

The Standard Bearer

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Vocation, or, To what life
and work does God call you? (2)

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Billy Graham (1918-2018)

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Salvation

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Opportunities to witness,
the book of Romans,
and Roman Catholics

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The other side
of the coin:
The Supreme Court
considers freedom
of conscience

Mr. Brian VanEngen



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Meditation

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan

Longsuffering to usward

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

II Peter 3:9

God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This last part of II Peter 3:9 has been used to teach a universal love of God. It is thought that this passage teaches that God desires the salvation of all. It is thought that it teaches that proper preaching must include an ‘offer’ because God wants the salvation of all. This passage has been used to teach that Jesus suffered and died for more than those actually saved.

As we commemorate the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus, let us use this passage of Scripture to answer the questions: For whom did Jesus suffer and die? Whom does God want not to perish but to repent? A careful answer to these questions must take into consideration the whole of the verse and the context of this second epistle of Peter. May the Spirit who inspired this Scripture enable us to understand clearly what we read.

The verse begins by declaring that God is not slack concerning *His promise*. What is God’s promise? Peter has been speaking about God’s promise. It is “the promise of his coming” (v. 4). “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (v. 13). It is the promise of Jesus’ second appearance to judge and to bring ultimate deliverance to His people.

When God’s promise of Jesus’ coming is realized, it will bring an end to the mockeries and denials of the false prophets (2:1; 3:3); and then, “an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (1:11).

Our Lord’s second coming is the one great hope of the Christian church and of every Christian believer. Then, every believer will receive perfect deliverance from all tribulation and every sin. Then, every believer

will know perfect life with God. And, then, death will be completely swallowed up in victory and every saint will be glorified. Every Christian matures unto an increasing longing for this glorious promise to be fulfilled.

But scoffers have always ridiculed the church for having this hope of Jesus’ final appearance. The scoffers of Peter’s day said that Jesus had not yet come and would not come as promised; and their reason was, “since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (v. 4). They call us fools for having our hope in God’s promise of Jesus’ coming because nothing has changed for 6,000 years (for them it is millions or billions of years).

Such mockers do challenge believers. Our hope is threatened and our Lord’s “delay” occasions some wondering why God has not yet fulfilled His promise. There are times when our old man of sin influences us to think that God is delaying the fulfillment of His promise. It seems that Jesus does not come as quickly as we think He should. Year after year goes by, decade after decade, century after century, and He does not appear. Sometimes we become weary in our battle with that nature against which we have to struggle all our life long. Every night we think of the good we wanted to do, but did not, and the evil we did not want to do, but did. Also, there are seasons of depression and times of great grief and sorrow that occasion the believer’s longing for Jesus’ second appearance as he wonders, “How long?”

In response to these scoffers and to the doubts which can easily arise within every Christian, Peter points to *God’s attribute of longsuffering*.

There are three elements to this virtue. First, God has an object in view. That object is the glorious perfection of all of His people together in the body of Jesus Christ in the new heavens and the new earth, where there will be no sin and no old man. God’s object is the full glorification of every elect child of God in the new heavens and the new earth.

The second element of longsuffering is God’s love—His constant, unchanging, fervent, everlasting love. It

is God's love that governs everything that He does to each and to every one of His people.

The third element in the divine virtue of longsuffering is the determination that the way to our glorious perfection is the necessary path of suffering and affliction. It is the fact that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Divine wisdom has determined that it is only through much trouble and trial that we enter into the kingdom of God. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). While we rejoice greatly to know that we have an inheritance reserved in heaven for us, which is ready to be revealed in the last time, yet "now, for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:4-7). "If need be" means that God has determined in His love that the best way for every Christian to reach the glorious object is through suffering.

God's attribute of longsuffering is that perfection of God's love for His people, according to which He constantly wills their final perfection in glory, but in the way of suffering.

Now, notice that our text declares that God is longsuffering to *usward*. God is *not* longsuffering to all! He is longsuffering to "us." The "us" are "them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:1). God desires to rescue us from all of our physical, emotional, and psychological troubles, and especially from all our sinfulness. But God, in His wisdom and love has determined that He has more work to do on us. We need further refining. As precious diamonds, we are being made ready for the crown of our Lord by having more cuts made on us, so that we may the more brilliantly shine forth the glory of our Maker. God is longsuffering to usward, His beloved elect and believing people.

In the context and text Peter presents three evidences to support the truth that God is longsuffering to usward.

