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Lead me to the rock

Rev. Michael DeVries

Vocation, or, Does God call you to be a teacher or a minister?

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Upon this rock Vision of Ezekiel (1)

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Meditation

Rev. Michael DeVries, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan

Lead me to the rock

“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

Psalm 61:2

As we wend our way through this vale of tears, there are many times when we feel overwhelmed. The stress, the grief, the pain—it is all too much! There are moments when it seems as if our whole world is collapsing around us. At such times we are mindful of our weakness and our helplessness. And we may struggle against bitterness, rebellion, even total despair. Through all of this we seek something solid, something steadfast upon which to stand, something to keep us from being totally overcome and destroyed.

And by grace, repeatedly and continually we find Jehovah God to be that refuge, that solid rock. We experience again and again that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1). We confess with David in Psalm 62, “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.”

The Word of God before us paints a very vivid picture of our desperation in the midst of the calamities of life. It pictures a mighty and terrible enemy in hot pursuit of a weak and defenseless victim. The pursuit has been long and hard, and the enemy is swiftly closing in for the kill. The enemy is relentless, and his object is nothing less than the total ruin and destruction of his prey. It appears to be a hopeless situation. There is no avenue of escape. To try to combat such an enemy is foolishness. One can only flee, and yet, at any moment, the pursuing enemy may reach him with a final bound and, like a ferocious lion, tear him apart and devour him. Panic, dread, and fear fill his soul.

Then, suddenly, there arises before him a mighty tower of rock. Standing upon that rock he would be safe; he would have a sure refuge; he would have peace of mind and soul. But the face of the cliff is sheer and impassable. The rock is too high! It still seems to be an impossible situation. All he can do is cry out! And

that is what he does, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!”

Perhaps this scene seems like a horrible nightmare. But it is at times the reality of our lives as God’s children. Many of life’s circumstances can fit this frightening picture: affliction, injury, disease, adversity, sorrow, persecution, death. But we can see ourselves in this picture especially when we are confronted with the dreadful reality of our sin and guilt.

What can we do, confronted as we are, with these awful realities. We cannot escape. There is no relief. The only answer is to cry unto God as the psalmist did! “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed.” Make no mistake—that is all that we can do. There is nowhere else to turn. There is no other alternative. As God’s children, this must be our prayer when our hearts are overwhelmed. Let us cry out, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!” And may we experience the everlasting arms of our God lifting us up and setting our feet upon the rock.

An urgent cry

When King David wrote these words, as inspired by the Spirit, he did so on the basis of his own experiences. He likely wrote this concerning the crisis in his own life, when he was forced from the throne upon which God had placed him. Very rapidly he had to flee the royal city, scarcely able to gather a few faithful men and a little food. His son, Absalom, had stolen the hearts of the people and his throne. David was banished from Jerusalem and from the tabernacle of Jehovah. Now he flees, seeking some place of safety, a refuge, some solution to his hopeless situation.

Humanly speaking, it was a no-win situation. If David’s small force under Joab was defeated, David would remain in exile. He likely would be pursued and killed. And, on the other hand, if Joab would defeat Absalom, it would mean the death of his son. The soul of the king was dark with forebodings. His mind was heavily burdened with fear and distress. There was no way

out! There was no avoiding the harsh realities. Behind he saw a pursuing enemy. Ahead was the steep, cold face of an impassible tower of stone. That is the same helpless, hopeless feeling we sometimes have. We can but cry with David, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!”

What is this rock? Who is this rock that is too high for us? Scripture says in I Samuel 2:2, “There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God.” We read in Deuteronomy 32:4 regarding Jehovah, “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Scripture testifies in Psalm 18:2, “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” There can be no doubt that Jehovah God is this Rock!

The idea expressed in this concept, that God is the Rock, is very powerful and very comforting. It portrays our God as being almighty, immovable, steadfast, and sure. No matter the strength of the enemy or the frequency of his attacks, Jehovah stands as the solid Rock, a sure Refuge. This implies that in Him safety, security, peace, and relief from distress are to be found. To stand on Him is to possess the same glorious characteristics. Then, when enemies strong and terrible arise, when the power of sin and death would overwhelm us, when affliction and sorrow would cast us down, we are safe and secure. By faith we stand upon our Refuge, the Rock of our salvation.

But the psalmist cries, “Lead me to the rock!” The idea portrayed is that he cannot ascend the rock himself. Of himself he is unable to climb to its top and enjoy the safety and security its heights provide. He is too weak; he has no strength. But even more, the rock itself is too high for him!

Perhaps you ask, “How is it that God is too high for David and for us?” Do you not know? Do we not grasp this from our knowledge of ourselves and of our God? When we look at ourselves and then behold our righteous and holy God, it becomes obvious why we cannot climb the Rock ourselves, why we cannot unite ourselves to Him. God is perfect; He is holy and just! He is the over-flowing fount of all good! He is light and in Him is no darkness at all! Nothing of sin and corruption can stand in His holy presence, much less, be united to Him.

And we, what are we? We are but miserable sinners! The enemy of sin has beset us from the moment of our conception. The devil and his hosts relentlessly attack us. We see our sin and guilt, and we behold the blinding

holiness of the glorious God of heaven and earth. Our unavoidable conclusion: the Rock is too high for us!

Besides, do not our sufferings, our miseries, and our sorrows teach us that the Rock is too high for us? We experience the turmoil of our minds and souls in the midst of our distress. We are so inclined to ask, “Why?” We struggle to stifle that questioning of the Lord’s ways, the spirit of rebellion that raises its ugly head. In our weakness we ask with the psalmist Asaph, “Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” (Ps. 77:9). But in that way we can find no rest for our souls. In the way of complaint and rebellion we find no peace, no relief, no comfort. The Rock is too high for us!

A sure refuge

Yet, in the midst of all his troubles and distress, David knows that God is his only help. The preceding verse beseeches the Lord, “Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.” And he continues, “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee....” With David we must see that the Rock is our only help and hope. And that becomes clear when we understand to whom the psalmist is speaking when he makes this request to be led to the rock.

He is speaking to the Rock itself! Salvation, deliverance, help, and strength come from the Rock! And the Rock Jehovah God has revealed Himself in is His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is Himself the Rock, the precious cornerstone of the church. Believing that, we know that on top of the Rock is the cross. There is redemption, full and free, the forgiveness of all our sins, deliverance from the power of sin and death. There is comfort, true comfort, our *only* comfort in life and death—that we belong unto our faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

It is all of grace that we behold Christ, our Rock, and deem Him precious. For many He is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. According to God’s sovereign determination, the disobedient stumble at the word of Christ crucified. It is of God’s sovereign, irresistible grace that we believe on Him and that He is precious to us.

But the psalmist declares that his heart is overwhelmed. And so it is for us at times—overwhelmed! We are yet so weak, so helpless and the rock is so high. The battle of faith saps our strength. We are left trembling, helpless, drained. The way before us appears long, dark, and frightening. But faith is the victory that overcomes the world and all our enemies. In faith, which is itself the gift of God (Eph. 2:8), we breathe the prayer, “Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!” and

that plea is the beginning of victory. For though faith makes us mindful of our own weakness, it holds before us the Rock, the Rock who is our strength, yea, the God of our salvation. We behold the Rock; we look unto Him for our help. We hear Him speak; “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (II Cor. 12:9).

So we are set upon the Rock, lifted up, rescued by the grace of our God. A blessed calm settles in upon our souls. We rest in the Lord. We are assured once again that God causes all things to work together for good unto His people. Our trust is fixed in God, the God of our salvation, the God who does all things well.

We are enabled to continue our pilgrim journey. We know we shall continue to be assailed by the enemy. We realize that we cannot ignore the harsh realities of life.

But we go forward knowing “Jesus is a Rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm.” He has always been and always will be a safe Refuge to all who flee to Him for shelter. And He is the *only* Refuge: “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”

Let us rejoice in the God of our salvation! In His faithfulness He reaches out His almighty arm to draw us out of danger and distress, to lift us up, to set our feet upon the solid Rock, Christ Jesus. May we go forward with this song in our souls:

“When troubles overwhelm my heart,
Then Thou wilt hear my cry,
For safety lead me to the Rock
That higher is than I.” (Psalter #160, stanza 2)



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Vocation, or, Does God call you to be a teacher or a minister?

Previous article in this series: April 1, 2018, p. 293.

Every believer has a God-determined calling in this life. Few passages in Scripture emphasize it as strikingly as the psalmist’s confession of God’s sovereignty over his life in Psalm 139. While he was yet “in [his] mother’s womb...[his] substance was not hid from” God, which is to say, God knew his unformed substance (vv. 13, 15). Indeed, adds the psalmist, “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (16). God forms the believer in the womb for membership in the glorious body of Jesus Christ. Each believer is fashioned to fill a particular place and perform a specific function in the church. With that purpose in view, God determines the various gifts, personality, and life-experiences that shape each person for that place in the church. Included in God’s plan is the believer’s vocation. In addition, the Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts “to every man to profit withal” (I Cor. 12:7).

