Parents – Len & Melissa; Siblings – Tyler & Lena, Shawn & Charlotte, Nicole & Chad Van Esch, Ryan & Morgan, Nathan; Grandparents – Peter & Teresa Barendrecht, Joanne & John (deceased); Great-grandmothers – Anna Barendrecht, Heather Hampson; predeceased by brothers Kevin and Brandon. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, Daniel 4:35b.)

SLINGERLAND, Jacoba (“Coby,” nee van den Hoek) – Age 89, July 18, 2026; Picture Butte, Alberta; Husband – Jacob (deceased); Children – Jenny & Wim de Vos, Nellie & Marty Vandenberg, Neil & Margaret, Joanne & Edy Vande Bruinhorst, Margaret & Arend Pelleboer, Tony & Nella, Fran & Ken Vanden Broek, Jake & Caroline, Linda & Rob Vanden Broek, Judy & Jos Groenendyk, Ben & Korlinda; 84 grandchildren, 121 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Kor & Gonnie Vanden Hoek, Olivier Vanden Hoek, Marinus & Ann Van den Hoek, Maatje Scheele, Anneke Slingerland, Klazina & Pete Visser; In-laws – Wim & Teunie, Tony & Margaret, Andy & Nita; predeceased by son-in-law Harry Van Maanen, grandchildren Charles Vanden Broek and Lyle Vandenberg, 2 siblings, stillborn sister Slingerland, and 12 in-laws. (Rev. E.C. Adams, Psalm 73:23&24.)

VAN GIESSEN, Helen Jean (nee DeVries) – Age 92, July 23, 2026; Portage, Michigan; Husband – Garrett John (deceased); Children – Sheryl, Gary, Randall & Trudy, Mary & Andrew Kieboom; Son-in-law – Leendert & Wilhelmina Weeda; 13 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren; In-laws – Anne, Mary Van Beck, Krystyna Sikkema, James & Pamela Sikkema; predeceased by daughter Sandra Weeda, 6 siblings, and several in-laws. (Rev. H. Hofman, Psalm 68:5&6.)

VAN VELTHUIZEN, Cornelis – Age 89, July 4, 2026; Lethbridge, Alberta; Wife – Jantje (nee van Middendorp); Children – Coba, Hennie & Gerard van de Bruinhorst, Maas & Michelle, Elly & Alex van de Bruinhorst, Gys & Geraldine, Ken & Diane Slingerland, Ditta & Tony Liefing; 53 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren; predeceased by daughter Jackie Slingerland, and all his siblings, and siblings-in-law. (Rev. P. Kleijer, Isaiah 40:6-8.)

■ 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.

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

If the touch of Christ in His abasement upon earth drew virtue from Him, certain it is that faith cannot touch Christ in heaven, but it will draw a quieting virtue from Him which will in some measure stop the issues of an unquiet spirit.

—Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

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 love 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@nrcslynden.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, 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
- Two high school teachers (areas of particular need are math, science, business and art, though flexibility exists based on candidate strengths)
- Education Assistants (EA), Personal Support Workers (PSW), and Developmental Support Workers (DSW)

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 resumé 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

Thinking About Teaching?

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

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

Why, Lord?—A Divine “Why” *(continued from page 205)*

was concerned about that. The deepest cause was that he was not just before God, His Creator. Here he showed to be a lover of self and a hater of God and his neighbor, his brother. He would finally offer his brother up to his own pride by slaying him. The Cain-nature is not yet extinct. We encounter it in the world and in our own hearts, with all its terrible consequences.

The Lord, who looks on the heart, sought out Cain. The Lord, in His condescending goodness, paid Cain a visit. That is already a miracle. Then the Lord asked him the question “Why?” The Lord visited Cain in his pride to keep him from worse. What did the Lord want to teach Cain with this question? Two things. The Lord wanted to teach him that when He looked upon Abel in favor, Cain needed not fear his own position at all. Grace does not lift one up but rather humbles one. So, Cain did not need to fear Abel at all.

The Lord also pointed out to Cain that if he persisted in his prideful anger, it would prove to be the root of man-slaughter. So, with the question “Why?” the Lord wanted to teach Cain to be content with the portion He granted him, and, at the same time, warn him. Cain had given an answer to the question “Why?” What kind of answer was that? His answer was the killing of Abel. He continued, thereby aggravating his judgment.

This divine “Why?” to Cain contains much instruction for us. Does the Lord not daily ask us the same question? Is not the Lord worthy to be recognized daily in what He leaves us, in spite of ourselves? How much the Lord gives

that we have not even asked for! Yet, if we then look upon the greater portion of our neighbor, does not the same Cain-nature arise in us, too? Does not the Lord then call us to be content with our portion?

Why did Cain not bow before the Lord? That was his offended pride, which manifested itself in thinking he had a right to the favor Abel had received. He was a man who had rights. He did not feel his pride to be guilt, for he was no longer a lover of God but a lover of himself. It is precisely a person with rights who must learn that he is without rights before the Lord. Our pride must become guilt before God, in the sense that we begin to see that we no longer fulfill the purpose for which God created us.

Cain did not learn that lesson. He continued, as man always continues, even while the Lord still visited him with the question “Why?” This is how man lives out who he has become through the Fall—not without a will but wilfully going against God’s warning. Pictured in Cain, we see that man will perish because of his own fault. Cain—in him God’s Word pictures man in his deep fall, already in the first history after Genesis 3.

If only Cain could be a beacon in the ocean for us. How blessed when one with rights becomes one without rights, and an innocent one a guilty one. Grace is needed for that. Then there is room for grace, for grace falls to ones who have no rights and who are guilty. How many times in our lives has this divine “Why?” sounded? How many times have we continued in the way of standing our ground? ❑

(To be continued)

Using the Word as a Sword

Can we go against sin and Satan with a better weapon than that which Christ used to vanquish the tempter? And certainly, Christ did it to set us an example how we should come armed into the field against them, for Christ could with one beam shot from His deity (if He had pleased to exert it) have as easily laid the bold fiend prostrate at His foot as afterward He did them that came to attack Him. But He chose rather to conceal the majesty of His divinity and let Satan come up closer to Him, that so He might confound him with the Word and thereby give a proof of that sword of His saints which He was to leave them for their defense against the same enemy.

William Gurnall (1616-1679)

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The Book of Nature and the Scriptures

The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,
In every star Thy wisdom shines;
But when our eyes behold Thy Word,
We read Thy name in fairer lines.

The rolling sun, the changing light,
And nights and days Thy power confess:
And the blest volume Thou hast writ
Reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.

Sun, moon, and stars convey Thy praise
Round the whole earth, and never stand;
So, when Thy truth begun its race,
Destined to spread to every land:

Nor shall Thy living gospel rest,
Till through the world Thy truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blessed
That see the light, or feel the sun.

Great Sun of righteousness, arise,
Bless the dark world with heavenly light;
Thy gospel makes the simple wise,
Thy laws are pure, Thy judgments right.

Thy noblest wonders here we view,
In souls renewed, and sins forgiven;
Lord, cleanse my sins, my soul renew,
And make Thy Word my guide to heaven.

—Isaac Watts

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