First, he answers the scoffers who say that everything continues as it was from the beginning of creation. Peter says, "Not so!" The scoffers deliberately ignore the fact that things are not the same since creation. They "are willingly ignorant" of the flood (v. 5). The universal flood so changed everything in God's created world that the only way to describe this world is to say that it is different from the world that was before. There was the "world that then was," but now we are living in "the heavens and the earth, which are now" (vv. 6, 7). The first world perished. The scoffers are liars.

The second evidence Peter presents in verse 8: "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing." You are not thinking correctly when you think in the realm of time. You are creatures of time, and you measure everything by time. But God is eternal! Isaiah 57:15 says that God "inhabits eternity." He is above time; He is not governed by time. And, because He is not governed by time, you cannot say, "But it's been six thousand years!" That does not mean anything to God. Do not put your measurements on Him. He is above time; He is not bound by time. In God's plan, Jesus' second appearance is the next big thing to happen; it is at hand. It is ready to be revealed. He is coming and He is coming soon. God is longsuffering to usward. Do not ignore the fact that years mean nothing to God.

And, the third evidence Peter presents is found in our text. "God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." We think that slackness is an evidence of a lack of concern and care, or of forgetfulness. We judge slacking as a weakness. So the apostle says, "God is not slack concerning his promise as you count slackness." Instead, God's apparent slackness is His wisdom is at work. He knows that what we need is more affliction and more trial of our faith. He knows that our faith must be further developed. God is calling us to exercise our faith, to believe that He is not delaying but loving us. He is doing what He has determined to be the best for us. We are foolish. We do not know what is best. He knows that we must be further refined. We do not like it, but He knows that we are going to come out the better. So His love wants the best for us, even though it hurts terribly.

God has promised a glorious inheritance. And He has this amazing virtue of longsuffering that He shows to us and to all His suffering people.

God has a great *purpose* for His being longsuffering to us. His love and wisdom demand the apparent delay because of His desire that all should come to repentance.

If God would have Jesus appear sooner than He planned, then the body of Jesus would not be complete. Then some of the elect would perish. You see, some of the elect are not yet conceived, and some of the elect are not yet converted. And thus the body of Jesus Christ would not be perfect. It would be deformed; there would be missing parts of the body.

That is how we are to answer those who interpret this verse to say that "all" refers to every person in the world, head for head. Such a position contradicts God's eternal decree of reprobation. Peter speaks of reprobation in the previous chapter: "But these as natural brute

beasts *made to be taken and destroyed*” (II Pet. 2:12). Consider also I Peter 2:8, “A stone of stumbling, a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed.*”

Second, the interpretation that God desires to save everyone contradicts the truth of hell. “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them into hell” (2:4). Consider, too, the other verses in chapter 2 that speak of hell: 5, 6, 9, 13, 17.

Third, consider the fact that if our text means that God does not want any person to perish, but wants every single person to repent, and that Jesus will not appear the second time until that happens, then Jesus will never come. Some have perished in the flood (v. 6); others perish daily in their sins.

Fourth, if God wants everyone to be saved, then God is a failure! God is not God if He cannot get what He wants. But He *is* God! He accomplishes His purpose fully and perfectly. What He wants, He accomplishes.

Instead, the verse means that when the last of the elect are born and reborn, conceived and regenerated, then He will come. That is the right time.

So we answer the question, For whom did Jesus suf-

fer and die? Not for the false prophets and scoffers; not for the “angels that sinned” (2:4), not for the “old world” (2:5), not for “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah” (2:6), not for “the unjust” (2:9). But He died for “us,” for His “beloved” (v. 8).

God’s longsuffering to usward may sometimes seem hard. But this passage of Scripture, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, would have us look up to gain His perspective and to see His goal. Be assured of His love that is always characterized by wisdom in bringing all of the necessary refinements.

God’s longsuffering to usward is not tarrying in a bad sense, but is evidence that God is saving and gathering unto Himself His elect children. Though we long, understandably, for deliverance more and more, we must realize that it must happen according to God’s sovereign will that all the elect come to repentance and not one of them be lost.

While we have to suffer, we can take comfort that this is the name of that virtue that God gives to Himself. So, pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” And trust His wisdom and His love.



Editorial

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

Vocation, or, To what life and work does God call you? (2)

Previous article in this series: March 15, 2018, p. 269.