As we have pointed out previously, some vocations enable a believer to serve God more directly than other vocations, through a direct service to the church. Two

vocations that stand out are the Christian school teacher and the minister of the Word. Through these two vocations God blesses His church now, and for the future. For that reason, before any other vocation is considered the youth of the church must ask: Does God call me to teach in a Christian school? Does God call me to preach the gospel?

In this last segment on vocation we face the question, How do you determine whether or not God calls you to one of these vocation? As we have indicated in the previous articles, if God calls you to a particular work, He furnishes the necessary qualifications. For what qualifications ought one to search, then? The calling of teacher and preacher are in many ways so similar that one can speak of the qualifications of both simultaneously. And this we will do, setting forth four spiritual qualifications first, and then three natural abilities that one ought to possess for either calling.

As regards the requisite *spiritual* qualifications, they are not unique to teachers and ministers. Just as the qualifications for elders and deacons in I Timothy 3 should be found in all believers, so these that we set

forth will be, ought to be, in every believer. Yet these qualities must be clearly manifest in those who pursue either of these vocations.

First and foremost, all those considering the calling of either teacher or minister must love God. Love for God produces a desire to give themselves to the praise and glory of God, which in turn is manifested in a life of grateful obedience. Loving God, they must recognize in themselves a love for God's truth, and hence for the source of truth, the Bible. In addition, since the call is not general but specific as to the content of the teaching/preaching, they do not merely say, "We want to be teachers." Rather, they are convicted that God calls them to teach in harmony with the truth as God gave it to the Protestant Reformed Churches. Likewise, the call to the ministry. Therefore, we say that without a zeal for God, His cause, and His truth, no one ought to pursue these vocations.

Second, prospective teachers and preachers must find in themselves a genuine love for God's people, particularly the youth. This brotherly love enjoined on all Christians truly desires the good of God's people, and truly desires to help them as one is able. Do you have this yearning to give your time, abilities, and heart—to give yourself—for the good of sinful saints? Then, perhaps, you have the call to be a teacher or a minister.

Closely related, since both teaching and ministry are positions of service, the desire to serve must also be part of your spiritual makeup. Self-promotion has no place in these vocations. The proud must stay far away. Despite what you might imagine, God does not need you, no matter how gifted you may be. Ultimately, under God's judgment, the proud will fail, for God's people cannot abide such pride, and God will not tolerate it. A desire to serve, coupled with humility and meekness, these are the spiritual virtues found in godly, effective, beloved teachers and ministers.

A fourth spiritual trait that must be manifested in prospective teachers and preachers is godliness. This is the life of daily conversion described so well by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 33. It is the mortification of the old man, manifested in "a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them." It is the quickening of the new man, evident in "a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all

good works." Is perfection required? Obviously not. Yet fellow believers must see the work of the Spirit, the Holy, sanctifying Spirit, in the lives of those who will be teachers and ministers. Without this, the instruction of the teacher and the preaching of the minister will be undermined, for the walk will contradict the instruction, making it hypocritical and of no effect.

If then, upon examination, and with help of others, you behold these gifts of God in you—love for God and for His people, a desire to serve, and the life of sanctification, God may well be calling you to be a Christian school teacher or a minister of the Word.

Yet more is needed. God also bestows specific *natural* gifts to equip certain saints for teaching and for preaching. The most obvious prerequisite is the ability to teach. This mysterious gift from

God equips one to convey knowledge in an understandable and interesting way—the teacher doing this in the light of Scripture, and the preacher teaching the truth of Scripture itself. Capable instruction also demands interpretation of the information—the teacher in the light of the Bible, and the preacher interpreting the Bible itself. And, effective teaching applies the truth to the lives of God's people. Young people, examine yourselves and consult wise believers to determine whether God has given you these gifts to teach.

Second, as to natural gifts, both teachers and ministers need leadership qualities. To be effective in these vocations, you must have a certain level of self-confidence to stand before others and deliver your message with some authority. This is a difficult quality to assess, but again, you can be greatly helped by the judgment of others.

Third, both vocations demand the desire and ability to study. Do you like to read and study? Much study is required of both teacher and minister. They unceasingly pour out of themselves and their knowledge, and therefore, they need continual replenishment. Without serious, continual study, they become stale, for there is no development. Teachers and ministers who fail to apply themselves to their studies become a burden to the school and the church, respectively. Do you enjoy learning, even delight in gaining knowledge through study? Then you may well be called by God to one of these vocations.

These are some of the basic qualifications for which our youth must search themselves. They will not have

If then, upon examination, and with help of others, you behold these gifts of God in you—love for God and for His people, a desire to serve, and the life of sanctification, God may well be calling you to be a Christian school teacher or a minister of the Word.

all the qualifications at the same level as an experienced teacher or minister. Training is required, and then experience through working in their vocation. Those who seek such vocations should try a stint of teaching in some capacity, and in this way have opportunity both to evaluate themselves and seek the judgment of others. If you begin to see these God-given spiritual and natural gifts, talk to teachers; talk to ministers. They can help you in your struggle to know God's will for your life.

Yet there is another element that is often a guide to knowing God's will as to our calling, namely, availability. In Christian schools and in churches, this is rather referred to as "need." In Protestant Reformed schools and churches the need is pressing. Let's start with the schools. Months ago, the weekly bulletins in Protestant Reformed churches started carrying notices of open positions in Protestant Reformed schools—already eleven positions in January. As of this writing, schools are seeking teachers to fill *sixteen* positions! From a brand new educational effort in Edmonton, to expansions of high schools in Redlands and Randolph, to a variety of needs in established grade schools and high schools, *many* teachers are needed for the next school year.

According to the Teacher Education Development (TED) committee of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Schools, this pressing need will continue for the foreseeable future. A significant (happy) reason for this is that the schools are growing. Besides, schools will always have a certain turnover of teachers—women called to the new and high calling of being wives and mothers; men who, for various reasons, decide they are not called to teach, and seek another vocation; retirements. There is much reason for concern.

Our schools need teachers. This makes the consideration of the calling more pressing.

As regards ministers, looking to the next few years, we can be specific. In the upcoming school year, no students from the PRC will enter the seminary. After the class of 2019 graduates (with two graduates, D.V.) there will be no graduates *from the PRC* for three years—in 2020, 2021, and 2022, though, we trust, there will be graduates from a sister church. Not until 2023, then, is there the *possibility* of a PRC graduate. At the same time, we hope a minister will soon accept the call to assist Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Sin-

gapore, and in 2019 a replacement for Prof. Cammenga will be called, opening churches for the aforementioned two graduates of that year (2019). By 2023, it is quite likely that six other ministers will have retired and Prof. Gritter's replacement called. That means there could well be seven vacancies by the year 2023. In five years the need for ministers will be tremendous. That means the need for seminary students is urgent now!

Over the years, the Lord has blessed the Protestant Reformed schools and churches with a steady supply of teachers and ministers. Through these dedicated servants God has instructed, built up, and admonished the Protestant Reformed Churches in their generations. What a blessing! Will this continue?

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that "God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them" (A. 116). Since teachers and ministers are gifts of God through whom God imparts so great blessings, one may rightly paraphrase that answer, "God will give His gifts of teachers and ministers to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them."

It is obvious, then, what our response to this need must be, first and foremost—prayer! Let us steadfastly beseech the Lord to provide laborers for the Christian schools and the churches. But also, let us be encouraging our youth, from childhood on, to consider *first* whether God calls them to these vocations.

And to the youth reading this, perhaps because your parents love the Protestant Reformed schools and churches, and therefore placed it in your hands to read, I exhort you seriously to consider these pressing needs. Pray diligently that God will make known to you His will, and where He calls you to work. When seeking his vocation, a spiritually minded person's interest is neither money nor prestige. Rather, his concern is how *God* evaluates his life and work. Therefore, he asks, "To what life and work does God call me?"

It is obvious, then, what our response to this need must be, first and foremost—prayer! Let us steadfastly beseech the Lord to provide laborers for the Christian schools and the churches. But also, let us be encouraging our youth, from childhood on, to consider first whether God calls them to these vocations.



Search the Scriptures

Mr. Don Doezeema, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

Upon this rock (31) Vision of Ezekiel (1)

Previous article in this series: June 2017, p. 395.

The previous article in “Upon This Rock” was the twenty-second in a kind of series-within-a series entitled “Robbing Christ of His Honor.” Those articles, as you might recall, were dealing with the fascinating subject of typology, inspired in large part by articles of Rev. George Ophoff reflecting on it long ago in the *SB*. Much to my regret, my writing on it was interrupted. Lord willing, I will be able to return later to that aborted mini-series, but, for now, the best I can do is (using material I have already written) pick up where I left off in my recounting briefly the last days of the nations of Israel and Judah. I was doing that from the perspective mainly of the prophets, and, even more specifically, with a view to the dawning of the ‘day’—for it is out of the scattering of the people of Israel and the ruins of the house of David that there comes the glorious kingdom of David’s greater Son.

