

the **Banner** *of Truth*

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The Official Periodical
of the Netherlands Reformed
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In this issue...

Gentleness
Captivity Led Captive
Pentecost

For our young readers...

David Meets Nabal
and Abigail
Birds

*"And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit,
whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." GENESIS 1:12*



Meditation Gentleness <i>Rev. H. Hofman</i>	99
Bible Study The Names of the Mediator (5) <i>Rev. C. Neele & Rev. A. Schot</i>	100
A Word in Season Captivity Led Captive <i>Rev. J.J. van Ekeveld</i>	101
Pentecost <i>Rev. M. Heerschap</i>	102
From Our Inheritance An Exhortation on the Day of Pentecost <i>Rev. A.W. Verhoef</i>	103
Prayer Day <i>Rev. W.C. Lamain</i>	104
Commentary The Gladdening and Lovely Time of Spring <i>Martin Luther</i>	105
For Young & Old What the Bible Says About the Moon (1) <i>J.D.P.</i>	106
Reflections Evening Twilight (5) <i>Rev. P. Blok</i>	108

Questions & Answers Questions from Our Readers <i>Rev. H. Hofman</i>	109
Current Events	110
TIMOTHY – for the Young The Life of John Bunyan (2) <i>Taken from Christian Stories for Children</i>	111
Bible Stories for Little Ones David Meets Nabal and Abigail <i>Submitted</i>	112
Bible Quiz Birds <i>Aunt LenaBeth</i>	113
News & Announcements	117
Classis Midwest 2024 Meeting Minutes	118
Back Cover Characters of Christ <i>Isaac Watts</i>	120

Cover: Sunrise over the Mountain Field | Wallpaper Abyss

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Meditation

Gentleness

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

“Thy gentleness hath made me great” (Psalm 18:35b).

The text for this meditation is also recorded in 2 Samuel 22:36b. There it is history. In the Psalms it is, as it were, prepared for the chief musician and recorded for an even larger audience. Matthew Henry notes that others may make use of it to thank God for their deliverances. Now it may be sung in the temple, and it is suited for commemoration, reflection, self-examination or whatever the occasion may be in which even a reader of *The Banner of Truth* may find himself. The month of May reminds us of several worthy commemorations, such as the Ascension of Christ into heaven, National Day of Prayer in the United States, but also soon the graduations in our schools and those in higher education such as college or university. May the Lord grant the truth of the text to be the experience of the heart!

“God has spoken once, twice have I heard this...” Sometimes the Lord gives His children a second edition as we can see the duplication of this text both in 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18. It is the same word as He spoke before but now with more instruction, more experience, more depth, and more sweetness or consolation.

David reflects upon the way of the Lord with him and may speak of a very blessed conclusion, *“As for God, His way is perfect.”* David has no complaints about the Lord’s way with him. Thus was God’s way with His Son in the steps of humiliation—also a way about which the Son never complained—also God’s way with the steps of Christ’s exaltation. What a wonder and blessing it is when the soul united to Christ by faith may come to that blessed agreeing that there is no unrighteousness in Him. There *never* is, but can we always say and agree with that? Let us see for a moment how David came to the expression of our text.

Concerning the way of the Lord with David, he arrives at a somewhat unexpected and surprising expression. Does this not sound strange? Who would say of himself that he

or she has become great? Maybe little children would say such a thing, but would a child of God say this? Moreover, it is one thing if others say it of someone else, but David says it of himself! In addition, it is one thing to think it but another to voice it. To what kind of greatness is David referring? Becoming “great,” acting “great,” being “great”—great people...it happens among adults, and children dream of it. Being bigger, better, higher, and more important than others occurs frequently—our day is full of it, is it not? Does David not sound presumptuous? Had it not been more proper of the sweet Psalmist of Israel to say, “Thy gentleness has made me small, insignificant, humble”?

Actually, this is the case when we study the word “gentleness” a bit closer. Becoming great is yet something different from becoming *proud*. Thankfully, it doesn’t mean this! Dear reader, we make things great by adding, building, multiplying. However, the word “gentleness” in the Hebrew actually comes from a root word which means to humble, to oppress, to cause to submit, to force down, or even to torment, to vex. The Lord makes great by breaking down, suppressing, subduing, making small and do not such measures often become necessary in the life of grace? There is, also after receiving grace, so much that exalts itself against the Lord. Let us then not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding. The lesson in this text is that the Lord’s way and all He undertakes for His Church is always gentleness—even though it may imply a cross, a trial, a thorn, or an affliction. The poet of Psalm 102 says that the Lord weakened his strength in the way and shortened his days.

David knew of many dealings of the Lord with him that were hard on his flesh but profitable for his soul. In Psalm 119 he writes, *“I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”* Then we will wholeheartedly repeat what David said, *“As for God, His way is perfect,”* despite the Sauls that persecuted him and the Shimeis who cursed him. □

God’s Wisdom in Dispensing Crosses

Lest in the unmeasured abundance of our riches we go wild; lest puffed up with honours we become proud; lest swollen with other good things—either of the soul, the body, or of fortune—we grow haughty, the Lord Himself, according as He sees it expedient, confronts us and subjects and restrains our unrestrained flesh with the remedy of the cross.

—John Calvin



Bible Study

The Names of the Mediator (5)

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

Brightness

*“Who being the **Brightness** of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”*
(Hebrews 1:3).

The apostle writes in the letter to the Hebrews, “Who being the Brightness of His glory...” We must distinguish a source of light and the rays emanating from it. We see the sun in the sky, and we see its rays. These rays are the brightness of the sun. Christ is the Brightness of the Father’s glory. When this name is used by the apostle in the first chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, he first introduced Christ as Creator (verse 2). He also describes in the third verse that the second Person in the divine Being is the Sustainer of all things. Here he writes about the divine nature of the Mediator. This is important. When the apostle uses the name Brightness, he is talking about the deity of Christ.

This must be distinguished from the glory of God that was revealed in the human nature of the Mediator. About this John writes, “And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” John here points to the unspeakable miracle that the light of divine virtues in Christ became visible to lost sinners. However, the name Brightness in the letter to the Hebrews refers primarily to the relationship between the Father and the Son. Christ is God of God, Light of Light (Nicene Creed), but the Father and the Son are distinct persons. The sun and the rays are not the same. The Son of God performs the work of the Father and shares perfectly in the glorious virtues of the Father. The name Brightness points to the perfect divine glory of the Son. His majesty is a divine majesty. This name teaches us how insignificant we are over against Christ.

How often the Saviour is spoken of as if He were our friend. Actually, the human nature of Christ is then separated from His divine nature. However, the apostle sets before the Hebrews: when we speak of the Saviour, we are speaking of a divine Majesty. Be careful in your speaking of Him! Realize how superior He is. This is also experienced by a poor people who dare not approach to Christ. They realize that He is so great, and they themselves unworthy, damnable sinners. We may well ask ourselves: How do we think and speak of the Son of God?

Do we know our place in relation to the Brightness?

—January 14, 2010, Rev. C. Neele

Child

*“For unto us a **Child** is born...”* (Isaiah 9:6a).

The beginning of the ninth chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy speaks about a people walking in darkness, about people living in the land of the shadow of death. We understand from Matthew 4 that this refers to the semi-pagan Galilee. There, lived a people in great ignorance and misery. Who could help and save them? This would certainly require great and powerful people. How else could it become light in these miserable, dark circumstances? Isaiah may point out the Saviour; it is a...*Child*. Must a child not be helped himself? Yes, but with this Child it is different. His birth gives light and unspeakable joy. Nor is it just any child, it is *“Thy holy Child Jesus”* (Acts 4:27), a pure, spotless Child, without sin. He will teach the ignorant all things and shine the light of His life in the land of the shadow of death.

The birth of a child gives joy. This holy Child is being revealed. In this last word lie two matters: opening and giving birth. This is what a spiritually wretched person so needs. The Word must be opened to the heart. The name Jesus becomes precious, but the need is going to be pressing. He must be known personally. When by faith one may look upon this born Child, there is an inexpressible joy. Then deep wonderment fills the heart. Was this holy Child willing to bow so deeply for such an unholy, guilty sinner? At the birth of John the Baptist, it was sung, “O precious child, O matter of joy, gift of the omnipotent One” (Dutch rhymed version). How much richer may one sing at the revelation of the Child Jesus to the soul—precious, lovely, full of grace and comfort, a Fountain opened against sin and uncleanness.

From this Saviour proceed many blessings. The little ones in grace are helped by Him in a childlike manner. From Him also flow the treasures of the Covenant of Grace. “A seed shall serve Him” (Psalm 22:30). It will seek Him (Psalm 24:6). It is a seed, sanctified by God, which shall inherit the earth (Psalm 25:13). His glory and righteousness will be seen over them (Psalm 90 & 103). Then by grace it becomes true after all—from generation to generation—for people conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity (Psalm 51:5).

There is salvation in the Child of Bethlehem.

—June 17, 2010, Rev. C. Neele

(To be continued)



A Word in Season

Captivity Led Captive

Rev. J.J. van Eckeveld, Zeist, the Netherlands

“Thou hast led captivity captive” (Psalm 68:18b).

Ascension preaches unto us that Christ has not only ascended up on high but also that He has led captivity captive.

In times past, prisoners were drawn along behind the victory chariot of the winners of the battle. In this manner the heaven-ascended King has bound all of His enemies behind his victory chariot. Which enemies? In the first place, the power of sin under which we have cast ourselves. Subsequently, there is Satan, for He has broken into the house of the strongman well armed to rob him of his goods. He has captured the world; therefore, He could say to His Church, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Also, hell must fall under His might. That is why Paul could say, “O grave, where is thy victory?” To name a few more, He has also taken away the sting of death. He carries the keys of hell and of death. He has bound all of these enemies to His victory chariot.

Why is it written that He has led captivity captive? It is because these enemies have taken us captive. Satan has captured us because we became his prey in paradise. Death has captured us, for the wages of sin is death. Hell has us in its grip, for we have made ourselves worthy of the righteous judgment of God.

As children of Adam, we have become prisoners of Satan, sin, death, and hell.