The truth of God’s absolute sovereignty is beautiful and comforting to the believer. God leaves nothing to chance. This is embedded in the Reformed believer’s confession of his greatest comfort: “I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.” This same Jesus, “so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1). Indeed, fellow believer, Jesus executes the counsel of God, and every step of your journey is directed to bring you to your place in glory. That includes your vocation—the work to which God calls you in this earthly pilgrimage.

In the previous editorial, it was demonstrated that God has a specific calling for each of His children, and that every believer can discover what that calling is. We take up now the question of how this is to be done. It is our desire to assist parents and their youth looking to discover their life’s calling.

We point out, first of all, some general considerations or guidelines in the process of seeking God’s will. One of the first elements that comes to mind is money, and that is a legitimate factor, rightly considered. How much a job pays is not the overriding factor, but it is significant, especially for the man who is or hopes to be the “bread winner” for a wife and family. The Reformed “Marriage Form” gives this admonition to the husband:

And since it is God's command that the man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his face (Gen. 3:19), therefore you are to labor diligently and faithfully in the calling wherein God hath set you, that you may maintain your household honestly, and likewise have something to give to the poor.

With this obligation laid on him, a man pursues a calling that enables him to provide for his family and support the causes of the kingdom, including the thousands of tuition dollars for Christian education. At the same time, the size of the paycheck should not crowd out all other considerations. For the fact is that, frequently, the life-style and spending habits of a family are more important than a man's take-home pay. Many a family on a large income cannot seem to make ends meet due to extravagant living, while, on the other hand, many other families make it just fine on far less money. For all that, a responsible man consciously seeks a job that will enable him to support family, church, and school.

More serious is the matter of church membership. Someone examining a particular vocation must be sure that it will not lead him or her away from membership in a faithful Reformed church. For a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches, that means membership in a Protestant Reformed congregation. Each must consciously face the question, "Will I be able to hold this occupation and live near a Protestant Reformed church where I can be an active member in the same?"

In addition, it should be obvious that some occupations are ruled out because they lead to compromise with Christian principles, yea, even violations of God's express commands. This includes a violation of the fourth commandment (working on Sunday, not in a work of necessity or mercy), the fifth (joining a labor union that may strike), or the eighth or ninth (stealing or dishonesty). Jesus' word applies here—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

In addition to facing these general considerations, the believer seeking to determine God's will regarding his vocation must make a personal evaluation of himself. God, the all-wise Creator, has formed each one for the place and function in society and in the church that He determined. An evaluation of his interests and God-given gifts will direct a believer in his search for God's will. This starts with one's personality. Although a particular personality does not necessarily pinpoint one's calling, it can help rule out some. An individual with a stern and unsympathetic personality must not seek nursing as an occupation. A believer who prefers to follow rather than to lead should not attempt to start

his own business. Some personalities are fit for certain vocations, and others are not.

In addition, in this process of coming to know God's will, the believer must take stock of his gifts, both physical and intellectual. Young believers should not only examine themselves, but they would also be well advised to seek out the help of other responsible Christians who know them well. Closely associated with that are their interests—what they enjoy doing. This is not necessarily determinative either, but a young person seeking his vocation may legitimately look for something that he enjoys and is good at. Past education and training can also help determine one's calling.

These personal considerations are guides giving some direction, even though often in negative ways. That is to say, one can conclude that he is not called to this or that vocation because he lacks the necessary gifts or personality. A young person must evaluate all these elements, and with much prayer, seek to know God's will for his life.

And then, there is the matter of opportunity. Very significant in determining one's calling are the options available to the individual. The possible vocations available to a believer at a given time as determined by God direct him in discerning God's will. Allow me to demonstrate this with just one personal example. While attending high school, I became convinced that my calling was to teach in a high school, with at least some courses in my first love, mathematics. I went to college with that determination and expectation. It seemed clear to me that God's will was that I teach in Covenant Christian High School (the only high school supported by Protestant Reformed members at that time). I based this on my evaluation and my desire—I loved mathematics; I wanted to teach high school-age students; I was qualified in history and economics (obviously high school subjects); I received training in college for secondary education; and I did my student teaching in a Christian high school. Surely, this must be my vocation, I concluded.

It was not. When I graduated from college, Protestant Reformed schools advertised for many openings, but not one was available in Covenant Christian High. Clearly, it was not God's will that I teach there. In various ways, God made it plain that I was to teach all the subjects in grades six through eight, and be administrator of a school as well. The point is, God often gives us clear guidance in our vocation by limiting the options. We can be thankful that this often directs us to the place God would have us to work, for He is far wiser than we are.