I started the series with five articles on the end of the nation of Israel (the ten tribes). Think Jonah, Hosea, Amos, even Balaam. The Jews of the northern kingdom were ultimately scattered among the nations, never, as a people, to return. Then there were three articles concerning Israel’s “treacherous sister” (Jer. 3:6-8), Judah, mainly again from the perspective of the prophets. Remember the testimony of Jeremiah: “And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah” (3:11). That is, backsliding Israel was not so bad as, was more righteous than, her sister Judah. More righteous also, according to the prophet Ezekiel, was *Sodom* (Ezek. 16:52). Hard to believe, but, of the three (Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem), Jerusalem was declared by God Himself to be the worst of the lot (Ezek. 16:46-52). “Son of man,” said the Lord to Ezekiel, “cause Jerusalem to know her abominations” (v. 1). “As I live [an *oath*, for confirmation of a declaration so incredible], saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters [the four smaller cities nearby that were, with her, destroyed by fire from heaven for their *physical* whoredoms], as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters [all the other, lesser cities of Judah].... Neither hath Samaria [lately

destroyed for her *spiritual* whoredoms] committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they.... They are more righteous than thou.”

Sodom and Samaria more righteous than Judah!? Can that really be true? Had not Judah at this point in her history remained loyal to the house of David for more than 300 years? And had she not maintained during all those years the worship of God in the house that He had chosen to put His name there? Does all of that count for nothing? The vast majority of Jews would have simply dismissed the words of Ezekiel as the deluded rantings of a fanatic. As they did also the words of Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel. They chose, rather, to believe the lying words of false prophets, who declared: “The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these” (Jer. 7:4).

Such, we have seen, was the folly of apostate Jewry. “Behold,” God said through Jeremiah His prophet, “ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and [then] come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. 7:8, 9). That was indeed their thinking. Does Jeremiah threaten them with the judgment of God? Not to worry. They have nothing to fear. For they had dutifully offered their sacrifices. As if God were not a searcher of *hearts*. Jehovah, like the idols of their vain imagination, can be pacified, so they thought, by sacrifice and offerings.

“Therefore pray not thou for this people,” the Lord told Jeremiah, “neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee” (Jer. 7:16).

Hardly could more terrifying words have been uttered against the nation of Judah. For they can only mean that the Lord judged the people of Judah to be “past remedy” (Calvin).

“Seest thou not,” the Lord asks His prophet, “what

they do *in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem*? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour drink offerings to other gods” (7:17-18). Idolatry. And not something practiced *covertly*, in *secret*, in an attempt to hide from the eyes of others what is an abomination in the eyes of God. No. It is right out in the open, in the *streets* of Jerusalem—in open defiance of God’s command that they *not* serve the idol gods of the heathen but *Him alone*.

And not only in the *streets* of Jerusalem but also in the very *temple* itself. We ought to take special note of that—because *God* did. “The children of Judah have done evil in my sight,” the Lord said to Jeremiah. And what is it that they have done? “They have set their abominations *in the house which is called by my name*, to pollute it” (Jer. 7:30). And again, in speaking to Jeremiah of the provocations of the kings, the princes, the priests, and the prophets, along with the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jer. 32:32), the Lord drew special attention to this, that “they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it” (32:34).

And as to the prophet Jeremiah, so also to Ezekiel.

“Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast *defiled my sanctuary* with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity” (Ezek. 5:11).

The record of that defilement of the temple of God in Jerusalem can be found in the *historical* books of Kings and Chronicles. The *prophets*, however, provide details that may sometimes be overlooked. A single chapter in Ezekiel, for example, can be an eye-opener with respect to the degree to which the pre-exilic Jews were *addicted* to idolatry. A look at chapter 8 might be worth our while in this study.

Ezekiel was already in Babylon. He was among those who had been carried away captive from Jerusalem with King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) some eleven years before the city was finally leveled by the powerful armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel must have been grieved to learn that the Jews who still remained in the land of promise had profited so little from the punishments they had already endured because of their apostasy. Far from being humbled by the hand of God heavy on them, they were more and more hardened in their rebellion against God. Jeremiah saw it with his own eyes. And God, as it

were, took pains to see to it that His prophet in Babylon did too.

Worthy of notice, surely, is what Ezekiel saw at the beginning of his vision: the “appearance of fire” in verse 2 and the “hand” of verse 3. Calvin says concerning this that what Ezekiel saw in vision was “a visible figure as a symbol of God’s presence.” It is “*God’s* majesty and incomparable glory [that] is signified.” But then also this, that God “so represented himself *in the person of* his only begotten Son” (emphases added). Poole properly connects the “appearance” here with that in chapter 1, verses 26 and 27, where he identifies the “appearance of a man” as the pre-incarnate *Christ*, “who appears as King and Judge to vindicate his own honor, to punish rebels, and to give warning by his prophet ere he execute his just and severe indignation.” That’s it. For the abominations that Ezekiel is about to see in the temple were exactly this: a robbing *Christ* of His honor.

“In the visions of God” (that is, in *vision*, not in *body*) Ezekiel was lifted up and brought to Jerusalem—and not just to the *city*, but specifically to the *temple*, in order that the prophet might himself see the pollutions by which the very temple of God was being profaned (8:3). “And, behold,” the prophet says, “the glory of the God of Israel was there”

(8:4)—a visible representation thereof, in order, again, that what the prophet views immediately thereafter might be seen, by contrast, as a *rejection of Jehovah God* and of His covenant with Israel.

Evidently Ezekiel was, in vision, placed by the hand of God (of *Christ*) in the inner court of the temple, at the gate that led directly to the great altar of burnt offering. Looking, then, “toward the north” (8:5), as instructed by the Lord, he saw at the gate an *image*. An *idol*. Greater sacrilege can scarcely be imagined. Yet, Zedekiah, currently king of Judah, was not the first to commit it. His great grandfather had done the same some 80 or 90 years earlier (cf. II Kings 21:7). In neither case is the idol identified. Whether it was of Baal, or Ashtaroath, or whatever—that is not important. What *is* important, the Lord points out to Ezekiel, is that it was an “image of *jealousy*” (8:5). An image, that is, that provoked the *Lord* to jealousy. One thinks immediately of the second of the Ten Commandments. “...for I the LORD thy God am a *jealous* God”—jealous, that is, of His own glory, which He will not give to, or share with, another. Therefore—no images! Nor *idols*. Indeed, the abomination that Ezekiel was made to see in vision was almost certainly a violation of the *first* command-

For the abominations that Ezekiel is about to see in the temple were exactly this: a robbing *Christ* of His honor.

ment. No *representation of Jehovah* was this, but an image of a heathen idol god. And in the *temple!* Hard by the *altar!* Its very *location*, therefore, an aggravation of this scandalous violation of God's holy law and profaning of His house. Writes Calvin:

...when they erected the idol before the altar they flew as it were in the very face of God. If an immodest woman runs after an adulterer, her husband is justly enraged; but if she brings him before her husband, and wantons with him before his eyes, and prostitutes herself to all crimes, then certainly such wanton lust cannot be endured.

And such was the sin, here, of Judah. In plain view of the altar, before the very face of God, they place the image of an idol to compete with Him for the adoration of the people in His house of worship.

"Son of man, seest thou what they *do*? Even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?" (8:6). Ah, yes, that was the point. Let no one wonder that God abandons His house, when His people flaunt their spiritual adultery before His face.

And there was more.

Bad as it was, the "image of jealousy" was hardly the extent of the profanation of worship in the temple. "Turn thee yet again," the Lord said to Ezekiel, "and thou shalt see greater abominations" (8:6). What Ezekiel had seen thus far was one idol, in a prominent place, a place purposefully chosen in order that the idol that occupied it might be seen and adored by everyone who came into the temple. What the Lord *now* reveals to the prophet is idolatry that is practiced, not openly, but "in the dark" (8:12), that is, out of sight. In fact, Ezekiel could behold this abomination only after, in the vision, digging a hole in a wall, and then discovering and walking through a secret door (8:7-9). No doubt to his astonishment Ezekiel beheld in that room a gathering of "seventy men of the ancients [that is, the elders] of the house of Israel," every one of them with "a censer in his hand," to offer incense not to one but to a multitude of gods—"every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed [painted] upon the wall round about" (8:10-11).

Again, Ezekiel sees this "in vision." It may be, therefore, that the scene that unfolded before his eyes was representative, not of what actually occurred in the temple, but, as Keil (and other commentators) believe,

"of what the elders of the people were doing secretly throughout the whole land." We are inclined, however, to agree with Calvin, that Ezekiel was being shown the corruption, the profaning, of *worship* in the very *temple* of God. His explanation is intriguing:

But he [God] says that they [the elders] did it *in darkness*, because they kept secret their sacred rites; as also there were mysteries among profane nations, which were not open to any but the initiated. Since therefore the multitude was not thought worthy of those mysteries, it is therefore probable that the place among the Jews of which the Prophet speaks was like a small chapel, which the elders, and those who had authority among the people, retained to themselves.