Have you already become acquainted with the need of your soul? By nature, we do not realize this. It is necessary that our eyes are opened for the terrible reality of our spiritual captivity. By means of the discovering light of Word and Spirit, we learn to know ourselves as such prisoners. What a horrible discovery! That is not how the Lord has created us. It points us to our heaven-high guilt. Has it become your distress and sorrow that you have sinned against a good doing and righteous God? How we then try to deliver ourselves. We are followers of the Covenant of Works and try to make ourselves right with a holy God, but that will lead to failure.

Have you already learned to see by the light from above that you lie under the power of the enemies because of your own guilt and that you can never deliver yourself? There is no longer any escape because you have delivered

yourself to these enemies. Then it becomes true, “Oh, great compassionate One, can a poor sigher, a crier still be heard? Is there yet a hearing ear?”

The head bruised

Pay attention now—He has led captivity captive. Ascension preaches unto us that that He has been the Victor. Do you not have any defense against the attacks of Satan? The heaven-ascended Christ has bruised his head. Do you not have any power against the temptations of the world? Christ has conquered the world. Do you go bowed down under the burden of your sins? Christ has carried away the burden of sin from an innumerable multitude. Do you fear death? He is the Victor over death. He has slain all the enemies. He is the Victor over all the powers and mighty ones. He has ascended up into heaven with all of these enemies bound to His victory chariot. Is that not a

rich message? Now it may be proclaimed to those that are bound that there is opening in their prison and that He has taken captivity captive. He ascended up into heaven full of honor, and the prison became His spoils.

The burden of sin

Are you such a captive? Do you not know how you may be delivered from the might of your deadly enemies?

Perhaps at one time you had the courage that it would be possible, even for you, but it is already so long ago. Pay attention now to this ascended King. Would He not have power to deliver you? Stretch out your bound hands unto Him. Would He not have power to release your bound hands? Bring your complaint unto Him. Would He be powerless to release you? What a wonder when our eye is opened for Him who was the Victor over all of His enemies. For Him there is no enemy that is too mighty. It is the message from the ascended Saviour, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.”

It has become Ascension Day; therefore, for Him there are only slain enemies. That is also so for the Church who may be comprehended in Him. Woe is our portion if we still always stand for our own account, for then we will sink away with all of His enemies into the eternal night. The call still goes forth from the King who has ascended into heaven. □

He has slain all the enemies. He is the Victor over all the powers and mighty ones. He has ascended up into heaven with all of these enemies bound to His victory chariot. Is that not a rich message? Now it may be proclaimed to those that are bound that there is opening in their prison and that He has taken captivity captive. He ascended up into heaven full of honor, and the prison became His spoils.

Pentecost

Rev. M. Heerschap (1911-1993)

(Translated from the May 1977 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“And I will put My Spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:27a).

Beloved reader, it is indispensable to all of us for salvation that God the Holy Spirit makes His indwelling in our hearts. Precisely, this is the meaning of Pentecost, the feast which we hope to commemorate.

The Holy Spirit, the third Person in the adorable, blessed essence of God, came down on that day. He made His people a temple of the living God. Just as the Son of God came down in Bethlehem’s stable in our human nature—“Immanuel, God with us”—and that He died on Golgotha—“God for us”—so it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to come down on the Day of Pentecost—“God in us”—so that the miracle of God’s eternal good pleasure would be accomplished in the application of salvation obtained by Christ. God makes the heart of fallen man a dwelling for Himself and establishes him in communion with Him. The ground was laid in Christ. He bore the wrath of God and took it away and was afterward glorified at the right hand of God. He had to enter heaven to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who will abide with His people forever.

Thus, the word of Ezekiel’s prophecy was fulfilled, “And I will put My Spirit within you.” Note that this is not a work of the mind but a work of the heart; not a general but a saving work. So, death and life, eternal well and eternal woe are connected to this.

Now the work of the Spirit may be spoken of by a historical knowledge, but where grace is lacking one is a stranger to the blessed indwelling of the Spirit. It is by His indwelling that in conviction unto salvation the Word declares Him to be one with the Father and the Son as the third Person in the Holy Trinity; that with the Father and the Son He is due the same divine honor, not as power but as Person. This shines forth in the work He does and the honor which is due to Him. This divine

honor is due to Him in His work in Creation and, also in the work of re-creation.

How necessary it is, to come to self-examination, to know and experience that God’s Spirit is given in us. Because darkness is great, the general gift of the Spirit is often mistaken for the special gift. Only with the special gift of the Spirit is there a godly sorrow that works repentance to salvation not to be repented of, a reproving of sin, righteousness, and judgment but, also, a well-founded hope to live, enjoying comfort, and once to die happily.

There is so much that comes close but does not bear the stamp of the true work—that this Spirit is given in the inward parts. How our times speak that we live in the latter days; how many spirits reveal themselves. A cry is heard; here is the Christ and there is the Christ; yes, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived.

Therefore, blessed are they who may learn to be ministered unto by the sovereign work of God and wrought upon by that Spirit, raised from their state of death and discovered to their lost state by this Spirit who is in them, and brought to Him in whom they obtain redemption—namely, forgiveness of their trespasses and restoration into His communion. It is the Spirit’s work not only to discover these as to how lost they are but, also, to reveal Christ as the Way of salvation and to glorify His work in them.

May it please God to send forth His Spirit in these days of darkness that cover the earth and God’s Church—the north wind of the Spirit for uncovering, to make way for the south wind of the Spirit of consolation. That there may be some of Judah yet brought out of Babylon, gathered together at Jerusalem, and who have for them fulfilled, “And I will put My Spirit within you.”

“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:39). ◻

Truth Received in the Heart

Naked speculation leads to receiving truth in regard to its evidence, but when it has a prevailing sovereignty in the heart, then we receive it in love. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick by us—that is, when we are willing to sell all for the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:46). We are often brought to decide between our lusts and the truth. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both. Therefore, let it soak into the affections and hide the Word in your hearts that you may not sin against God.

—Thomas Manton



From Our Inheritance

An Exhortation on the Day of Pentecost

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

(Translated from the June 1974 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”

(Acts 2:40b).

When the apostle Peter, girded with power from on high, spoke to the assembled crowd, he said at the end of his sermon, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

It is an incomprehensible miracle that it was precisely Peter who was given to utter this grave warning on the Day of Pentecost, the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He who was so afraid that he would deny knowing the Lord; he now was as brave as a young lion and could, driven by God’s Spirit, give a testimony that has been food for thought for lost souls throughout the ages and has been preaching matters for God’s servants until the present time.

Between the lines we may note that we need not speak of God’s servant in pride and disdain. After all, everyone who has been truly set straight by the Lord will not speak contemptuously about Peter’s denial of his Lord and Saviour but will have to ask himself with shame: how many times have I denied the Lord—denied the Lord in my family; denied the Lord in the midst of my friends; denied the Lord at my work; and denied the Lord in my official work? The most advanced of the Lord’s children will, by heavenly light, be most ashamed of themselves. How many times has one spoken where he should have kept silence, and how many times has one been silent where he should have spoken.

One thing is certain: Peter did not make it right with the Lord, but the Lord made it right with Peter, both personally and officially. Now on the Day of Pentecost, as the spokesman for all the others, he spoke boldly concerning Him whom he had denied so terribly, but for which he had become deeply guilty. God Himself restored him into his office, and now girded with power from on high, he summarized his speech in the above appeal, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

Reader, may we come to know, by the discovering operation of the Holy Spirit, that we, too, belong to that untoward generation. May we:

- Become untoward in our deep covenant-breaking in Adam and having slid back from our Creator and Maker with a perpetual backsliding.
- Become untoward with body and soul and refusing to bow under God. No need from ourselves to fall before the High God.
- Become untoward in our ways. Does not the Lord say to us, “Their deeds were evil”?
- Become untoward with our mouth, untoward in all things temporal and eternal.

Thus, with us, no turning back anymore!

On the contrary, with man there is a hardening against better knowledge, and he goes on and on in the paths of destruction without taking into account that eternity is at hand, but now the apostle said, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Does that mean separate yourselves from it and become a better generation?

No, that is not what this zealous servant of the Lord said because he knew that he himself also had belonged to that untoward generation. It was grace alone that he was translated from the state of death to the state of life. When he said here, “Save yourselves,” then you must read this in the context of the entire sermon that Peter was given to preach there and on that day. He set before them their great sins, which were especially manifested in their wicked operations against the Saviour of lost sinners. Oh no, they were not lost in their own eyes. They were blind to the miserable state in which they were, just as today man is blind in the ways of heaven.

Look now, Peter could also point out that there was still a possibility from God’s side for evil persons to be saved. However grievously they had sinned, however much they had forfeited it, the Lord still let Peter announce that there was a way of escape. Hence, he concluded with this earnest exhortation. He exhorted them says the Word of the Lord. Oh, what a precious and loving exhortation that was. The love of Christ constrained him to show them through whose labour alone they could be delivered from the wrath to come. However, then it also had to manifest itself in them by their turning away from the path of sin, confessing and bemoaning their great guilt before the Lord with heartfelt sorrow. The fruits have, therefore, become richly manifest. In those days thousands were saved from the untoward generation to which they belonged by and of themselves.

Now, look at our lives. We live in a time when untowardness is abundantly revealed. My dear reader, is there still a plea to heaven to save ourselves from the untoward generation and to end up as a poor beggar at the Lord’s feet? Or do we feel quite at home in the untoward generation? Can we go farther and farther along the path of sin? Do we also seek more and more the things below? Then know that all this will perish, and so will we if we do not come to true repentance and there does not come a breaking with the world and sin.

Do you know what is needed for that? That God’s dear Spirit begins to work in the heart. Not because we are so willing because that is not how it is but because the Lord, even in the end of time, will still add to the Church such

that shall be saved. Are you going through life as a miserable one, as one having no hope? Do you feel that you are so tied to the untoward generation? Then know that there is One in heaven who can still help you and free you from the clutches of Satan, the world, sin, and your own flesh.