However, even with a careful examination of gifts

and interests, as well as of opportunities, you might not be assured of God's will. You may not take the easy way out with a kind of fatalism. A fatalistic attitude says, "I do not know what my calling is, but if I take this job, it must be God's will, for His counsel is all-inclusive." A believer may not make decisions in that way.

This becomes plain when one compares seeking to know one's calling with seeking a husband or wife. Consider a situation where a young woman meets a man who is attracted to her and asks her out on a date. He continues to take her on dates, and eventually asks her to marry him. Ought her attitude to be, "If I agree, and we do, in fact, get married, then it must be God's will"? Regardless of his spiritual condition? Even if he manifests no interest in the Reformed faith? Obviously, she should not reason so.

That is an extreme case, but this is an issue even when a believing girl meets a believing man—both committed to the Reformed faith. They both desire to know God's will as regards whom they should marry. Among all the godly, Reformed believers they know, is this the one God determines for a husband, a wife? What is God's will for my life in marriage?

To be sure, there are significant differences between choosing a life's mate and one's vocation, the most obvious being that marriage is for life, and the vocation is not necessarily so. Additionally, marriage is the single most important decision a believer makes. Marriage is life-determining. It determines one's family, friends, church, and home life. One's vocation ordinarily does not have the same impact.

Still, the question remains, among the possibilities one has before him for a vocation, which is God's will? God does not reveal this will in mystical ways—through special messages or dreams. And one must be careful not to be too influenced by some striking event in his life that might seem to point to a particular calling. Rather, careful consideration, coupled with fervent prayer will lead one to know God's will.

I exhort young believers to seek God's will for your life. I have witnessed you, conscientious Reformed youths, struggle mightily with this matter. You come to parents, to pastors, and teachers seeking help. In your seeking, I urge you to be spiritually minded. Jesus

guides you into this way of thinking. In the context of instruction on earthly goods and a warning against serving unrighteous mammon, Jesus commands you, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 6:33). That is to say, in all things seek the kingdom of heaven. And He reminds you to store up your treasures in heaven, not on the earth.

This directs us to the reality—we are on earth to serve God and His church. We must work with our hands the thing that is good, but for most of us, what we produce in our earthly labors will be burned up when Jesus returns in glory. It is not of lasting value. What is done serving the church is lasting. The inspired apostle Paul indicated that the same was true even for ministers of the Word, writing in I Corinthians 3:12-15:

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

If this be true of a minister's work, how much more of our earthly labors?

Yet, each member of the church, regardless of his or her vocation, in some way can serve God by serving the church. The particular calling one has could make a difference as to time and energy available to serve the church. Some vocations enable one to serve God by serving Christ's body more directly, specifically, teachers in Christian schools and ministers of the gospel. Exactly for that reason, you young men and women ought to consider—before anything else—whether God calls you to the work of teacher, and young men, whether God calls you to be a minister of the Word. Before any other option is considered, these are first.

To this we turn next time.

I exhort young believers to seek God's will for your life.... In your seeking, I urge you to be spiritually minded. Jesus guides us into this way of thinking. In the context of instruction on earthly goods and a warning against serving unrighteous mammon, Jesus commands us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 6:33). That is to say, in all things seek the kingdom of heaven. And he reminds us to store up our treasures in heaven, not on the earth.



All around us

Rev. Erik Guichelaar, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin

Billy Graham (1918-2018):

Billy Graham died on February 21. He was 99 years old.

As I read over all the tributes and praise being given to Billy Graham on Facebook and other media, I thought to myself, “Although I’ve certainly heard the name, I don’t really know who Billy Graham is. And outside of our Reformed community, I only hear good things being said about him.” And then I thought, “Perhaps there are others, especially of the younger generation, who are in the same situation—they have heard only good things about Billy Graham, but don’t really know who he is.” And so I thought it might be profitable to take this occasion of Graham’s death to learn more about who this man was.