Not only, therefore, did the elders fail in their bounden duty to act as a *deterrent* to idolatry in Israel, they themselves took an *active part* in it. And not only did they *participate* in it, they *raised it to a higher level*.

And their rationale?

They said, "The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth" (8:12)—or, as Calvin understands it, "hath deserted the land." Two evils, perhaps, show themselves here. First, a practical de-

nial of God's omniscience. Hidden from the eyes of *men*, they imagined that *God* did not see them either. But underlying that evil was their carnal conception of Jehovah God. The God who had given them this land had apparently withdrawn His aid. How else, after all, can they explain His failure to protect them, already *twice*, from the dreadful armies of Nebuchadnezzar? Many of their brethren are already in far-off Babylon, along with the sacred vessels of the temple of God in Jerusalem. What can they do, now, but turn to another deity? Which one? Who can tell? Worship, therefore, a multitude of them. Portray them all on the walls of their 'chapel.' And then bring their censers. Honor them all.

Which they did. Every man of the seventy had his censer in his hand, filled evidently with a generous supply of incense. Which must have been costly, for the smoke of it was seen by Ezekiel to be like a "thick cloud" (8:11). The elders were in earnest. When it came to the worship of their idols, they spared no expense.

And there is yet more, and greater...next time.

And such was the sin, here, of Judah. In plain view of the altar, before the very face of God, they place the image of an idol to compete with Him for the adoration of the people in His house of worship.



Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (23) “What saith the Scripture:” The Bible’s sufficiency (2)

Previous article in this series: March 1, 2018, p. 252.

Additional proof of Scripture’s sufficiency

We ended our last article by demonstrating Scripture’s sufficiency from the two classic passages on the infallible inspiration of Scripture, II Timothy 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:19-21. Besides the support for the sufficiency of Scripture that is found in these two classic passages, there are other texts that underscore this truth concerning the Bible. One of those texts is Deuteronomy 4:2, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

This text was part of Moses’ exhortation to the children of Israel as they were about to enter the promised land. An entire generation that had been disobedient to the Word of God had perished in the wilderness. In the very next chapter, Deuteronomy 5, Israel would receive the law of God for the second time; hence, the name of the book “Deuteronomy,” which means “second [giving of the] law.” Deuteronomy 5 contains the repetition of the Ten Commandments, the moral law of God, first given to the children of Israel in Exodus 20, after they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. But before the second giving of the law, Israel must hear the sharp exhortation that she is not to add unto or take away from the word of God’s law. God’s Word is to be obeyed, without any deletions from or additions to that Word of God.

What was true for the Old Testament people of God with respect specifically to the Old Testament law, by implication applies to the entire Word of God, including the New Testament. It is all the law of God, inasmuch as it is all the revelation of His will and is all His Word. To it we are not permitted to add anything, and from it we are not permitted to take anything away.

In Proverbs 30:5, 6 we read: “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Once again, the admoni-

tion given is that we are not to add anything unto the Word of God. The idea is that we are not to change God’s Word in any way as that word comes to us in the Scriptures. Changing the Word of God would include not only adding to the Scriptures, but also taking away from them. Both adding to and taking away from God’s Word involve changing His Word, which is forbidden by this admonition. Strikingly, the ground upon which the warning rests is that “every word of God is pure.” The purity, that is, the infallibility and perfection of the Word of God is the reason on account of which the Scriptures cannot and may not be altered in any way.

That only makes sense. The need to change the Word of God could only be necessitated by one of two things. Either there is some fault in His Word, which would require that something be deleted from it. Or, there is something lacking in God’s Word, which would mean that there is a deficiency in it that must be made up. Either alternative brings into question and, ultimately, denies the purity of the Word of God. If God’s Word is pure, without any fault or error, it necessarily follows that nothing can be added unto or taken away from His Word. It is altogether sufficient in itself.

And finally, there are the closing words of the entire Bible, in Revelation 22:18 and 19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book.

What the apostle John through the Spirit says here does not only apply to the book of Revelation, as though “the prophecy of this book” refers exclusively to this

one book of the Bible. Rather, what applies to the book of Revelation as inspired, God-breathed Scripture, applies to the entire Word of God. What applies to the last book of the Bible, by clear and necessary consequence, applies to the whole Bible. It is all prophecy, that is, it is all the very Word of God. That is the nature of prophecy. The book of Revelation is the last of those books of prophecy; it closes the canon of Scripture. What applies to the book of Revelation, by extension, therefore, applies equally to the whole of Scripture. If any man adds to the words of Scripture, or takes away from the words of Scripture, the judgment of God rests on him. God will visit upon him the plagues that are written in the book of Revelation and God shall take away his part out of the book of life.

Severe warning! Awful judgment!

The sufficiency of Scripture in the Reformed creeds

In line with the teaching of Scripture regarding its sufficiency is also the testimony of our Reformed confessions. The Reformed confessions are explicit with regard to the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. The title of Article 7 of the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561) is: “The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the Only Rule of Faith.” The article begins:

We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is *sufficiently* (emphasis added, RLC) taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for anyone, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures; “nay, though it were an angel from heaven,” as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden “to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God,” it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) is in complete agreement with the Belgic Confession of Faith on the issue of Scripture’s sufficiency. In the first chapter, “Of the Holy Scripture,” at the beginning of the sixth paragraph, the Westminster divines state:

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1562/63) also contain a statement concerning the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. The title of Article 6 is, “Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scripture for Salvation.” The article begins:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

The Scots Confession (1560), written principally by John Knox, also affirms the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. In Chapter 19, the title of which is “The Authority of the Scriptures,” the confession puts in the mouth of every Scotch/Irish Presbyterian these words: “As we believe and confess the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make perfect the man of God, so do we affirm and avow their authority to be from God, and not to depend on men or angels.” Scripture is sufficient both to instruct and to make perfect the child of God.

At the time of ordination/installation into office, three questions are put to every minister of the gospel, according to the Reformed Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God’s Word. We ought to remember, at this point, that the Reformed liturgical forms are “minor confessions.” The second question in the Form of Ordination is: “Whether thou dost believe the books of the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God and the perfect doctrine unto salvation, and dost reject all doctrine repugnant thereto?” The question calls for more than merely an affirmation of the infallibility and divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, as important as that is. It also calls upon the minister to affirm the sufficiency of Holy Scripture. It does so in two respects. First, not only is Scripture referred to as the “Word of God,” but it is the “only Word of God.” Nothing can be added to it or taken away from it; Scripture is the “only” Word of God. Then, secondly, Scripture contains the “perfect doctrine unto salvation.” “Perfect” here is “complete.” Scripture contains the complete doctrine unto salvation. Everything that is necessary to know for salvation is contained in Holy Scripture. Nothing need be and nothing can be added to Scripture or subtracted from it.

The incentive to use the Scriptures

The truth of Scripture’s sufficiency puts tradition in its place, its rightful place in the church. The Reformers and the Reformed churches did not throw tradition out the window. They did not reject tradition, the valuable role of tradition, or the benefit of the traditions of the

church. The Reformers to a man had high regard for ecclesiastical tradition. And the Reformed believer today ought to have high regard for church tradition.

Of what profit for the church today are the writings of the theologians and preachers of the church of the past! Of what enduring value are not the writings of an Augustine, a Luther, a Calvin, a Bavinck, and a Hoeksema. Of what great value are the creeds and catechisms of the church of the past: the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Standards. What good does not the church today derive from the Church Order of Dordt, the liturgical forms, the Directory for Public Worship, and the Directory for Family Worship. There have been so many beneficial decisions of the church and church assemblies of the past: the Council of Nicea, the Synod of Dordt (1618-'19), and the synods of the Protestant Reformed Churches. And there is so much more that we have received from the church of the past by way of tradition. No, we must never reject tradition because it is tradition, but hold the traditions in highest regard. Nevertheless, none of the traditions may be held above the Word of God. None of them is an authority alongside the authority of the Word of God. And none of them is to be held in contradiction to the teaching of God's Word.

Scripture's sufficiency ought to be a great incentive to the believer to read and to use the Word of God. Since Scripture is the complete Word of God, the minister ought to be encouraged to preach the Scriptures. In doing so, he preaches the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). That preaching is sufficient and that preaching must make plain that the Word of God is sufficient unto salvation for every child of God. The sufficiency of Scripture ought to convince the faithful minister and elder that Scripture has the answers for the needs of the people of God—all their needs. The solution to even the most difficult pastoral situation can be found in the Holy Scriptures. This is all that we need on the mission field. We need not and we may not bring anything else in missions than the Word of God, for the Word of God answers to the needs of God's people everywhere and in every age.

The sufficiency of Scripture ought to be an incentive to read and meditate on Scripture for the benefit of our marriages and families. Everything that a husband and wife need in their marriage, everything that parents need in their calling to rear their children, every difficult problem that they face with their teenagers, has an answer. And that answer is to be found in Holy Scripture. It is to be found in Scripture because Scripture is sufficient—the Word of God in its entirety.



Believing and confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington

Remembering the Lord's day

Lord's Day 38

Question 103. What doth God require in the fourth commandment?

Answer. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal sabbath.