If you have had a little exercise in your life, then you will experience more and more that it will be an incomprehensible miracle from above if you save yourself from this

untoward generation. Then, once at the end of the race, you will give Him glory—not to yourself, because it was a miracle of God that drew you out of the state of death and transplanted you into the kingdom of His eternal love. Oh, that a little more of it might be experienced here on earth, “But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” What a blessed Pentecostal fruit that would be for you and me on our journey to the great and never-ending eternity. □

Prayer Day

Rev. W.C. Lamain (1904-1984)

(Taken from the March 1982 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

May the Lord give us and our children, with the congregations, a deep impression of our dependency upon the Lord, but also of our unworthiness due to the Fall in Paradise, and that, day after day, we have no right to any outward or inward blessings. It has all been sinned away, but still, we are at this side of death and the grave. The Lord has spoken in several ways during the past winter with wind, snow, ice, and rain. A great number of people have died as a result of this, but to take it to heart is only by the grace of God, even though the responsibility lies for us as creatures of the Lord. With all our religion, we are dead in transgressions and sins. Only when a wonder happens from above shall there be a blessed result and fruit. The Lord only can break our heart asunder, confessing God’s justice and righteousness that we are unworthy of the least of God’s blessings and consideration. This season we will have a Prayer Day, but in ourselves we are so prayerless.

In Genesis 4:26 we read, “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began man to call upon the name of the Lord.” That was the first public service. Who was responsible for this? God Himself in His free and sovereign grace and love. God is a prayer-giving, a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God; which is made possible only in and through that great Intercessor, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the privilege of the true Church of the living God. Hebrews 4:14, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” We also read in Romans 8:26, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Without those things which the Lord mentions in His Word, we are so poor that we cannot express it. Only when we come, by grace, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit do we find how wretched, poor, and empty we are. The blame is not upon the Lord, no, far from it. He created us perfect and after His own image. It is all our own guilt and nothing less.

O Lord, that it might please Thee to give us a Prayer Day; a prayer in truth and uprightness, but most of all for the honor of God’s great and holy name and for His attributes. That His name may be honored and glorified in our heart and life, in our family, children and grandchildren, for the coming of His kingdom and for the breaking down of the work of Satan. That the Lord Himself may teach us to pray, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

That there might be a prayer for the extension of Thy truth and of Thy Church from pole to pole over the length and breadth of the earth. That the Lord might preserve us to stay with the truth which is the only right truth. That the Lord might remember our churches and schools in this year and season; also, all those that labor in the church. That our life will be lived in the fear of the Lord, and that God’s name was never blasphemed on account of our conduct. That we might receive a prayer for our President and government, nation, state, and city; that the work of the devil might be broken down and the Sabbath honored; that married life might be protected and preserved from all kinds of murdering, killing, and all works of darkness.

Also, that the Lord might remember our fields, our industry, and our cattle and all the works of our hands. The needs in several families are great; poverty is standing before our doors.

“We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.” That God might bring us back unto Himself, His Word and testimony. “Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.”

May the Lord graciously bless the few lines to our souls and the souls of our generation. □

A true believer looks on religion, not as a burden which he must be forced to endure, but as a privilege which is his happiness to enjoy.

—Andrew Gray



Commentary

The Gladdening and Lovely Time of Spring

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

(Taken from the book *The Last Words of David*, translated from Latin by Henry Cole, D.D.)

“And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (2 Samuel 23:4).

Here David compares the rule or kingdom of the Messiah, who shall re-establish and restore righteousness and the fear of God, to the gladdening and lovely time of spring, wherein the world, after the dull and gloomy scene of a long winter, begins to open forth its beauties again and to cheer every kind of living creature by its new appearance. For while, during the winter, the sun is far removed from us, the earth is, as it were, shut out and confined by cheerless frost, ice, and snow. The trees wear a miserable aspect, being stripped of their foliage and verdure, and everything that grows out of the earth lies torpid. There is no trace of anything flowery or verdant anywhere to be seen, no fruits show themselves, and the whole world is, as it were, dead. However, as soon as the spring begins to appear, the sun now coming nearer to us opens the earth, which then smiles with a new and lovely aspect, and the whole world seems to arise from the dead. For all ever consider that the spring is the most delightful time of the year, as the poet sings,

*Now every tree its leafy pride resumes,
And the year’s loveliest season smiles around.*

There are many who have been of the opinion and have said that it was in this season of the year that the world was first created; that agrees with the Scriptures, also, which make the vernal month, that is our March or April, to be the first month of the year.

In like manner, the kingdom of grace peculiar to this Ruler brings to us the all-gladdening and plenteous time of spiritual delight, wherein this Messiah freely gives unto us righteousness and the fear of God, whereby we, as green, flourishing, and fragrant plants, grow up in him and bring forth fruit. For He is our Sun of righteousness, who now comes near unto us that He might shed upon us His light and life. As it is said in Malachi 4:2a, “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.” And that He might do all these things by signs it was His will to abolish death and to begin this His kingdom of a new and eternal righteousness by His resurrection in the time of spring, when all nature returns to life. Whereas, before, He was born into the world in the middle of winter, which was to signify that He undertook for our sakes the dark and dreadful burden of sin, misery, and death, to which the human race was subjected. He bore

the tempestuous season of this winter for upwards of thirty-three years.

For, as in this prophetic description by the time of spring is signified the saving and life-giving time of the grace of God, which has dawned upon us through the Messiah, the Son of God, so, on the contrary, by the time of winter the opposite is signified: that is, the time of the wrath of God under sin into which the whole human race has been plunged by nature since the time of their first parents by their fall. God, under this order of the times and seasons has, as it were, shadowed and set forth similitudes, whereby to present unto us these different states of sin and grace that we might by the different changes of the seasons be continually reminded of these things until the last day (when there shall be another and a new heaven and earth, and another order of things); that we might thus be brought to think upon these great matters and learn to make a practical use of them each day of our lives. May God grant that our eyes and ears may be attentive to the admonitions which the seasons thus afford us.

According, therefore, to this spiritual representation of things contained in the changes of the seasons, Adam, the first of the human race, may rightly be said to have first lived in the all-delightful time of spring, seeing that he was created in the very time of spring, as being the time in which the world also was first made. By sin he cast himself into the dreadful time of winter until God by this all-gracious Sun, his dear Son, dispelled the awful winter, restored this new spring, and again established an eternal Church, which He still goes on to gather together, that it may hereafter live in the eternal enjoyment of God. Now this wonderful change, or as the Psalm speaks, these “years of the right hand of the Most High” have begun, he who lives in this new and eternal spring shall never die, and he who dies in that dreadful winter shall never live. That is, as Christ says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” For on the latter, that eternal Sun, concerning which David here speaks, is gone down and has set for ever, but on the former, He arises and shines in His eternal light.

Nor is this the only thing that is intended by this mention of the spring and the winter. It more especially refers to that great secret of the prophetic doctrine, that the kingdom or dominion of the Messiah would not be like the political economy of Moses. For that policy and government of Moses is the ministration of the law, by which sin is not only not taken away, but is really increased; or, as Paul saith, becomes “exceeding sinful” because the law shows

how great and terrible sin is, and men by it are accused and condemned. Being by it cast into horrid fears, they not only begin to hate the judgment of God and the law itself, by the sentence of which they feel themselves so condemned and killed, but also flee away from God, as Paul wonderfully and copiously sets forth this office of the law and the effects of it.

This is, indeed, to stand at the foot of Mount Sinai, while it horribly shakes and trembles with thunderings and lightnings, being made to rock from its foundation, and while there is such a terror produced all around that it seems as if heaven and earth were rushing together. In truth the light and rays of the sun were darkened with far more heavy and thick clouds than if it had been in the middle of the freezing winter, though it was then the time of spring to this visible world when the light of the sun occasionally beams forth. At that time, He was so far removed that his rays had no effect whatever. So, the nations and the ungodly, who are without the law and lie buried in the winter under their sins, live in greater security, and, as they imagine to themselves, far more happily than the people of God. Because they, even in the time of their spring, endure the terrible tempests of law terrors which are as thunderings and lightnings. For when that all-fair Sun, Christ the Son of God, does not shine into their minds with His splendor, they have none of the joys of the spring to delight or refresh them. Moses fills all things with terror and death by the heavy tempest of his law. Thus, the storms and tempests which variously infest this our air and atmosphere are to us as perpetual prophets and teachers, showing us that it is the same with the minds and consciences of men, and that the godly are often thus overwhelmed with the terrors of the law; who nevertheless, as Paul says, are not under the law, but under grace.

However, as David says, after the times of Moses and the prophets, that joyful time of the Messiah succeeds when the ZUR or Rock Himself of Israel reigns that He

might by His free bounty plentifully bestow upon us righteousness and eternal life. This, I say, is that delightful and joyful season, when the whole face of things is changed, as in the spring, to a new and all-gladdening aspect, when, before the clear shining, a genial shower has fallen; that is, when the sweet and healthful voice of the gospel is heard. Afterwards the Sun Himself, Christ, arises in our hearts, and they are raised up and enabled to receive the consolation, the clouds and storms of Moses, together with the thunderings and lightnings of his law, being wholly dispelled. Hereupon all things truly look green, flourish, and blossom. There is a new light and a day full of new joy, gladness and life, like unto which there is no time in the whole of this world's year. Now all that tempest and winter of clouds, thunderings, sin, death, and all kinds of terrors, are overcome, dispersed, and utterly disappear. There arises an all-clear and all-gladdening day of a new and eternal Passover, or of victorious rejoicing in our risen, living, and eternally-reigning Lord.

This is what David means when he says that the government of the Messiah, his Son, is like unto that spring day, when after a morning of copious and genial rain, the sun rises with a sweet serenity, shines forth, and clothes all things with verdure and beauty. Even so Lactantius, among many other testimonies, thus describes the time of the resurrection of Christ:

*Behold! the beauties of the new-born world,
Bright from the bosom of the spring, declare
That all Creation with it God revives!
For, as Christ rises from the dreary grave,
Each tree in foliage smiles; each waiting bud
Bursts into bloom, to hail its risen Lord
Triumphant o'er the dismal realms of death! □*

¹Lactantius (c.250-c.325) an advisor to the first "Christian" Roman emperor, Constantine I. The Latin poem *De Ave Phönice* (*The Phoenix*) is attributed to him.