Billy Graham was born on a farm in 1918, near Charlotte, North Carolina. He was raised in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. When he was 20 years old, while attending college in Florida, he was ordained as a Southern Baptist minister. In 1943 he graduated from Wheaton College with a degree in anthropology. He never received any formal seminary education. After graduation, and for just over a year’s stint, Graham served as a pastor of a tiny Baptist church. “A great pastor he was not.”¹ However, Graham was learning that his greatest gift was in “closing the deal” (9), that is, getting people to make a decision to become saved. Gradually, Graham became more involved in evangelistic revival efforts, and began to make more and more of a name for himself as a dynamic speaker. His first crusade/revival meeting was held in 1947 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was attended by 6,000 people.

Billy Graham had his “big break” in the autumn of 1949, when he held a crusade in Los Angeles:

The tactics that Graham deployed that fall dictated the template for virtually all the crusade meetings for the next six decades.... The services featured celebrity testimonies, both old and new music, electrifying

preaching, boilerplate evangelical theology, prayer with converts, and lots of Southern charm—all delivered with smashing sincerity and effectiveness....

Things got off to a slow start.... But the conversions of celebrities, such as...the Olympic track star and war hero Louis Zamperini, as well as the priceless publicity bestowed by the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, helped generate a cumulative attendance [over 8 weeks] of 350,000 with 3,000 converts.... The size and publicity of the Los Angeles project triggered extensive coverage in the national and international media, including in *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times*. Their stories transformed Graham into a national personality (12, 13).

In 1950, Graham founded the “Billy Graham Evangelistic Association,” which started organizing evangelistic “crusades” throughout the world. In 1950, he also began a weekly “Hour of Decision” radio program. And thus his career took off. In 1956, he co-founded the magazine *Christianity Today*. “By the 1950s, Graham would be a national personality, by the 1960s an international celebrity, and by the 1970s an icon everywhere. That status would stay with him until he effectively retired from public ministry in 2005” (5). He would frequently speak to audiences of over 100,000 people. By the end of his ministry, Graham would preach to more people in live audiences than anyone else in history—nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. In one crusade in South Korea, he preached to an audience of over 1 million people at one time.

But who was Billy Graham? And what did he stand for? In what follows, I have tried to capture a few of the most significant elements (in my mind) that made up who Graham was.

First, Graham was a very handsome man with an irenic personality that made him attractive to many:

If good looks and smart attire provided the base, Graham’s manifest easiness in his own skin materialized on televisions and even behind distant stadium pulpits as old-fashioned Southern charm. On talk shows in

1 Grant Wacker, *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 8. [Subsequent references to this book will simply give the page numbers.]

particular he came across as dashing photogenic. He proved a lively guest, blessed with a quick smile, ready quip, and easy-going banter (301).

Taken together, these character traits of an extroverted and irenic approach to life, coupled with humor, meant that millions ended up simply liking the man, whether or not they agreed with his theology or approach or anything else (296).

People who encountered him, personally or through film archives, including critics, almost always spoke of his humility, or at least likability (304).

Second, theologically, Billy Graham was a rank Arminian. What is meant by that is this: Graham emphasized that it is up to you to become saved. To quote the Statement of Faith from the website of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association, “We believe...that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ results in regeneration by the Holy Spirit.”² According to Graham’s Arminian viewpoint, using your own free will to choose for salvation is what gets you regenerated/reborn. You just need to accept Christ’s free offer. “The whole of it was this. Things were broken, but God offered a solution. Humans needed only reach out and take it” (33). “God loves you, and He can make a difference in your life if you will let Him...” (54). All you have to do, is “close the deal.” This is an offense to the Reformed, biblical faith and gospel.

Not surprisingly, Graham’s Arminianism influenced his view of providence:

As for human history, Graham, like most evangelicals, believed that it was neither determined nor random but something in between: contingent. That meant that God maintained a plan for the final hour of the final day, but he had given humans the ability to speed up or slow down the process. More precisely, God ultimately oversaw everything but left many of the details open-ended. Humans operated more or less freely within a framework of divine oversight (35).

Third, Billy Graham emphatically viewed it as his calling, not to make disciples of Christ, but to win converts (44). This is why he did not have to “squabble” over points of doctrine like others (and this is what made him appear as such a friendly person). His calling was simply to be God’s salesman, and “close the deal.” When it came to the Bible’s infallible inspiration, Graham “did not engage in debates, let alone polemics about the Bible’s reliability. Rather, he focused on real-life answers to real-life questions” (41). When

it came to the creation account, “the key point, [Graham] said, was to affirm that God had created humans, whether by evolution or by blowing on ‘some dust’.... ‘I’m not a literalist in the sense that every single jot and tittle is from the Lord’” (39).