Secular Western culture, along with much of modern Christianity, has rejected the fourth commandment. The reasons for this rejection include 1) *evolutionism*, which

rejects the creation week; 2) *secularism*, which puts so much emphasis on human achievement and pleasure; and 3) *dispensationalism*, which misunderstands the

use of the law in the New Testament church. Because of this, the teaching of the fourth commandment is especially necessary and urgent today.

The urgency, however, is much closer to home. We may not be evolutionists, secularists, or dispensationalists, but the importance of this commandment and its requirements are still slipping from us. As the world around us, and other Christians, use this day more and more for their own pleasure, the temptation becomes stronger and the conscience less convicted with regard to the Sabbath. Technology has a way of crowding our lives and time, also on Sundays, and soon it becomes accepted to “take pleasure in” the Sabbath-desecrating activities of our age—for example, professional sporting events.

It is good for us, then, to be reminded of the reasons for maintaining the Christian Sabbath on the first day of the week, and to see the spiritual blessings of keeping Sunday as the Lord’s day, a day of rest from secular employment and pleasure, and a day consecrated to the worship of God.

Reasons to keep the Sabbath

The first reason is that God created a seven-day week. Not only did God create in six days and rest the seventh, but God created the seven-day week itself as a basic measurement of time. In the creation of that week, God ordained and set aside one day as a day of rest. God Himself rested, not because He was weary, but as a pattern for man to follow. He created a day of rest because man, physically, mentally, and spiritually, needs to rest from his labors. He created the day of rest as a day for man to find his rest in God, and to enjoy the work of God. Creation is the first reason.

The second reason is that the fourth commandment is one of the moral requirements of God’s law. There were in the Old Testament also civil and ceremonial laws, which had to do with Israel’s life as a society and with Israel’s worship with a view to the coming of Jesus Christ. Those civil and ceremonial laws were expansive and comprehensive, and the use of them passed away with the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In contrast to those laws, God established His moral law of Ten Commandments, which He wrote with His own finger on two tables of stone, to be a permanent statute for man. The Sabbath requirement is one of those ten permanent, moral requirements. As we look at the fourth commandment from a New Testament perspective, we acknowledge that there is a ceremonial aspect, namely the keeping of the seventh day as the Sabbath; but this does not mean that we dismiss the entire commandment. Exodus 20:11 says that God “blessed”—

not the seventh day—but, He “blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” The Sabbath is not necessarily Saturday, but it is this: one day of the seven, as a rest day. That God “hallowed” that day means He set it apart, the whole of it, as a day of worship and rest.

The third reason we are to keep the Sabbath day is that this is a pattern and requirement throughout Scripture. The prophets spoke to this. Isaiah 58:13-14 contrasts using the day for yourself, for your pleasure and for doing things your way, to your using it as God’s day and finding your delight in Him. And so, when Jesus comes, we see that He customarily entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day to worship God (Luke 4:16). Also, in His disputes with the Pharisees, Jesus did not speak dismissively of the Sabbath itself, but rather addressed the legalistic abuse of the Sabbath that denied mercy (Mark 3:4). So also Isaiah speaks of God’s blessing remaining on the New Testament church from one Sabbath to the next (Is. 66:23). If nothing else, this means that the New Testament church would continue to keep the Sabbath, and to measure time according to the creation week of seven days, punctuated with a day of rest and worship.

Fourth, we are to keep the Sabbath day holy, and now especially Sunday, because this was the day on which Christ not only arose, but also gathered that same day, and subsequent Sundays, with His disciples until His ascension. And so, in Acts, we find that the church had gathered on the first day of the week, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And later, in its establishment in Troas and Corinth, the church continued to gather for public worship around the word and sacrament on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). When Jesus said in Mark 2:28, “Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath,” He meant that the weekly day of rest belonged to Him, and in light of that we are to read Revelation 1:10, in which John says that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” John is saying that, on the day that belonged to the risen Lord, the first day of the week, he was worshiping God in the Spirit.

Added to this, and here is our fifth reason for keeping the Sabbath, is that historically the New Testament church has worshiped God on the first day of the week, rejecting the idea of Saturday as the Sabbath as heretical and cultic. The church’s practice throughout history is not determinative, but it is weighty. Only in the last fifty or so years has this practice, which has lasted for 2,000 years, been rejected. There is, in that rejection, a certain spiritual arrogance, in which one sets himself up above those who have preceded him, and rejects the leading of the church by the Spirit. In connection with this, we should note that the rejection of the biblical idea

of the Sabbath has quickly led the church away from the Word of God in many other areas, including the Bible's teaching on marriage, worship, work, authority, and so on.

Delighting in the Sabbath

For the believer, keeping the Sabbath day should not be viewed as a chore and a duty, but rather a joy and a blessing.

The word "sabbath" means rest. God gives us rest to enjoy all our days, but especially on, and never apart from, the Sabbath. We find this idea of "rest" throughout Scripture. God brought Israel from Egypt into Canaan, the land of rest, and when all the Canaanites were conquered, David had rest from his enemies (I Kings 5:4). This rest was not only physical, but was a picture of the rest that is ours in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4 tells us that once Joshua had given the Israelites rest in the land of Canaan, he spoke to them of another rest, yet to come, which is the spiritual rest of the heavenly Canaan. This spiritual rest comes to us through Jesus Christ, who says in Matthew 11:28,

Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Our souls need rest from the burden and toil of sin. Sin brings turmoil. The guilt of sin weighs on the mind, and one cannot rest. The power of sin dominates in one's life and there is no calm. The consequences of sin bring one into misery. For all this, Jesus is the Rest-giver.

It is in connection with this spiritual rest that God gives us the Sabbath day, with all its spiritual activities, as a day to reflect on our rest in Him, to enjoy that rest, and to look ahead to the rest that will be ours in heaven. He does this especially through the preaching of the gospel, in which He speaks peace to our souls, and through the sacraments that He ordains for the strengthening of our faith. All the activities of the Lord's day should lead us into the enjoyment of that rest.

Resting on the Lord's day does not mean we stop working, but it means that we engage in a spiritual labor in which we develop and maintain our spiritual life. Through prayer, hearing God's Word, private study of Scripture and other good Christian literature, and by fellowshiping with other believers we begin to enjoy

the eternal rest that will be ours together in heaven. What a joy to focus on such eternal realities and blessings!

With this perspective on Sunday, keeping the Sabbath should be a delight. Paul says in Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," and John states, "the commandments of God are not grievous" or burdensome (I John 5:3). If salvation and the joy of salvation in fellowship with God is ours through Sabbath keeping, then there is nothing burdensome at all about this commandment. Then we see what Jesus means when He says that "man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man" (Mark 2:27). In the

beginning when God made the Sabbath, He had in mind our delighting in the blessings of rest in Christ.

Sabbath day blessings

What wonderful blessings are ours through keeping the Sabbath! These blessings include knowing God and experiencing communion with Him, peace through the forgiveness of sins, the hope of glory, and the joy of the communion of the saints. There are blessings that come to our families as we sit together to read and discuss God's Word and to pray. There are blessings that we enjoy immediately, and there are blessings of everlasting value.

To the degree we forsake the Sabbath, we forsake also these blessings. Where one does not gather with fellow believers to hear God's Word, but instead uses the day in selfish ways, he will grow ignorant of God, and that selfishness will begin to infect his life and relationships in other ways. Not only will he deteriorate spiritually, but this will affect his family and, ultimately, the church will be affected. Church attendance will wane, the practices of Christian living will become a burden, and soon one will walk away from the Lord and will walk with the world.

In the Sabbath God is giving us something that the world can never give.

As Isaiah says, our delight in the Lord will come through delighting in the Sabbath (Is. 58:13, 14):

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.

For the believer, keeping the Sabbath day should not be viewed as a chore and a duty, but rather a joy and a blessing.

Questions for Discussion

1. What arguments do people use against keeping Sunday as the New Testament Sabbath?
2. The Jews in the Old Testament observed the Sabbath on the last day of the week; we observe the first day of the week. Why the change?
3. The fourth commandment includes a reference to the doctrine of creation (Ex. 20:11). How is keeping the Sabbath day related to the doctrine of creation?
4. What biblical indication is there that this commandment is a moral requirement also in the New Testament?
5. What, according to the Catechism, is the main requirement of this commandment?
6. Which elements of worship are mentioned in

the answer of the Catechism? Are there any other elements to add to this list?

7. How, according to the Catechism, should our keeping the Sabbath affect the rest of our Christian living?

8. In Deuteronomy 5:15, a different reason is given for keeping the Sabbath than in Exodus 20. What is the spiritual significance, for us, of the reason given in Deuteronomy 5:15? How does this teach us that our obedience is motivated by gratitude?

9. What is the spiritual rest typified in the Sabbath?

10. What delight is there for us in keeping the Sabbath? How can we teach our children to delight in the Sabbath?

11. What are some of the blessings in your life from observing the Sabbath?



God's wonderful works

Rev. James Laning, pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa

Foundational principles (11) Heavenly life only in Christ

Previous article in this series: January 1, 2018, p. 152.