For Young and Old

What the Bible Says About the Moon (1)

J.D.P.

(Taken from the October 1969 issue of *The Banner of Truth*)

In recent months the eyes of the world, as never before in the history of the world, have been focused upon the moon. (*July 1969 was the first manned landing on the moon. Now again in recent years mankind is seeking to land and set foot on the moon. —Ed.*)

What does Scripture have to say about the reason for the creation of the moon? Note that in the first chapter of

Genesis, God has pointed out four specific reasons for which the moon was created. Genesis 1:14-18 reads: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two

great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.” The most obvious reason for the moon’s creation was to illuminate the night (verse 16). Men have always been frightened of facing darkness. From early times people were nomadic—they were herdsman and shepherds. To a shepherd on the hillside, the moon was a gracious gift from God, for no artificial means of illumination were possible nor were they provided. God made it clear at the time of Creation that He had set a greater light and a lesser light—the sun for light by day and the moon for light by night—in order that men should not walk in darkness.

The thing this impresses upon me is that it was not God’s purpose to permit His creatures to stumble in darkness. Blindness was not a natural part of Creation. It was an abnormality that came as a result of sin. The apostle John testified, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5b).

Genesis 1 also points out (verse 14) that the sun and the moon were given to mark the passage of time in an orderly fashion. It was the moon that marked months and years

rather than the sun, for there was no change in the daily cycle of the sun that would mark a significant or a new beginning, for each day was like the preceding day. With the waxing and waning of the moon, God provided for an orderly progression of time.

The lights were put in the heaven for days and for years. He gave the lights in the heaven “to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good” (verse 18).

While God is an infinite Being, unbound by time, man is a finite creature bound by time. In order that man’s finiteness might be compared to the infinity of God, God provided for the marking of time.

In Genesis 1:14b, we find the third reason that God created the sun and the moon. “Let them be for signs...” Now signs in Scripture were manifestations of God—manifestations of God’s character, God’s attributes. The signs or the miracles performed by Moses attested the authenticity of Moses as a messenger of God, and those performed by Christ authenticated His person and the work that He had come to do. In the apostolic era the apostles were authenticated by the signs which they performed.

In Romans 1:18-20, the Apostle Paul, speaking of knowledge that man may have through nature around them, says: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known

of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him (about God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; **so that they are without excuse.**” What Paul tells us here is that all men are responsible to God and answerable to God because there are certain signs that have been placed in nature that testify to the character of God and man’s responsibility to Him as the Creator. Paul does not single out any of the particular means of revelation in nature in Romans, but when we go back to Genesis 1:14, we find that the sun and the moon were placed in the heaven to be signs to all created intelligences that Creation is responsible to God and is to acknowledge His sovereign authority.

Now when we consider the moon as a sign or the sun and the moon as a sign, they can be divided into two classifications: first of all, as a sign to believers, then as a sign to nonbelievers. The sun and the moon that God put in the heaven, according to Psalm 19:1, revealed God’s sovereign power as the Creator. “The heavens (with the sun and the moon they contain) declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.” The firmament bears testimony to the fact that the firmament—the heavens—came into existence as the result of the work

of God; not by accident, not by chance, not by natural generation, but created by a sovereign, intelligent Creator.

This same Psalm, in verses 4-6, suggests that the signs in the heaven bear testimony to God’s sovereign control over His Creation. Verse 2 tells us that these signs also bear testimony to the infinite wisdom of the

Creator. “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

I think of the questions that are asked Job by God: “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? (These are references to recognizable constellations of stars in the heavens.) Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who hath given understanding to the heart?” (Job 38:31-36). What God asked Job was this: Can you look at the signs that God has placed in the heavens without being overwhelmed at the wisdom of God who ordered the sun and the moon and the stars in their courses? ■

(To be continued)

What Paul tells us here (Romans 1:18-20) is that all men are responsible to God and answerable to God because there are certain signs that have been placed in nature that testify to the character of God and man’s responsibility to Him as the Creator.



Reflections

Evening Twilight (5)

Rev. P. Blok (1920-2019)

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

An Old Friend

“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

Visiting the elderly in the congregation is one of the many tasks in the ministry. During a visit when it is asked how life is experienced in the evening twilight of life, the answer is often, “It has passed away like a shadow.” That was also the experience of the poet: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”

It is a privilege to listen to the wonders of free grace at the feet of the elderly, not by contemplating the matters but from having experienced them. Then there develops a connection between one another, and a union flows from this. Thus, there will be an accepting and a respecting; each other’s needs in natural and spiritual life will be carried along into the inner room. In eternity they will not meet a strange God, neither will they meet a strange people. “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.”

What is from heaven binds together. What is bound together by the flesh always ends in the flesh. What is of heaven ends up in the poorhouse together and lives from what is granted. What is of the flesh is “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” and lives from what is taken. To a poor people, God can give something. A rich person has no lack. In Hebron, two women met each other. Elisabeth and Mary were bound together by God. What they possessed was received in an honest way. They experienced this as a miracle. Mary had said, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”

The Lord gives just enough that they do not lack but, also, just enough that they always need God. Elijah could go through the desert for forty days and forty nights because of the bread and water that was granted. It was enough to get through and not to perish. Thus, true life is tried, purified, and fought against, but when they call in trouble, God will deliver them.

An old elder wrote to a minister because of an inward bond. In the past they had often met each other, and a bond had developed. This was strongly experienced by the old friend. He wrote, “If you have some time, come for a visit again.” Thus, they met each other one evening. It could be seen that the evening twilight had come. The shadow of

eternity could be seen. In an old chair sat a man broken down according to the body. His voice was weak, but his spirit was lively. Without saying anything, they sat together. One of the elderly was close to home, and the number of the God-fearing was few. The minister remembered the word of Jeremiah: “How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!” When the spiritual household goods disappear, the house becomes empty. Natural man can fill it with religion and furnish the house with new household goods, but fallen man cannot replace life. “So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”

How was it with the old friend? For others, he was a readable letter, but God’s people often walk with the light on their back. Then their life is clear to another, but they themselves walk in darkness. The Lord prepares for eternity in His way. It is a difficult lesson to learn. To live out of Christ is to die with Christ. In the evening twilight of life, man’s merits do not count. Having an office in the church, gifts of labor, and fruits of the ministry are not companions to the Jordan. The inheritance is distributed according to the electing good pleasure. Leaning on the righteousness of Christ only, the Church will enter in. For this, discovering and uncovering grace is necessary. Being made receptive for heavenly teaching, the old friend shared the following. The evening twilight showed the end of his life and promised eternal rest. He said, “It is the end. I know it and I feel it. The Lord showed retrospection in my life. My official labours ended with a deficit. My pillars were unable to support the building. The memories of the meetings with my King made me see the resting places and resting times for my soul, but my soul could find no rest in them. It lay outside of me in Another. It taught me two matters which point to the ground of salvation. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers.” There is but one price and one Saviour. A matter lies behind this: “Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1 Peter 1:18,21).

It is not a false hope with which God’s Church travels home. It is grounded in the only and perfect righteousness of Christ. In a way of true discovering and uncovering, the Holy Spirit makes room for it. Christ must be received as a gift from the Father. Only through Him will the Church be reconciled to God. “Who is wise, and he shall understand

these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

*I wait for God to hide me;
My soul, with longing stirred,
Shall hope, whate'er betide me,
In His unfailing word.*

*My soul waits for Jehovah
With more intense desire
Than watchers for the morning
To dawn of day aspire.*

—Psalter 446:3 □

(To be continued)



Questions & Answers

Questions from Our Readers

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

What is meant with the expression that there needs to be weight on the clock?

Thank you for this question. It nicely suits the set criteria for the Q&A page in *The Banner of Truth*. Perhaps the few lines that were added in addition to the above-mentioned question remind us again that we must not too quickly assume that our children and young people understand expressions like the older ones do. I quote: “Having grown up with a weighted clock in the house, I have a general idea of what it means but wouldn’t mind clarification for myself. I suspect that youths and children, having grown up with digital clocks, would find this expression quite meaningless...”

To understand what is meant by the expression, we need to picture for a moment the old grandfather clock that I am sure you have seen somewhere. We have one in our living room. It is a simple fact that as soon as the weights of this stately piece of furniture touch the bottom of the clock because I forgot to wind them up, the clock inevitably stops ticking. So, in order for the clock to work and be useful in telling us the time, the weights need to be in a position where they do their work, so to speak.

Is it possible to detect a spiritual picture in this? Most certainly! In the life of grace, the weight of trials is often necessary for God’s children so that spiritual fruits become more evident. Think of the fruits of humility, self-denial, patience, longsuffering, and others. There are so many obstacles that are a threat to growth in grace and fruit-bearing. To mention one such obstacle, perhaps the main one, I would single out the sin of pride. Pride is a terrible sin and very unbecoming in the state of grace. Now in order for pride to die and grace to flourish more and take deeper hold of a child of God, the Lord in His condescending mercy often hangs the weight of afflictions, trials, crosses, or thorns on the life of His children. This causes them, at times, to groan, to complain, and to cry out as we read in

so many places of Scripture. However, we also read something else sometimes. David writes in Psalm 119:71, “*It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes.*” And in Isaiah 12:1 we read: “*And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise Thee; though Thou was angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me.*”

Recently, I read a striking and beautiful example which might comfort those afflicted souls bowed down under the weights of trials. It was a reference to what I often saw as a little child on a nearby farm in Klaaswaal where we lived during the years my father was a student at the theological school in Rotterdam. In those days there were no digital scales as we have them today. No, the scales that were used to weigh potatoes or veggies or whatever the farmer was selling consisted of a simple platform where the bag of goods was placed while on the other side there were—weights of steel, weighing five pounds, or ten pounds or more. On the one side there were the goods, on the other side the weights. When the balance was found, the weight was determined. Perhaps you can picture it; the goods were there with the needle of the scale right in the middle. So—as I read—the Lord places on the one side the weights of suffering, bitter, sour trials, difficult things, crosses etc., but on the other side there is the weight of the Saviour’s eternal love—and the scale is held by pierced hands. My dear reader, that is what gave me a little comfort and strength to go on in the midst of all that can press our shoulders downward. The blessed Saviour holds the scale, and He has not only laid a *bottom* in the suffering by His bitter suffering and death, but He also holds a *balance* in it. Then I could say, there needs to be weight on the clock. May you say that as well? □

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



Current Events

Continuing Violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo

At least seven people were killed on April 2 as members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF, an Islamist rebel group) carried out a midday attack on a village in Mangina, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Others were taken hostage, and the local Christian health center was looted and set on fire. It was reported, “The rebels entered Mangina without being noticed; it was at the Ballon roundabout that it crackled with bullets in the air. At least seven people were killed, including a woman. After the ADFs went to the (health) center of Mangodomu, which they looted before burning it down, some nurses were taken hostage.” In recent times, the ADF has violently targeted Christian hospitals and churches in DRC to disrupt peace and stability in the region. “The deliberate targeting of essential Christian institutions like hospitals and churches not only demonstrates the ruthless nature of the ADF but also highlights their intent to undermine the social fabric and disrupt the provision of critical services to the local population,” a local reverend said. “By attacking places that are meant to provide care, healing, and support to communities, the ADF is not only causing physical destruction but also instilling fear and insecurity among the people.”