With regard to his view of the end-times, Graham had dispensationalist views. However, “...he downplayed them. They remained artfully vague in his preaching...” (45). “Indeed, in his...vision for *Christianity Today*, he urged the editors to avoid the topic [of dispensationalism] altogether. Always alert to the evangelical (not to mention the wider) reading market, he warned that the magazine would lose the support of ‘thousands of ministers’ if they waded into the subject” (46). When it came to his view on heaven, Graham “even speculated about golf courses and beloved pets [being there]—whatever it took to make folks happy” (49). When it came to his view on hell, Graham said, “And then there are people that say that hell is not eternal.... I leave all that in God’s hands” (50).

Graham’s calling was not to get into such doctrinal issues; his calling was to be God’s salesman and simply persuade people to become saved. And why did Graham do his work through *crusades*? Because that was the best method of marketing what he was selling.

The crusade structure was not accidental. Partisans would have resisted the word *theatrical*, but they were theatrical, if by that we mean carefully staged in order to produce a desired result. ...Everything was predictable. People got what they expected and paid for with their money and their time (140).

Will-worship to the extreme. A man once said that if you heard 10 of Graham’s sermons, you probably heard them all.

Fourth, and not least, Graham helped build and shape what is called the modern ecumenical movement. Because Graham was not under the oversight of any denomination or local church, “he was answerable to no one except his supporters. He enjoyed the luxury of choosing his own friends” (175). And choose he did. First, he affiliated with parachurch movements; then he joined hands with liberal, mainline Protestantism; then he united with Pentecostals and with Catholics, and even beyond. Graham’s position over time became this: the “one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy, but love. There is far more emphasis on love and unity among God’s people in the New Testament than there is on orthodoxy, as important as it is” (182). And so you get this quotation from Billy Graham: “I feel I belong to all the churches. I am equally at home in an Anglican or Baptist or a Brethren assembly or a Ro-

² <https://billygraham.org/about/what-we-believe>

man Catholic Church.... And the bishops and archbishops and the Pope are our friends.”³ Or this comment: “Graham admitted that he stumbled over the doctrine of papal infallibility, but there was not much else about which he and believing Catholics differed. Protestants paid too little attention to Mary, he mused.”⁴

And what about people who had never heard the gospel?

Graham told an interviewer that he used to believe that people who had never heard the gospel were doomed for hell. “I no longer believe that,” he stated. “I believe there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities for saying ‘yes’ to God” (200).

What will the final make-up of the body of Jesus Christ look like? Graham’s answer:

[God] is calling people out of the world for his name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something

they do not have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think that they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven.”⁵

Billy Graham has had a huge influence. I hope this article has been as enlightening for our younger readers as it was for me to write it. What we know today as “mainstream evangelicalism” follows largely in the footsteps of Graham. I hope you are able to see from this article the connections between what Graham stood for and what surrounds us today in what is called “mainstream American Christianity”—dispensationalism, false ecumenicism, the extreme prevalence of will-worship, watered-down Arminian preaching, moral therapeutic deism, and more.

There is much more that could be said. If there was one thing that especially impressed itself upon me in the writing of this article, it was this: How important our Reformed confessions are, and how good it is to have the Formula of Subscription for our officebearers to sign! What a blessing for us, both members of the church and the officebearers themselves! What a bulwark our Reformed confessions have been in the face of Satan’s constant attacks upon the truth, and the appealing and seductive ways he tries to lead us astray. I suppose this is why when I was growing up, I never learned to call myself ‘evangelical,’ but ‘Reformed.’

3 As quoted in Iain Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000*, (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 69.

4 Wacker, *American Pastor*, 191.

5 As quoted in Murray, 73-74.



Strength of youth

Rev. Brian Huizinga, pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California

To teach them war (19)

God’s armor for us: The footwear

Previous article in this series: February 15, 2018, p. 233.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

Ephesians 6:15

The footwear itself

Like the girdle and breastplate we have previously examined, footwear is also important for battle. To have “your feet shod” is to have sandals fastened to your feet. The Roman soldier of Paul’s day did not wear rugged, all-terrain combat boots, but simple sandals with straps and sometimes spikes.