What if Adam had not fallen into sin? Would he eventually have received the heavenly life that we now have in Christ?

Many maintain that he would have. Adam was called to obey during a testing period, they say. If he had remained obedient during that period, God would have granted him heavenly life, the life that we now have in Christ.

In this article, we take a look at this position. How do those who hold to it attempt to prove their position? And what does Scripture say about heavenly life and how it is obtained?

A common view

Many say that God established with Adam a covenant of works. This covenant, they say, was a binding agreement between God and Adam in which God promised Adam everlasting, heavenly life if he remained obedient for a certain period of time. Some

who hold to this view will even go so far as to say that Adam could have merited heavenly life by his obedience.

When we read the Genesis narrative, we do not read of such an agreement between God and Adam. We read of God commanding Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and warning him that if he does eat of that tree he will die on that very day. But we do not read of God asking Adam if he agrees to this. Nor do we read of Adam expressing his consent. There is also no mention of a testing period. Nor do we find a promise that, if Adam obeyed long enough, he would become unable to sin and that then death would no longer become possible for him.

A couple of arguments used to defend the idea that Adam could have obtained everlasting, heavenly life are as follows:

1. The tree of life is said to symbolize a promise of everlasting, heavenly life.

2. The fact that Christ was able to merit heavenly life for us implies that Adam also was able to do this.

Refutation

1. *Only the divine and human Mediator, Jesus Christ, could merit heavenly life.*

It was impossible for Adam, a mere man, to merit heavenly life. Even if Adam had obeyed perfectly, he would have done only what it was his duty to do: “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

Heavenly life could be merited only if Adam first fell into sin and then a Savior came who remained perfectly obedient even while suffering hellish agonies for sins that He had not personally committed. As our Lord’s Supper Form points out, Christ our Redeemer “restored that which He took not away” (Ps. 69:4). Such obedience while suffering was required to merit heavenly life for us.

To suffer the punishment we deserved and to purchase for us the right to receive heavenly life, our Mediator had to be not only a man but also very God. He had to be a man, since a man had to suffer for man’s sin. But a mere man could not have sustained God’s eternal wrath. Our Mediator, therefore, had to be God Himself, so that by the power of His Godhead He might sustain God’s wrath in His human nature (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Days 5, 6).

2. *Adam was earthy and would have remained earthy.* Scripture points out a number of contrasts between Adam and Christ. One of them is as follows: “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (I Cor. 15:47).

Adam was of the earth, earthy. There are two Greek words in this section of I Corinthians 15 that correspond fairly well to our two English words earthly and earthy. The first word is found in verse 40, where we read of *terrestrial* bodies. The Greek word in that verse means literally “upon earth” and could be translated by our English word “earthly” which means “pertaining to the earth” or “belonging to the earth.” The second Greek word is found in verse 47, quoted above. This word is rightly translated “earthy,” which means “consisting of earth.”

Adam was “of the earth, earthy.” He was of the earth and would have continued to be of the earth. As long as he remained obedient he would have continued to live, but he would have remained earthy.

In contrast to Adam, the second man, Jesus Christ, is

“the Lord from heaven.” Only in the One from heaven can we enjoy heavenly life, a life that is higher than the life the earthy Adam had before he sinned.

3. *The tree of life did not symbolize a promise of heavenly life, since God had never made such a promise.* The tree of life symbolized that Adam had fellowship with God, which is life itself. He would continue to live, enjoying this fellowship for as long as he remained obedient. God had told Adam this, and the tree of life symbolized what God had told him.

When God gives His people a symbol, that symbol signifies something that God has expressed in words. God had said nothing about Adam being able to obtain heavenly life. So the tree could not have symbolized a promise that God had never made.

4. *It was God’s plan that Adam would fall and that Christ would then come and raise Adam and all the elect in Christ to a higher life.*

If Adam could have obtained heavenly life for himself and us simply by not partaking of a certain fruit for a time, then would it not have been better if God had planned it to happen that way? It would seem to us that it would have been, since then the suffering of our Lord could have been avoided. When we understand that this heavenly life could be obtained for us only by Christ, and that it was the plan of God that Adam would fall and that Christ would come and merit this life for us, then we marvel at the wisdom of our God who determined the fall, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, and all that happens in time.

Heavenly life in Christ

What is heavenly life? What does Scripture say about it?

1. *Heavenly life is knowing God in Jesus Christ.*

Heavenly life is life in the Lord from heaven, a life in which we know God in and through Jesus Christ. Christ told us what everlasting life is when He said: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

2. *Those with heavenly life are unable to sin and will never die.*

In the new man in Christ we are unable to sin. Adam was created righteous and was able to obey his Creator. But it was also possible for him to sin and then die. But in Christ, who is God Himself, we are unable to sin and will never die.

It is true that we believers in this life must still struggle with our sinful nature out of which evil continues to flow. Yet in the new man we delight to do what God commands (Rom. 7:22).

In the new man we are like Christ. We do not sin and it is not possible for us to die. Christ is truly immortal, and so are all those who are in Him. Our Lord said: “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26a). Christ died once. He died not because of His own sin but because our sins were upon Him. Now that He has satisfied the demands of God’s justice and has risen from the grave, He will die no more. He is immortal, and we who are in Him are immortal as well.

It is impossible for someone who is immortal to die. Adam could die and did die when he ate of the fruit God had forbidden. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4b). Only he who is unable to sin is immortal.

In other words, immortality can be obtained only in Christ. Christ is He “Who only hath immortality” (I Tim. 6:14-16). He is the One: “who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim. 1:10).

A life in which we will never sin, a life which will never end, that is the higher life that we now have in our heavenly Lord and Savior.

3. *Those with heavenly life are all united and directed by the same quickening Spirit.*

Scripture brings out another distinction between Adam and Christ. Adam was a living soul, but Christ is a quickening spirit: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (I Cor. 15:45).

Adam, our earthly head, was alive, but he was unable to bring anyone else to life. Christ, our heavenly Head, not only Himself lives, but also quickens us, imparting to us His heavenly life.

Furthermore, all those whom Christ quickens are then united and directed by the same Spirit that has quickened them. Just as the members of our body are directed by our soul, so all the members of Christ’s body are directed by His Spirit. There really is one Spirit dwelling in and directing all of us members, so that we live and commune together as one.

A life without sin united with a multitude of persons who are all quickened and directed by the same Spirit, such is the heavenly life that Adam himself never could have obtained. It is a life that is ours in Christ, the Lord from heaven.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of our God!



Strength of youth

Rev. Jon Mahtani, pastor of the Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer, Indiana

Relating to the catholic/universal church

In my last article on the church catholic or universal (Jan. 1, 2018, *SB*, v. 94, p. 156), I addressed the need to *recognize* that the church redeemed by Christ is made up of all God’s elect people from different places, races, and faces—of difference nations, vocations, and denominations. Our weekly confession of this in the Apostles’ Creed should be more than habitual speech; we ought rather to believe sincerely that God preserves the existence of such a people here in this world, including those outside the membership of our Reformed congregations. We must be willing to recognize these

brothers and sisters in Christ. Refusing to do so is a haughty and heretical attack against God’s Word, His people, and His saving work.

Not only should we *recognize* these members of the universal church, but we should *relate* to them as spiritual siblings. In order to avoid paying mere lip-service to the catholicity of the church, we should seek real relationships with her members. Of course, we must be wise and vigilant in our friendships with confessing Christians who differ in faith and life (whether inside or outside our church denomination for that matter);

but there ought to be a degree of fellowship with other believers if we truly believe our confession of “an holy catholic church.”

When we come into contact with members of the universal church of Christ, we will find that many of their respective churches have no formal ecclesiastical ties with ours (nor should there be, in many cases). But whether we like it or not, *God has established a spiritual unity in His church universal*. While attending high school and college, I experienced this first-hand. I came into contact and enjoyed fellowship with many conservative Presbyterian and Reformed young people outside of my church affiliation. Among plenty of nominal Christians who did not care about doctrine or life, I discovered some young people who took Scripture seriously, and some who even proved themselves more biblically astute and sanctified than young people in my own church (including myself). As I joined these fellow Christians in an honest pursuit of truth together, I found some differences in our understanding of Scripture. There was a significant contrast between our stances especially concerning common grace, divorce and remarriage, and the covenant. And yet, while not dismissing our disagreement on these weighty issues, I realized that we also had much in common.

Spiritual unity, I have learned, is not an “all or nothing” idea. Rather, there are varying degrees of unity. Among the members of the universal church, I am spiritually united to some more than others, but I am still wonderfully united in some degree to all those who are elected, redeemed, and regenerated by Christ. This will and should determine the kind of relationship I have with each member of Christ’s family. To understand how we should approach believers in the catholic church of Christ, here is a principle to follow: *Inasmuch as I agree in doctrine and life with others, to that extent I should have fellowship with them*. This principle does not answer every specific question in the young person’s mind, but it should help in our friendship choices with other Christians. Those who sincerely hold to the same doctrines and life values as I do will be in closest relationship with me. Then, not neglecting those with whom I am most closely united, I may (and should) look outward to seek relationships with other Christians who differ slightly.