—Persecution.org

Young Christian Sadly Killed

A fourteen-year-old Pakistani was shot dead on February 5 while standing outside a shop with other Christian boys in a market in a town in the Punjab province. Eyewitnesses reported that a group of six Muslim men armed with pistols arrived in the area on motorbikes around 5:30 P.M. and opened fire on the Christian boys. “Kill all the Churas!” shouted one of the attackers, using a derogatory term commonly used against Christians in Pakistan. The boy was struck on the left side of his chest just above his heart, causing him to collapse on the spot. Another attacker fired at another boy, but the bullet just grazed him causing only minor injuries. The uncle of the boy who was killed said, “The other attackers also opened fire on us with their weapons, but we managed to save ourselves by taking cover behind a wall.” He also said they rushed the boy to a local hospital, but he succumbed to his bullet wound before doctors could begin. Four of the gunmen were known to the Christians but no arrests have yet been made. A local church pastor said, “The perpetrators were known for their consistent pattern of harassing and assaulting young Christian men in the community.” Another pastor said the murder was religiously motivated. He said “The audacity of their attack shows that they will not hesitate to strike again. The police will be responsible for any more loss of life of Christians if they do not take adequate security measures.”

—ChurchInChains.ie

Wrong Celebration

On March 31, President Biden wrote, “On Transgender Day of Visibility, we celebrate the joy, strength, and absolute courage of some of the bravest people I know.” March 31 was Easter Sunday. President Biden made a proclamation in 2021 that March 31 would officially be this “Transgender Day of Visibility” (TDOV). With March 31 being Easter this year, the president created much backlash with his comments. While Easter and this TDOV day won’t coincide every year, this year the President Biden chose to celebrate TDOV as well as Easter. *(The last time Easter fell on March 31 was 2013; the next time will be March 31, 2086, if the Lord has not yet returned. Dear reader, we should always consider this when speaking of future dates. —Ed.)*

—FoxNews.com

Abortion Ruling in Florida

The Florida Supreme Court allowed a six-week abortion ban to take effect, but voters will have the final say. In a pair of significant decisions, the Florida Supreme Court upheld a fifteen-week ban on abortion in the state while also allowing a proposed amendment that would enshrine abortion protections in the state constitution to appear on the November ballot. The conservative-leaning court’s decision on the fifteen-week ban also means that a newer signed six-week abortion ban (with exceptions) will also take effect. The same court’s ruling to also allow the constitutional amendment to appear on the ballot means voters will have a chance in just seven months to undo those restrictions. The proposed amendment would bar restrictions on abortion before fetal viability, considered to be at about the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy. That means it would invalidate the six-week ban. It would also include exceptions past that point for “the patient’s health.” Under Florida law, the measure will have to receive the support of 60% of voters in November—not a simple majority—to pass.

—NBCNews.com

Healthy Young Woman Plans to Be Euthanized

A physically healthy, twenty-eight-year-old Dutch woman has decided to legally end her life due to her struggles with crippling depression, autism, and borderline personality disorder. She is scheduled to be euthanized in May—despite being in love with her forty-year-old boyfriend and living with two cats. The woman, who once aspired to be a psychiatrist, has been dealing with mental health struggles throughout her life. She said she decided to be euthanized after her doctors told her, “There’s nothing more we can do for you. It’s never going to get any better.” Despite wanting this, she said, “I’m a little afraid of dying because it’s the ultimate unknown. We don’t really know what’s next—or is there nothing? That’s the scary part.” The Netherlands became the first country in the world to make assisted suicide legal in 2001. In 2022, there were 8,720 euthanasia deaths in the Netherlands—representing roughly 5% of all the country’s deaths.

—NYPPost.com

Rejoicing in Persecution

Therefore, I bind these lies and slanderous accusations to my person as an ornament; it belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached and reviled, and since all this is nothing but that, as God and my conscience testify, I rejoice in being reproached for Christ’s sake

—John Bunyan



Timothy FOR THE YOUNG

The Life of John Bunyan (2)

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

Bunyan was not only a tinker but a soldier. He served in the Parliamentary army at Leicester, at the time of the battle of Naseby. Upon one occasion he was assigned guard duty, but another soldier volunteered to take his place, and that very man was shot through while at his post. Thus the Lord, whose tender care was over Bunyan, spared his life that he might be a well-known *soldier of the cross*.

Now, as the Lord chose Paul to be the great Apostle, who to the disciples seemed the most unlikely person, so he chose John Bunyan to preach the gospel, to the astonishment of those that knew his former life. He had not, however, labored in preaching more than five years before he was arrested by the local authorities on November 12, 1660, at Samsell, near Harlington, where he was scheduled to preach. His hearers met together, and after he had given his text, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" the policemen came with a warrant to take him prisoner. This did not disturb Bunyan very much, for he remarked, "We might have been arrested as a thief, or murderer, or for other wickedness, but, blessed be God, it is not so; we suffer as Christians, for well doing." He might have escaped, as he had heard that a warrant was issued against him, but he was determined to stand his ground. He was taken before the justices of the peace, and by them sentenced to Bedford Jail to await trial. The illustration shows the manner in which he was probably brought there (see page 88 in the April 2024 issue of *The Banner of Truth*). It was a damp, awful prison, built on a bridge.

Bunyan was afterwards tried before five or six justices, but they could find nothing against him except it was in the law of God. His chief offenses were that he did not use the Common Prayer Book and that he went about teaching in certain meeting places, which was contrary to the Church of England. For these acts of Nonconformity he was kept in the miserable jail cell for about twelve years, but his God was with him and made the prison like a palace to him. He was often far happier in the prison than the

king was upon his throne, or the rich man who "fared sumptuously every day." He never before had such insights into the Word of God. Doubtless he has preached to millions of the human race by his imprisonment who, except for that, would never have heard of John Bunyan, for by it he became very popular. The means used to stop the spread of truth were, by God's blessing, the cause of its greater spreading. It was in prison he wrote the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* and several other books, the materials for which were not borrowed. His library in prison consisted only of the Bible and the book *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

His imprisonment was made somewhat tolerable, as the Lord gave him favor (as He did Joseph) in the eyes of the jailer, who allowed him occasionally to visit his friends and to preach in the villages and woods. It is said that many of the Baptist congregations in Bedfordshire owe their origin to his MIDNIGHT preaching. This, however, came to the ears of the justices, and the kind jailer almost lost his job because of it. For some time, he was not permitted to go out of doors, but after a while, the jailer granted him liberty. Upon one occasion, having been permitted to go out and visit his family with whom he intended to spend the night, feeling uneasy at a late hour, he went back to the prison. It is well he did, for at midnight a messenger was sent to the jail to see if Bunyan was there, as there was a rumor that he had broken out of prison. After the messenger had seen him and left, the kind-hearted jailer said to Bunyan, "You may go out whenever you want to, for you know much better when to go out and come back than I can tell you."

Bunyan was often anxious when he was first imprisoned to know what would become of his wife and four children, one of whom was blind, but the Lord took care of them and in His providence enabled him to work for them in prison. It was written of Bunyan: "Nor did he eat the bread of idleness, for there," says the writer, "I have witnessed that his own

hands ministered to his family's needs. He made many hundreds of long-tagged laces, which he learned to make while in prison." John Bunyan, with many other prisoners, was freed indirectly through the help of a Quaker, and about the time of his release a law was passed giving certain privileges to Nonconformists. It was enacted partly to please the Roman Catholics, who with others were suffering persecution because they disagreed with the form of worship used by the Church of England.

He lived and preached the gospel for about sixteen years after he was let out of prison, and both he and his writings became very popular. Upon one occasion the king rebuked Dr. John Owen because he went to hear a tinker preach, to which Owen replied, "May it please your Majesty, had I the tinker's abilities, I would most gladly give up my learning."

Bunyan died in London, August 12, 1688, and his

body was buried in Bunhill Fields burying ground, where, of late years, an elaborate tomb has been erected to his memory. Within the last year or two, Bedford, the town of his imprisonment, has made room for a handsome monument to keep alive his memory. In conclusion, we are reminded of the words addressed to Eli, "For them that honor Me I will honor." Bunyan's name will ever be enshrined by his works on earth and will be had in everlasting remembrance in heaven.



*John Bunyan and his blind daughter
at the door of Bedford Jail*

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

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



Bible Stories for Little Ones

David Meets Nabal and Abigail

(Based on 1 Samuel 25)

Something very sad had happened in the country of Israel. Samuel had died. Samuel, who had been a father and minister to all the people and had given them so much godly help, had finished the job God had given him and been taken up to his final home in heaven.

David went to the funeral, too. Afterward, he and his men stayed in the plains near a village called Carmel. There were also some shepherds in those plains who belonged to a man named Nabal. David and his men tried to help those shepherds as best as they could. They drove away any wild animals which attacked the sheep, and they chased off any robbers.

Nabal was the kind of man who didn't have too many friends. He was rather grumpy and mean, and he had quite a temper, but he was very rich, and he

had thousands of sheep and goats. Although Nabal was an unfriendly man, his wife, Abigail, was a kind, generous, loving person. She was beautiful on the outside, but, most importantly, the Bible tells us she had a good understanding.