Footwear helped the soldier maintain or alter his position on the field of battle. Footwear was not for defense like other parts of the armor. Neither was the sandal for offense, for no sane soldier kicks his opponent or takes off his sandal and hurls it at the attacker. The sandal is like the girdle around the waist, in that it serves the offensive and defensive parts of the armor, allowing the soldier to utilize his weaponry effectively. When the battle quickly shifted this way or that way, the soldier needed solid footwear to make the shift and keep fighting. When duty called the soldier to march

over long distances, he needed footwear to endure the march. Sometimes he had to jump over booby traps, pass over sharp stones or thorns, climb slippery slopes, or fight on ground that was blistering hot or freezing cold. Stabilized with his footwear, the soldier could either stand his ground or press on into the fray effectively working his sword and shield.

The spiritual reality for the Christian soldier is “the preparation of the gospel of peace.” As truth is our girdle and righteousness our breastplate, so the preparation of the gospel of peace is our footwear that allows us to move about wielding the shield of faith and drawing the sword of the Spirit in our spiritual warfare.

The word “gospel” literally means “the good news.” And the good news is that for the sinner there is “peace” with God. The preaching of the gospel is the authoritative proclamation of the good news of the peace God has accomplished for His people in Jesus Christ. The gospel is not a well-meant offer of peace whereby God proclaims, “I sincerely desire peace with all of you; will any of you accept My offer of it?” The gospel is not a conditional promise of peace, “I, God, sincerely promise to make peace with you, if you desire to make peace with Me.” If the news is the announcement of a blessing dependent for its realization upon the will and work of the sinner, then the news is bad. The good news published throughout all the world to mad, God-hating sinners, who foolishly feud with God as the Supreme Potentate of the universe, is that God, in His tender mercy and unmatched power, and through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, has accomplished peace for elect sinners so that they can be graciously pardoned and made God-lovers.

The gospel of peace not only *proclaims* the reality of peace, but through the effectual work of the Holy Spirit *causes* the sinner to repent of his sin and to believe, so that the peace makes a home in his heart. The believer exclaims, “I have peace with God, the Sovereign Potentate who could have destroyed my body and soul in hell! My iniquity is pardoned! My warfare is over! I am God’s friend-servant!” How blessed in an unsettled world of raging nations and a groaning creation to have sweet communion with God!

Moreover, the appropriation of this gospel of peace positively affects the believer’s relationships with God’s people. For when the believer enjoys peace with God, he gratefully hears and obeys the sacred precepts of the gospel binding him to a life of unity with others in the way of humility. Only in the gospel do we have peace with God and with each other.

Our footwear is the “*preparation* of the gospel of peace.” The word “preparation” could better be understood as “preparedness” or “readiness.” *Preparation*

refers to the activity of getting something ready, but implies an incomplete state. If the mother is involved in meal preparation, she is still making the meal and does not have it finished. *Preparedness* refers to a state in which something *is* ready. When the meal is placed on the table, it is in a state of preparedness and ready to be served. Our spiritual footwear that allows us to move about in battle is “the preparedness or readiness of the gospel of peace.” The gospel of peace makes us prepared and ready to fight. When God declares peace in the gospel, and the Spirit applies that peace to the heart of the believer so that he enjoys peace with God and is determined to live in peace with his neighbor, he is prepared for war. If you have peace with God and to the utmost of your power strive to live peaceably with others, then you assail Satan. If your heart is peace-less and war-full, you will falter when battle draws near. The footwear that helps us maintain or advance our battle position is the preparedness worked by the peace of the gospel.

The value of it

First, the value of our footwear is that we have *conflict with sin*. Without peace with God, we have peace with the sin within us. When you are tempted to sit down on the couch and watch a television show with partial nudity or profane language (don’t even turn it on, grab a book instead); or when your friend at work spills some gossipy news about another girl and you are tempted to run with it; or when you are tempted to cheat in class because the difference between failing or passing the exam is just claiming another’s work as your own; or when the fellow at school who parks next to your old “beater” rolls in with a 2018 model straight from the dealer, tempting you to let jealousy and resentment reign in your soul, you will never resist these temptations if your feet are not shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You’ve made your peace with such sins. But when we live in communion with God and love what He loves, then we go through our day with a sin-mortifying dagger in our hand and at the first stirrings of the old man of lust, gossip, cheating, and jealousy there is conflict! We are ready to plunge the dagger into the old man’s chest. For God’s sake! Nearness to God is the motive and power to wage war with your sins. When young people walk in immorality or doctrinal deviation, the problem is that they are not living in communion with God. Communion with God means conflict with sin; and conflict with sin leads to victory.