This concept is not a new idea, but is in fact part of an official stance of the Protestant Reformed denomination—a binding synodical position found in the Constitution of our churches’ Contact Committee. “The Protestant Reformed Churches in America, in obedience to Scripture as interpreted in our three forms of unity, confess that there is one holy, catholic church.” The

doctrine of the universal church is the basis for what follows:

They believe, further, that it is their sacred duty to *manifest* the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible, *not only in their denominational fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign.*¹

The very existence of this Contact Committee along with these statements is our official recognition that spiritual union already exists between the members of our churches and many of those in other denominations. Not only should we be aware of this unity, but we should make an effort to show it. What our churches hold to officially is what we as members should seek to carry out in our relationships with other believers.

To avoid misunderstanding, let me be very clear about what I am *not* suggesting. The young person seeking to recognize and relate to the universal church must pay careful heed to this. Do not twist these words to mean that we may minimize *any* truth of the Scripture or diminish the danger of *any* false doctrine. Do not wrest this teaching to excuse enjoyment of worldliness with nominal Christians. Do not imagine that we may date those who hold to false doctrine while ignoring the differences. Do not somehow take this as an allowance of fellowship with those who are under church discipline or who knowingly and willfully continue in sin.

On the contrary, here are four practical points that I *am* suggesting. First, show meekness and love in your interactions with other confessing Christians. On the basis of Scripture, the Canons of Dordt say,

With respect to those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives, we are bound after the example of the apostle to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner. For the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others, who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ (Heads 3 and 4, Art. 15).

Admittedly, we ministers may sometimes be a poor example in this. In our efforts to identify the truth and sharply point out the lie, we occasionally forget the call for meekness and love towards our spiritual siblings.

1 *The Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches and Constitutions of Standing Synodical Committees, Rules and Regulations, By-laws, Forms, Declaration of Principles*, 2015 edition, 40-41.

God's people must not emulate this spiritual flaw. As we bear witness to those in other churches, our priority is not beating them in an argument but winning their souls with truth and grace. Our approach should not be a quick-tempered bashing of others but a patient hearing before speaking the truth in love. The cause of the offence should only be the *content* of the gospel; it should never be the haughty spirit with which we too often wield the sufficiently sharp sword of the Spirit.

In the second place, while we may judge doctrine and life with the Word of God, let us not judge a person's eternal destiny. Call false doctrine a lie. Call sin evil. Even warn about hell when we meet those who impenitently reject Christ and continue in sin. But identifying *or suggesting* our neighbor a reprobate is folly. We do not have God's vision to determine an invisible soul unregenerate, nor do we have God's foreknowledge to predict a soul's future damnation. As we approach other Christians, let us remember that we are not saved from hell by the church we attend. We are saved by Jesus Christ alone, through faith alone.

Thirdly, pray for those in the universal church. You have brothers and sisters in all kinds of countries. You have spiritual siblings in the many States of America. You have fellow believers in various denominations. Pray for them. As you meet these specific people, pray for them specifically! Sometimes, we feel like we continually repeat the same things in our prayers. One reason might be that we are forgetting about many others in the catholic church for whom Jesus Christ is interceding in heaven.

My fourth proposition is to develop friendships with those of the universal church. Prioritize your relationships, so that you make your most important friendships with those among whom you have the most spiritual agreement. Start within your local church and denomination. Then proceed to cultivate relationships with those our denomination has "sister" and "corresponding" church relationships. And then as you labor alongside other believers in the work place, as you study among other Christians at college, as you find God's people pocketed in unexpected places, carefully form friendships with them also. While we must always be on guard against false doctrines and temptation, we ought to rid ourselves of the phobia we have toward Christians whose weaknesses are different from our own—and whose strengths we may find valuable.

The doctrine of the holy catholic or universal church can be simply applied this way: love your neighbor. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). If we refuse to recognize and fellowship with our spiritual family, God will one day powerfully and beautifully make our stubborn hearts realize what we missed. This is a vision of what will soon be: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9, 10).

Reports—Classis East/West

Mr. Gary Boverhof/Rev. Joshua Engelsma

Classis East Special Meeting Report— February 28, 2018

This special meeting of Classis East was required for two purposes. The first order of business was the examination of Pastor-elect David Noorman. In the afternoon Classis met to treat the appeal of a member against the member's pastor and consistory.

After preaching his specimen sermon and upon receiving the approval of his preaching from Classis East and the synodical deputies from Classis West, Pastor-elect David Noorman was examined extensively on the six loci of Reformed Dogmatics, and his knowledge of the Scriptures, confessions, controversy, and practi-



*Pastor-elect (now Rev.) David Noorman and his wife
Carisa*

ca. Pastor-elect Noorman gave an excellent demonstration of his knowledge and training in all these areas. Classis voted unanimously (and the synodical deputies concurred) to approve of his examination, recommending that Southwest PRC proceed to his ordination and installation. With much thanksgiving to God, we rejoice in His provision of this minister of the gospel to the PRCA. SW PRC sent a letter of thanks to Classis for pulpit supply during the time they were vacant.

Classis then, treated a lengthy appeal of a member against the member's pastor and consistory. That appeal was rejected. Also, the pastor and consistory were given instruction from Classis.

Special thanks should be given to Hudsonville PRC for their hosting both the January and the special meeting of February of Classis East. They went above and beyond to care for the delegates.

The expenses of the meetings were \$3,823.65.

Classis will next meet on May 9, 2018, Lord willing at Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan.

Gary Boverhof

Stated Clerk, Classis East

Report of Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Loveland, Colorado, on March 7, 2018. Thirteen ministers and seventeen elders represented the churches. Rev. Dennis Lee chaired the meeting.

After opening devotions and the constituting of Classis, routine reports of the Stated Clerk, Classical Committee, and Reading Sermon Committee were read and approved. The church visitors also reported on their work over the last year and the presence of unity, peace, and love prevailing in the churches.

In closed session, two consistories explained their labors with impenitent members and requested that Classis approve their proceeding to the increase of censure by making a public announcement of the name. After careful deliberation, Classis advised both consistories to proceed.

With Rev. Griess accepting a call to First PRC (Grand Rapids), the now-vacant Calvary PRC requested pulpit supply from Classis. The following appointments were made: Rev. Huizinga—April 8 and 15; Rev. Lee—April 29 and May 6; Rev. Laning—May 13; Rev. Feenstra—May 20 and 27; Rev. Engelsma—June 10; Rev. DeBoer—June 17; Rev. Marcus—July 1 and 8; Rev. Brummel—July 15; Rev. Guichelaar—July 22 and 29; Rev. Key—August 5 and 12; Rev. Kleyn—September 2 and 9; Rev. Langerak—September 16 and 23; Rev. Barnhill—October 7 and 14; Rev. Regnerus—October 21 and 28.



Loveland PRC, site of March 7 meeting of Classis West

Classis approved the subsidy requests for 2019 for five churches and forwarded them on to Synod for its approval. Classis took note of the fact that Edgerton PRC is no longer requesting subsidy, and Edgerton's pastor, Rev. De Boer, addressed a word of appreciation to the churches for the financial support provided over the years.

Classis also voted for various classical functionaries. Rev. Laning was appointed to a three-year term on the Classical Committee, and Rev. De Boer was appointed to finish the remaining two years of Rev. Griess' term. Rev. Barnhill was appointed to a three-year term as a *primus* synodical deputy, Rev. Laning was appointed to a three-year term as a *secundus* synodical deputy, and Rev. Guichelaar was appointed to finish the remaining one year of Rev. Griess' term as a *secundus* synodical deputy. Classis appointed Revs. Hanko, Key, Kleyn, and Laning as church visitors, with Revs. Brummel and T. Miersma as alternates.

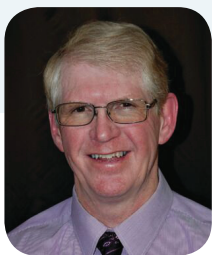
Ministers delegated to Synod 2018 were Revs. Huizinga, Key, Kleyn, Langerak, and Laning. Alternates are Revs. Brummel, Engelsma, Guichelaar, Lee, and Marcus. Elder delegates to Synod are Glenn Feenstra (Hope), Henry Ferguson (First Edmonton), Hilgard Goosen (Immanuel), Alan Meurer (Bethel), and Jim Regnerus (Doon). Their alternates are Bob Brands (Loveland), Alden De Jong (Hull), George De Jong (Crete), David Griess (Loveland), and Jim Lenting (Crete).

Classis was able to complete its work by noon. The expenses of this meeting totaled \$8,110.23.

Classis will meet next in Heritage PRC (Sioux Falls, SD) on September 26, 2018, the Lord willing.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma

Stated Clerk, Classis West



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

Seminary internships are a valuable part of the training of our young men for the gospel ministry. Do you know which year the first internship took place? Maybe you also know the students' names and which pastors they interned under? Or the church where the internships took place? Answers later in this column.