One day Nabal had a big feast; it was a meal to celebrate that the sheep had all been sheared. This means that the sheep had their wool shaved off, and now Nabal could sell them. Just then, some of David's men arrived. "We are sent from David," they said. "Please let us share in your feast. Anything you give us will be fine with us." Then the men added, "Remember that we lived with your shepherds in the plains of Carmel, and as long as we were there, nothing bad happened to them."

"David?" sneered Nabal. "Who is David? Many

people nowadays run away from their masters! Do you think I'm going to give you *my* food, *my* bread, *my* water, and the meat that I'm giving to *my* men?"

When David heard this, he grew very angry. Could David—a child of God—become angry? Yes, we have to say that no child of God is perfect. Each of God's children has his own sins. Some are proud, some get angry quickly, and some have other sins, but one thing will always be true—the child of God will hate that sin with his whole heart. He must continually pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"Grab your swords," David told his men. "Let's go after them!"

As they were on their way, Abigail, Nabal's wife, came hurrying down the hill toward them. One of Nabal's men had told her how unkind Nabal had been to David's men, and she felt terrible about it. Quickly she had taken loaves of bread, bottles of wine, meat, corn, raisins, and figs, as gifts for David, and hurried to meet him.

"Oh, my lord!" Abigail cried and bowed to the ground. "Please blame me for the awful things my husband did to you. Please don't kill anyone! That's just the way Nabal is—he is always mean like that. Please don't kill him, for I know that God is going to

make you king one day, and then you won't want to be sorry for this murder." David was very happy that Abigail had stopped him in time, and he thanked her. Then he and his men went home in peace.

When Abigail came home, she saw that Nabal was very drunk. He was in such a terrible mood that she didn't dare tell him what David had almost done to him, but the next morning he was happier, and then she told him how David had nearly killed him. How that frightened Nabal! The Bible tells us that his "heart died within him, and he became as a stone." Some think he had a stroke and became paralyzed so that he couldn't move. Whatever it was, ten days later he died.

How glad David was that Nabal had not died because of him. He had much for which to praise God. Only God's grace had stopped him from murder. Now David thought so much of Abigail and how she had helped him that he asked her to be his wife. In those days men would have several wives; although not right, God permitted this in those times. Also, Saul had already taken away David's other wife, Michal, and given her to someone else.

What did Abigail say? She answered, "Let me be your servant, to wash the other servants' feet." How blessed to be so truly humble.



Bible Quiz

Birds

Dear Boys and Girls,

David experienced much in his life. Sometimes he referred to types of birds when he described things that happened or how he was feeling. When God comforted Him and filled him with new life and joy, he felt as though he had the strength of youth in his heart. He described this in Psalm 103 as his youth being renewed like an eagle. An eagle soars high in the sky; have you ever seen it? It has a bold, piercing eye and fearless, tireless flight. David felt like that when the Lord comforted him.

However, other times also came in the life of David. At another time, he compared himself not with the strong eagle but with a lonely pelican, who is all by himself in the wilderness, and an owl alone in the desert. Owls sometimes inhabit deserted ruins or

abandoned buildings. They live a lonely life. David was in sorrow, afflicted by enemies. He was without friends and withdrew himself, reflecting on his grief. He was very sad.

He also called himself a sparrow. He spoke of a sparrow, sitting alone on the edge of a roof—"a sparrow alone upon the house top"—have you seen them, flitting in and out from under the shingles? Their little heads turn this way and that, always aware, always alert. David described himself as watching, just like a sparrow, instead of sleeping; he was watching for trouble, because his enemies were seeking his life. He had no rest.

When Saul was hunting for him, he compared himself to a partridge on the mountains. Imagine the

partridge, its beak wide open with exertion, running, under and through the shrubbery, down a hill and up another, ever fleeing the pursuing hunter. How exhausted it must be! That was how David felt.

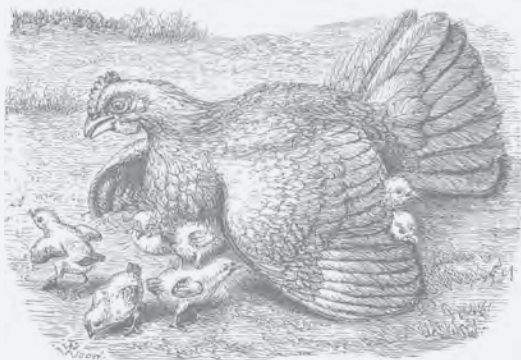
In Psalm 55, David wished he had wings like a dove. A dove flies low and takes shelter as soon as it can. David wanted to escape from “the windy storm and tempest”—the tumult and danger which he was in. He wanted to fly to silence and rest. Rest, where would he find it? The final escape would be when death would come; until then, there would only be moments of rest when he would have peace and sweet enjoyment in God. How he longed for this!

In Psalm 11, others tell David to flee as a bird to the mountain. David had been resting and trusting in the Lord, but others urge him to flee. This became as a temptation to David, to cause him to lose his trust in the Lord: “In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” Why should I take my life in my own hands, and fear the arrows of the fowler, the weapons of the enemy?

When David was far away from God’s house and could not go there, he became jealous of the little sparrows and swallows. Those birds could fly in and out through the openings of the temple so freely; they could even make their nests there. How David wished he could be there, too!

What type of bird describes each one of us? Would we be a swan looking at its own reflection in the water—someone always busy with what is important to himself? Are we as a black crow ripping open the garbage bags by the road or a vulture eating dead meat—someone busy only with sin, the world, and things which cannot bring life to a soul? Or are we a pigeon pecking at the ground, only ever looking down—someone who thinks only of what is important to him here and now and not about later, when eternity comes? Perhaps we are as a woodpecker, busy all day long—someone who has no time to pray or seek the Lord.

By nature, we cannot say we are as a bird who flees to safety, safety in the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you a fleeing heart, a heart that seeks after God.



1. Read Psalm 104. Where does the stork make its house? _____

2. Read Psalm 55. Which bird does the psalmist wish he could be like? _____

3. Read Psalm 102. Which birds live in the wilderness and desert? _____

4. Read Psalm 50. When God speaks of all that He owns, what is mentioned that lives in the mountains? _____

The birds mentioned in numbers 5-16 have been mixed up. For example, in #5, “hawk” should be replaced with a bird from a different verse, and so on. Correct each verse. Then fill these words into the coded crossword on the next page.

5. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young **hawk** which cry (Psalm 147:9).

6. Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a **bird** covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold (Psalm 68:13).

7. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every **dove** after his kind: and God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:21).

8. And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of **fowls**, or of young pigeons (Leviticus 1:14);

9. There is a path which no **fowl** knoweth, and which the **crane's** eye hath not seen: (Job 28:7).

10. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered **bird** like as the sand of the sea (Psalm 78:27).

11. Our soul is escaped as a **winged fowl** out of the snare of the fowls: the snare is broken, and we are escaped (Psalm 124:7).

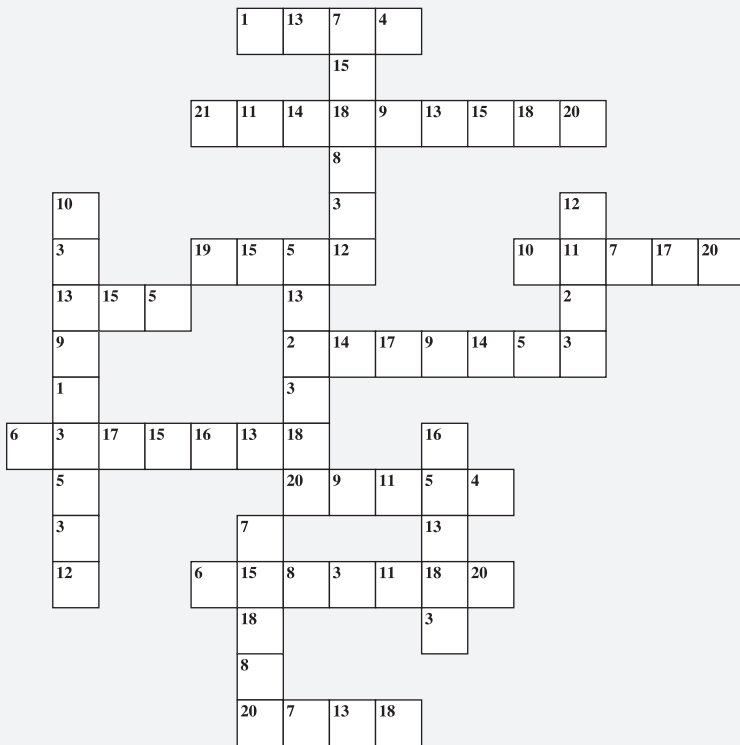
12. Behold the **great owl** of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (Matthew 6:26).

13. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the **turtledoves** came and devoured them up (Matthew 13:4).

14. Like a **vulture** or a **swallow**, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me (Isaiah 38:14).

15. And the **owl**, and the **night hawk**, and the **cuckow**, and the **swan** after his kind, (Deuteronomy 14:15).

16. The **little owl**, and the **fowls**, and the **hawk** (Deuteronomy 14:16).



Write the Letter:

1	H	2	V	3		4		5		6		7		8	G	9		10		11	
12		13		14	U	15		16		17	L	18		19		20	S	21	M		

For the Older Children

Do the math problem in each question and use the answer to your problem to choose the correct word to fill in the blank.

Sparrow = 543 Swallow = 982
Many = 390 Two = 234

17. "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the _____ (431+551) a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God."

18. "I watch, and am as a _____ (1,629/3) alone upon the house top."

19. "Are not _____ (13x18) sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

20. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than _____ (5,732-5,342) sparrows."



For the Younger Children

Do the math problem in each question and use the answer to your problem to choose the correct word to fill in the blank.

Raven = 10
Ravens = 16
Birds = 24

21. The baker and the butler had dreams in prison. The baker said: "And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the _____ (12+12) did eat them out of the basket upon my head."

22. Noah opened the window of the ark when the rain stopped and let out a bird. "And he sent forth a _____ (5+5), which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth."

23. Elijah was instructed to live by the brook Cherith during the famine. God took care of him there. "And the _____ (9+7) brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and

bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

* * * * *

Answers to April's "Insects" quiz:

1. Locust beetle grasshopper
2. Flies
3. Hornet
4. Moth
5. Lice
6. Flea
7. Bees
8. Ants
9. Ant
10. Grasshoppers
11. Locust
12. Flies
13. Hornets
14. Bees
15. Midianites, Amalekites
16. Locust
17. Locusts
18. Grasshoppers
19. Locusts
20. Amorites
21. C
22. E
23. F
24. G
25. D
26. A
27. B
28. H

Proverbs 6:6
Numbers 13:33
Deuteronomy 28:38
Ecclesiastes 10:1
Exodus 23:28
Judges 14:8
Judges 7:12
Deuteronomy 28:42
Proverbs 30:27
Nahum 3:17
Mark 1:6
Deuteronomy 1:44

Answers to previous quizzes were received in March from:

Clay Bakker (2)
Paige Bakker
Andrew Baum (2)
Jonathan Baum
Josina Baum
Julie Baum
Christina Blom (2)
GaryJon Blom
Jairus Blom
Jenina Blom (2)
Joseph Blom
Lawrence Blom (2)
Martena Blom
Martha Blom (2)
Willem Blom
Kyle Bouman (5)
Aryanna Breeweg
Andrew Breuer
Carly Brouwer (2)
Derek Brouwer (2)
Thomas Brouwer (2)
Brooklyn DeJager
Laurel DeJager
Jax DeVries
DeWilde Aidan
DeWilde Serena
Jackson Dendekker
Cody Driesen (2)
Ethan Driesen (2)
Jordan Driesse
Kailyn Driesse
Lindsey Driesse
Allison Ekema (2)

Kaylynn Ekema
Andrea Fluit
Willow Groeneweg
Josiah Greyn
Tonia Harris
Weston Hoogendoorn
Toby Hulshof
Alia Kelderman
Jada Kelderman
Anthony Knibbe (2)
Whitney Knibbe (2)
Kelsey Maassen
Abraham Mol
Madeline Mol
Teddy Mol
Zachary Mol
John Murphy
Andrew Murphy
Blake Pannekoek
Lauren Pannekoek
Kadri Post
Lincoln Rozeboom
Nevaeh Rozeboom (3)
Anna Spaans
Asher Spaans
Brogan Spaans
Joni Spaans
Isaiah Spaans (2)
Jacob Spaans
Levi Spaans
Micah Spaans (2)
Samuel Spaans (2)
Tessa Spaans (2)

Wilson Spaans (2)
Megan Taylor
Brandon Ten Hove
Hannah-Jo Ten Hove
Greysen Van Beek
Cole Vander Waal
Emmalyn Van Garderen (2)
Alana Van Manen
Evan Van Manen
Travis Van Manen
Kaiven Van Middendorp (2)
Konner Van Middendorp (2)
Asaph Van Ravenswaay
Madison Van Rhee
Brett Van Velthuisen (2)
Kenna Van Velthuisen
Alivia Vande Hoef
Micah Vande Hoef
Joelle Vande Waerdt
Sophia Vande Waerdt
Wyatt Vande Waerdt
Helen Verhoef
Shara Verhoef
Caleb Vogelaar
Matthew Vogelaar
Jayden Weeda (2)
Nathan Wesdyk (2)
Carli Ymker
Josie Ymker
Lane Ymker
Lauren Ymker

Ascension

Rev. C. Hegeman (1914-1981)

(Translated from the book *Een handvol koren* [A Handful of Corn])

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary"
(Psalm 134:2a).

After His resurrection Christ remained on earth for another forty days. He appeared to His disciples several times. Thus, the truth of His resurrection was confirmed. Now He was among the disciples, for the last time, outside Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. Christ, however, did not want to go until He had blessed His own. Luke said, "...He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." A blessing Ascension—blessing hands over the Church militant. All the benefits—which He merited and acquired through His suffering and death—He promised to His people in this blessing: reconciliation, grace, and peace. These blessing hands were pierced hands. With His own blood He became Surety for His children. What comfort!

What a benefit it will be if we, together with the poet of Psalm 134, may lift up our hands to heaven in order to be able to experientially understand the riches of the ascension of the Lord Jesus. That is free grace alone. If we have not learned to know the depth of our fall, we will not receive a blessing by Ascension. If, on the other hand, we have learned to bewail our damnable state before God, to seek refuge in the Lord Jesus' surety work and cry out with our hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, then Ascension becomes a cause of rejoicing.

Outside the right knowledge of Ascension, it will be for the unconverted a descending into hell and that eternally. The true comfort will flow to us from Ascension when we consider that Christ has accomplished all righteousness; that He, bearing His people on His mediatorial heart, ascended from this earth into heaven to bring the human nature into heaven. Also, that He may return from there to judge the quick (living) and the dead. Looking at the ascended Mediator in faith, the Church sings:

*Thou hast ascended up on high
And captive led captivity.*

—Psalter 180:8

Is that also your experience, reader?

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.**



Please send your answers to the address shown below:

Aunt LenaBeth
180 Jacobs Road, Newfoundland, NJ 07435
E-mail: auntlenabeth@gmail.com

News & Announcements

■ Ministerial Calls

Extended:

To Rev. E. Maljaars of Tarija, Bolivia, by the congregations of Chilliwack, British Columbia; Markham, Ontario; Sioux Center, Iowa; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sunnyside, Washington; Waupun, Wisconsin.

To Rev. H.A. van Zetten of Nieuw-Beijerland, the Netherlands, by the congregation of Grand Rapids–Covell Avenue, Michigan.

Declined:

By Rev. A.H. Verhoef of St. Catharines, Ontario, to the congregation of Wolphaartsdijk, the Netherlands.

■ Obituaries

BOLLE, Elizabeth Linda (nee Joosse) – Age 68, March 29, 2024; St. Catharines, Ontario; Husband – Leonard; Children – Joanne & Aaron Sterk, Chris & Gerdien; 6 grandchildren; Mother-in-law – Jane Bolle; predeceased by parents Gerrit & Jannie Joosse, father-in-law Herman Bolle, and an infant brother. (Rev. A.H. Verhoef, Psalm 6:1-5.)

BOUWHEER, Hendrika (nee Boers) – Age 93, April 2, 2024; Norwich, Ontario; Husband – Wouterus (“Tees,” deceased); Children – Maria & Gary Day, Theo & Gail, Gary & Liz; Randy & Wilma; 10 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren. (Rev. E. Hakvoort, 1 Corinthians 15:8.)

VANDER WIELE, Johanna (“Honey,” nee Dekker) – Age 88, March 18, 2024; Pompton Plains, New Jersey; Husband – John S; Children – John M. & Beverly, Jane & Robert Van Sweden, Judy & Bruce Verblaaauw; 8 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren; Siblings – Martin Jr. & Carol Dekker; predeceased by infant daughter Joanne and sister Nellie Baum. (Elder S. Mol, Isaiah 40:8.)

WALMA, Andrew (Andy) – Age 65, March 7, 2024; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wife – Sue; Children – Kimberly & Daniel Spaans, Andrew & Erin, Katie & Kevin Schoenborn, Kristen & Cleveland Reid, Michael & Amanda, Mark & Dena, Donnie & Janelle, Jolene & Lance Maassen; 16 grandchildren; Mother – Rolena; Mother-in-law – Joan Mast; Sisters – Cindy & Dan Kwekel, Julie & Myron Baanhofman; In-laws – Arnie & Donna VanVeldhuizen, Karla & Jeff Merritt, Linda & Robert Lytle, Karen & Matt Kruithoff, Dan Mast; predeceased by father Andrew, father-in-law Adrian Mast, and siblings Jackie and Donnie. (Rev. H. Hofman, Isaiah 40:6-8.)

■ Classis East and Midwest Youth Conference

August 15-18, 2024 D.V.

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

■ Grand Rapids Young Adults (Post-High School) Trip

August 15-18, 2024 D.V.

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

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on May 17, 2024, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Len & Pat DeVisser

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

“Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psalm 119:133).

10293 Jane Drive, Allendale, MI 49401

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on May 31, 2024, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Gerrit A. & Joyce Bakker

hope to commemorate their 50th wedding anniversary.

“O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 107:1).

2993 Rock River Bluff Rd., Rock Valley, IA 51247

60th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord, in His merciful goodness, has richly blessed our dear parents and (great) grandparents,

John & Catharina Lagemaat
(nee Neels)

with their 60th wedding anniversary on April 10, 2024.

“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4).

#9-46485 Airport Road
Chilliwack, BC V2P 7Y1

65th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, our dear parents and grandparents,

Henry & Arlene Hoefakker

hope to commemorate their 65th wedding anniversary on May 6, 2024.

“Praise ye the LORD.

O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 106:1).

122 Fisk Street, Sumas, WA 98295

75th Wedding Anniversary

The Lord willing, on June 3, 2024, our dear parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

Jay & Emily Lugthart
(nee VanderMale)

hope to commemorate their 75th wedding anniversary.

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 136:1).

May the Lord remember them and bless them.

725 Baldwin St., Room 266,
Jenison, MI 49428

I was never fit to say a word to a sinner except when I had a broken heart myself.

—Edward Payson

Minutes of Classis Midwest 2024 Meeting (Summary)

On the evening of March 19, Rev. J.J. Witvoet of Rock Valley led the prayer service at the calling church of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, for the Classis meeting to be held the following day. The service was opened with singing Psalter 228:2&3, reading 1 Kings 17:1-7, and with prayer. The text was from 1 Kings 17:1-6. Theme: The Lord's Word and Way by His Servant Elijah. Points: 1) A Solemn Declaration; 2) A Blessed Instruction; 3) A Gracious Preservation.

Article 1—Opening

The Classis Meeting convened on Wednesday, March 20, at 8:30 A.M. in the Sheboygan, Wisconsin church. On behalf of the calling church of Sheboygan, Rev. Witvoet opened the meeting with the singing of Psalter 112:1-3 and the reading of John 18:1-14. He then presented the special memories since our last meeting (discussed below) and opened with prayer for our meeting today. A warm welcome was extended to all delegates and all those present.