Regarding worship

This from a recent PRC church bulletin:

It is good for us to gather as a congregation to worship our covenant God once again. As we come, let us be conscious that we enter into the presence of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, but Who also dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. May the Lord humble our hearts that we may exalt His Name in reverent praise and worship.

Congregational activities

From a recent bulletin:

Our annual Prayer Day service will be this Wednesday, March 14, at 7:00 P.M. This is a regular worship service, set aside at the beginning of Spring and another season of growth. We acknowledge our dependence on God for daily bread and pray that He will provide for us again in this coming year as He, in His providence, governs the natural creation and the growth of plants for man.

Many congregations were called to worship on March 14 as they observed the annual Prayer Day service.

Evangelism activities

The Evangelism Committee of the Edgerton, MN PRC has scheduled a lecture for April 20. Rev. Matt DeBoer plans to present the topic of "Sabbath Observance."

The congregation at Kalamazoo, MI PRC was privileged to gather for a lecture on April 13 as Rev. J. Slopsema spoke on the topic: "Persecuted for Christ's Sake." All were encouraged to invite others to come.

Young people's activities

The Young People's Society at Hudsonville, MI PRC recently hosted their third annual Wiffle-ball Tournament, with junior high and high school divisions.

The Young Calvinists invited all young people and young adults to enjoy an evening of fellowship and spiritual growth at their "Talking Points" event. This was held at Hope PRC on Tuesday, March 27. Rev. A. Laning spoke about "The Five Points" and how they relate to the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dordt as well as to the lives of our young people today. Refreshments and fellowship followed.

The Young People's Easter Mass Meeting was held at Georgetown PRC on March 25, with a speech given by Prof. Doug Kuiper. All young people were encouraged to attend for a time of fellowship and growth. Refreshments followed.

Classis activities

Classis West met March 7 in Loveland, CO PRC at the foothills of the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Representing the 14 churches were 13 ministers and 17 elders, with Rev. Dennis Lee chairing the meeting. (Cf. the stated clerk's report in this issue.) The next meeting is scheduled for September 26, 2018 at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, D.V.

Minister activities

A special worship service was held March 7 in Southwest PRC, as the Consistory called the congregation to worship for the purpose of the ordination and installation of Pastor-elect David Noorman. Prof. R. Cammenga led the service and conducted the installation. Refreshments followed the service. A welcome program was held March 11 after the evening service with refreshments following.

Rev. A. Spriensma planned to visit a Reformed Fellowship group (TULIP Fellowship) in St. Petersburg, FL. He was to preach there March 18, 25 and April 1, lead Bible studies, and begin the investigation of possible future work in this area. The group has expressed interest in the teachings of the PRC and has requested preaching. We give thanks for the opportunity God has

provided and remember Rev. Spriensma in this and all of his labor as home missionary.

The Council at Calvary PRC in Hull, IA formed a new trio consisting of Rev. Allen Brummel, Rev. Jonathan Mahtani, and Candidate Jonathan Langerak. The congregation called on March 29.

School activities

Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI held their band concert on March 27 at the Hudsonville Fine Arts Auditorium and their choir concert on March 28 at the Jenison Fine Arts Center.

This from the Lynden, WA PRC bulletin:

Eagles are all around us! We see them perched watchfully in the trees and soaring majestically in the sky. What can we learn from eagles? What do the habits of eagles teach us about God and about how we are to live as Christians? What does the Bible say? Learn about the

ways of eagles—and the works of our great God—at Covenant Christian School's Spring program, entitled, "As the Eagle...So the Lord," scheduled for Friday, March 23, at 7:30 P.M., at Lynden PRC. Join us for an evening of singing, video presentations, meditation, and inspiration! Hope to see you there!

Trivia answers

The PRCA internship program was first implemented in 1994. The two students were Allen Brummel and Doug Kuiper. Allen Brummel interned under Rev. Jason Kortering in Singapore while Doug Kuiper interned under Prof. (Rev.) Russell Dykstra in Doon, IA PRC. More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:3

Announcements

Wedding anniversary

We rejoice and give thanks to our heavenly Father for the 50 years of marriage He has granted our parents, **Robert and Geri Blankespoor**. On May 1 they will celebrate this gracious gift. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which kept covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

Paul and Cheryl De Roon

Dave and Brenda Vaandrager

Jon and Rachel Mooy

Kevin and Sharla Fykstra

Jon and Kathie Regnerus

Tim Blankespoor

Dan and Sheila Blankespoor

24 grandchildren

and 5 great-grandchildren

George, Iowa

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 9, 2018 at 8:00 A.M., in the Faith Protestant Reformed Church.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

Teacher needed

The **Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School** is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. The school will be starting from grades 1-3, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

Teacher needed

The **Protestant Reformed School in Wingham** is in need of a teacher to serve in our school. Our need is especially for a middle school teacher or a high school mathematics and science teacher. However, we encourage all interested teachers or prospective teachers to contact us as we are flexible with grade and class assignments. Please contact the Education Committee at educationcommittee@prswingham.org for more information on our need, the school, and any questions you have.

Announcements continued

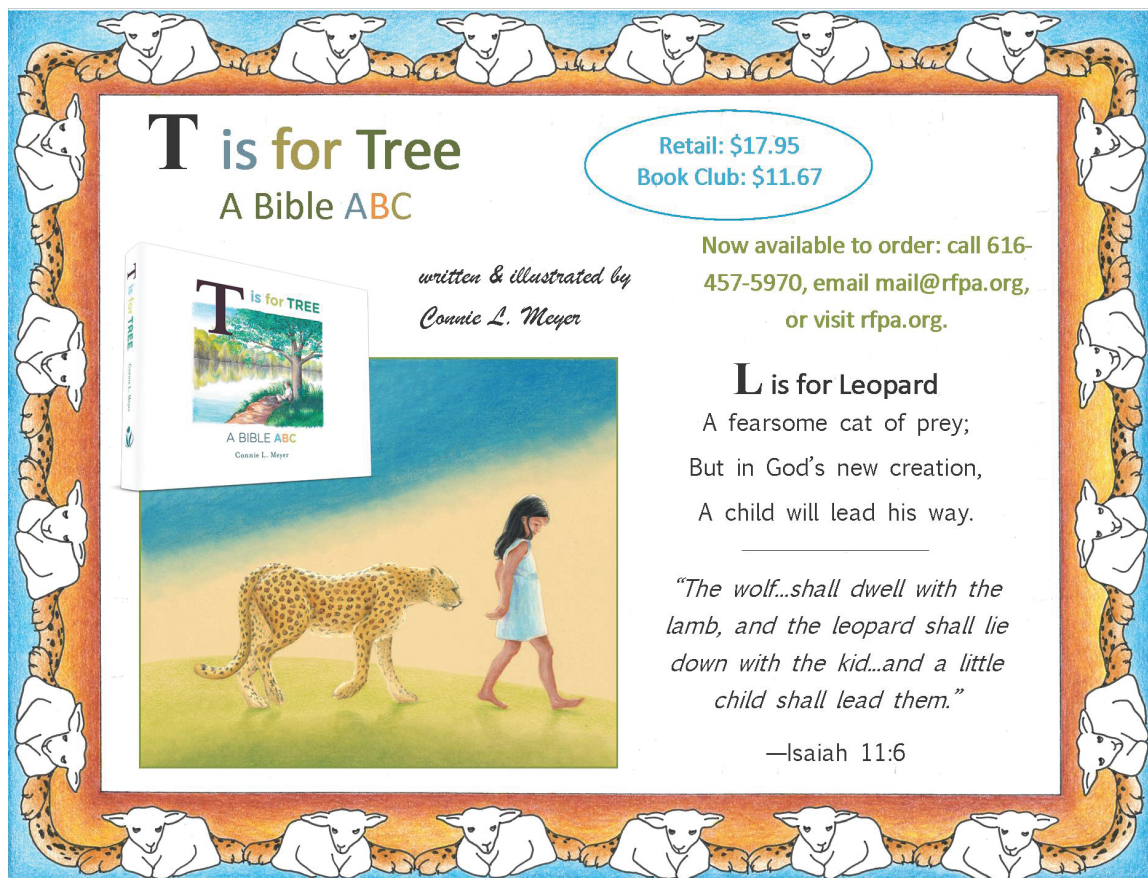
RUN! FIGHT! LEAD! YOUNG MENS CONFERENCE

SPEAKERS: REV. MAHTANI, SPRONK & ERIKS, JUSTIN VISSER & KARL DYKSTRA

WHERE: GEORGETOWN PRC WHEN: APRIL 28, 8AM - 12:30PM (BREAKFAST PROVIDED)

WHO: HIGH SCHOOL / COLLEGE AGE YOUNG MEN

SIGN UP ONLINE BY APRIL 21! GEORGETOWNPRC.ORG/RUNFIGHTLEAD



T is for Tree
A Bible ABC

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L is for Leopard
A fearsome cat of prey;
But in God's new creation,
A child will lead his way.

"The wolf...shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid...and a little child shall lead them."

—Isaiah 11:6