The special memories since our last spring meeting are as follows:

- On September 24, 2023, Elder J. Witvoet, Sr., laid down his office. He had served the church in Lansing (South Holland) for many years before they were organized and as clerk since they were organized in 2012. He served as deacon for two years and as elder for almost nine years.
- Many other birthdays and anniversaries of Classis Midwest consistory members were also mentioned.

Rev. Witvoet then opened with a few thoughts regarding John 18:11b; "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" John goes from the High Priestly prayer in John 17 immediately to the Garden of Gethsemane. There we find Jesus going with His disciples. He went further into the garden with three of His disciples, but they slept. Here we see how man is averse to that suffering. Then Judas with a band of men and officers came to take Jesus, and we see how He goes so willingly, even with that knowledge of what must take place. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" It is the cup filled with the unmitigated wrath of God. Who can fathom the depth of that cup? Christ came under the full wrath of God to pay the price of sin for His people. He drank of it to the very dregs to empty it so that the way may be opened for sinners to be reconciled with God. That is the message His servants may bring in this season. Have we received a glimpse of it personally? May the Lord go with us in the furtherance of this season and into the unknown future in each of our offices. Amen.

Article 2 & 3—Credentials & Moderamen

Credentials from ten congregations were examined; twenty delegates were approved. Deacon voting rights were approved. The following officers were selected to serve at the meeting:

- President* – Rev. J. Slingerland (by rotation)
- Vice President* – Rev. H. Hofman (by rotation)
- Clerk* – Elder L. Teunissen (by appointment)
- Treasurer* – Elder R. Teunissen (by appointment)

Article 4 & 5—Minutes and Correspondence

The minutes of our last meeting held in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on March 28, 2023, were approved and signed. Correspondence sent and received was reviewed, and action was taken as appropriate.

Article 6—Committee Reports

A verbal report was given by Rev. Hofman on behalf of the Classis Midwest Youth Committee. He reported that Classis Midwest Youth Day was planned for August 16 and 17, 2024, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He also mentioned that every other year Classis Midwest holds a youth day in conjunction with Classis East, alternating location in each Classis. This results in some years that a youth day would not be held in Classis Midwest. This was discussed; it was agreed that we try to work out an arrangement to hold a youth day in Classis Midwest each year. We also discussed that consider adding a member or two to our committee. It was requested that our committee bring their recommendation to our next meeting. Rev. Hofman will communicate our conclusions to the other committee members.

Article 8—Classis Points

Grand Rapids-Beckwith: Is it necessary or even prudent that every consistory member be sent a copy of the Synod minutes and all accompanying reports at the conclusion of a Synod meeting? Would it not be better, in the interests of confidentiality (as well as a substantial saving of costs for printing and mailing) that these only be sent to Synod delegates with perhaps one copy for each consistory for their records? This point was discussed, and it was agreed to forward this point to Synod with some of the thoughts which were expressed in our discussion. Following are some thoughts which were expressed:

- Article 36, 1(c) requires minor assemblies (consistories) to implement the lawful decisions of the major assemblies. This requires communication. The brief summary of Synod decisions and minutes published in *The Banner of Truth* is too limited for proper implementation. Also, an adequate number of copies is needed so a consistory can educate themselves on the decision requirements in a timely way.

Sioux Falls: 1. Request Classis Midwest to call the churches of the Classis to a day of prayer and fasting for the lack of pastors, seminary students, and seminary teachers. It was agreed that all of our consistories would put a notice in their bulletin the week prior to the meeting of the Curatorium, calling upon our members to lay this need before the Lord in prayer.

2. Request the Classis to forward the point to Synod, asking them to reconsider the ruling that all deposed ministers' written material shall not be used in public teaching in the churches and request this decision to be made on a case-by-case basis. That each case be considered individually, whether it is warranted or not, to banish all written material especially when it is a non-doctrinal reason for being deposed. It was agreed, at this time, that it would be more prudent to discuss this point at a later time, possibly at a future meeting.

Article 9—Church Visitation

Church Visitation had been conducted for all congregations prior to our meeting of March 28, 2023, held in Kalamazoo. It will be necessary to develop a schedule for visitations to be done prior to our next spring meeting. Assignments were made for the lead minister for each of the church visitations to be held prior to our next spring meeting.

Article 14—Next Classis Meeting

If a fall Classis meeting is required, it will be scheduled for October 9, 2024. The next spring Classis Midwest meeting will be scheduled for March 26, 2025. The calling church for our next Classis Midwest meeting is the congregation of Sioux Center, Iowa. The ministers who will conduct the labors at the next Classis Midwest meeting will be as follows:

- Rev. H. Hofman, *President*
- Rev. J.J. Witvoet, *Vice President*
- Classis Prayer Service: Rev. J. Slingerland
- Office Bearers Conference (Spring only): Rev. J.J. Witvoet

Article 15—Closing

President's closing remarks: Rev. J. Slingerland thanked all the delegates for an orderly meeting. He wished that the Lord might bless each of our labors in the different congregations. May He pour out His Spirit yet in the midst of us.

Vice President's closing remarks: Rev. H. Hofman thanked the president for all labors during our meeting and thanked the delegates for an orderly meeting. He reminded each of the delegates that we have much to be thankful for when we may experience unity in our midst. No harsh words were spoken. He reminded us also that we have much work to do in our inner chamber for the welfare of our congregations. He thanked the Sheboygan consistory for organizing the meeting and thanked the ladies for their hospitality and delicious meal. He wished each safe travels. May the Lord go with us. He requested that we sing Psalter 348:4&6 and closed our meeting with prayer.

All the Lord willing,

Rev. J. Slingerland, *President*

Elder L. Teunissen, *Clerk*

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

■ Administrators Needed

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

NETHERLANDS REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, POMPTON PLAINS, NEW JERSEY. The school administrator will strive to direct the school according to the Word of God, the Three Forms of Unity, the Constitution of the Netherlands Reformed Christian School, the policies of the NRC School Board, and the regulations of the New Jersey Department of Education. The primary duty of the administrator is to maintain productive relations with the school board, students, faculty and staff, parents and community.

Relocation expenses and financial incentives will be discussed upon inquiry. For more information or to apply, please contact Tom Van Vugt (education chairman) at 973-703-1511 or email tomv@plainviewgrowers.com, or John Van Der Brink (administrator) at 973-628-7400 or email nrcs_office@nrcsnj.org

■ Teachers Needed

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, COAL-HURST, ALBERTA, invites applications from elementary or secondary teachers for the 2024-25 school year, D.V. Applicants must be members of the NRC or a closely-related denomination and eligible for Alberta certification. Any inquiries should be directed to the principal, Mr. Marc Slingerland, at 403-381-3030 or marc.slingerland@ccschool.ca. Should the Lord incline your heart to apply, please submit a cover letter and resumé with references to office@ccschool.ca

EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, is inviting applications to fill full-time *educational assistant* position to work with a special needs student, beginning September 2024, D.V. 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. A. Vrugteveen, at principal@ecschool.ca or call 905-563-3077.

Please send applications to the secretary of the school board, Mr. G. Brouwer, 1385 Third Ave., St. Catharines, Ontario, L2R 6P9. Email: gerry@ecschool.ca

EBENEZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN, is in urgent need of a teacher for the 2024-25 school year. We have a very small, multigrade classroom school. Certification is not required for this position although it would be helpful. Currently, the school board acts as principal with further oversight by the consistory. May this position and our need be bound upon someone's heart to come over and help us. For any questions regarding this position and all interested applicants, please contact Randal Teunissen at 920-828-0225 or e-mail rdteunissen@yahoo.com

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

NERIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, is looking for an educational assistant for the 2024-25 school year, assisting in a one room multigrade classroom. This unique position is for an organized, flexible team player, willing to learn and able to transition between grade levels, who will report directly to the current teacher/principal. The position is for two days per week, subject to increase in future years pending student enrollment. Applicants must be a member of the Netherlands Reformed congregations or a closely related denomination. For more information or to apply (before the end of April 2024), contact the principal, Darlene Dekker, at darlene.dekker@neriahcs.ca or school board president, Mr. Daniel Visser, at 403-554-1097 or email visser.daniel@outlook.com

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

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

OBADIAH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, GIROUX, MANITOBA, is looking for help with educating our middle and secondary students for the 2024-2025 school year. If you are interested in this position, please reach out to Jonathan Barten for details at 204-408-4006 or JBarten.OCS.Giroux@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

To All Candidates for Education Positions

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

User Name:

advertising@nrcea.education

Password: **Schooljobs!**

Characters of Christ

Go, worship at Emmanuel's feet;
See in His face what wonders meet!
Earth is too narrow to express
His worth, His glory, or His grace.

The whole Creation can afford
But some faint shadows of my Lord;
Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.

Is He compared to wine or bread?
Dear Lord, our souls would thus be fed;
That flesh, that dying blood of Thine,
Is bread of life, is heavenly wine.

Is He a tree? The world receives
Salvation from His healing leaves;
That righteous branch, that fruitful bough,
Is David's root and offspring, too.

Is He a rose? Not Sharon yields
Such fragrantcy in all her fields;
Or if the lily He assume,
The valleys bless the rich perfume.

Is He a vine? His heavenly root
Supplies the boughs with life and fruit;
Oh, let a lasting union join
My soul the branch to Christ the vine!

Is He a fountain? There I bathe,
And heal the plague of sin and death;
These waters all my soul renew,
And cleanse my spotted garments, too.

Is He a fire? He'll purge my dross;
But the true gold sustains no loss;
Like a refiner shall He sit,
And tread the refuse with His feet.

Is He a star? He breaks the night,
Piercing the shades with dawning light;
I know His glories from afar,
I know the Bright, the Morning Star.

Is He a sun? His beams are grace,
His course is joy and righteousness;
Nations rejoice when He appears
To chase their clouds and dry their tears.

Oh, let me climb those higher skies,
Where storms and darkness never rise!
There He displays His power abroad,
And shines and reigns the incarnate God.

Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, His full resemblance bears;
His beauties we can never trace,
Till we behold Him face to face.

—Isaac Watts