Second, the value of having our feet shod is that we have *confidence as sinners*. We are yet sinners, and the Slanderer tempts us to believe that hardship in our life is

evidence of God's anger and punitive wrath against us, a foreshadowing of the hell-fire that awaits us. But having a close relationship with God through the gospel, our feet are shod and we are ready to do battle with Satan, believing and confessing: "I have peace with God, Satan! You cannot scare me with your allegations that my mother has cancer, or that my father forsook my mother and us children for another lover, or that I got cut from the sports team and mocked for it, or that I got broadsided in the intersection totaling my car and shattering my femur, or that I got dumped by my boyfriend who is now dating my cousin, or that I was released from my job, or that I have a speech impediment or hereditary disease, because God is punishing *me* for *my* sins with these painful experiences! Get behind me, Satan! I know I have peace with God! If He does not avert these evils, it is because He will turn them to my profit. When God comes in grievous affliction, I ask Him, 'Comest thou peaceably?' Without fail, He reassures, 'I come peaceably!'"

Third, the value of our footwear is that we have *courage amid peril*. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Is. 52:7). The gospel of peace proclaims, "Thy God reigneth!" Your God, with whom you enjoy peace, sits upon His throne in the heavens and does all His good pleasure. Though the billowing waves of the sea roar and pound against the shore, though the mountains be cast into the depths of the sea, though troubles and hardships of all sorts round the believer swell, though his house is swept away in a flood, reduced to splinters in a tornado, or emptied by a burglar; though his dear friend apostatizes from the faith and gives his allegiance to Satan; though hosts make war on every side with kings and nations and governments and political parties and advocacy groups and lobbyists and furiously marching mobs taking counsel together against the church in demanding universal acceptance of sexual perversions; though terrorists blow up cars and buildings and enter venue after venue opening fire on unsuspecting patrons; though corruption of the worst sort abounds at the highest levels of government throughout the world; though men and women everywhere in a hedonistic society reveal themselves more and more to be the lovers of pleasure and haters of God and His Ten Commandments that they are; though the devil himself comes to the believer using all these circumstances as javelins of terror to incapacitate him and influence him to spend more time worrying than praising, the believer is not moved, he is not afraid. You are not afraid are

you? You go to church and hear the gospel of peace, "Thy God reigneth!" You have peace with Almighty God through Jesus Christ and know all these things are working the salvation of the church.

Fourth, the value of these sandals is *concord with God's people*. The gospel of peace brings peace not only between the believer and God, but between and among believers. Preaching destroys the citadels of pride in hearts and turns hearts to God and each other. The only way to heal a church torn by strife and division is to preach the church out of it through the gospel of the blood of the cross, by which all things are reconciled unto God. The gospel works concord among God's people, and when we have concord, we are fortified against Satan. Trying to battle Satan each day without having the gospel of peace and thus concord with each other is like going to battle barefoot. You will not be ready. Disunity and schism lead to greater strife and enmity. If you, young person, are not living in peace with your parents, then it is so easy to disregard their curfew, their rules for dating, and have a big mouth toward them. If you are not living in mutual respect and admiration for *all* your classmates, it is so easy to join in mocking a unique one. If you are not determined to see the best in others as valuable image-bearers of Christ who contribute to the diversity of the body, but only ever look negatively at people and focus on their weaknesses in order to feel better about yourself, then when you are confronted with another's good looks, athletic prowess, or acceptance into an elite university, fires of jealousy will ignite in your heart and you will seek to find something bad in them. If you are not living in unity with others in your Young People's Society and esteeming them better than yourself, then you will take their innocent comments in the Bible study as personal attacks directed against your lifestyle and leave in a huff. Discord fosters greater discord. Separation generates greater separation. Satan feasts on discord.

What tremendous value there is having our spiritual feet shod for battle with the preparation of the gospel of peace! The soldier who goes forth conquering and to conquer is the soldier whose heart overflows with gospel peace. I trust you know that peace.

Putting it on

Before the soldier goes to war, he carefully binds his sandals to his feet so that he is ready for combat. The child of God fastens his spiritual sandals by going to church on Sunday. God graciously gives you the gospel and a heart for it. Then when you go to church to receive the gospel of peace, you shod your feet. The soldier sings, "O, how I love to go to church to have my

feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I know it will be a good week. There will be war. I know I will take some blows. But I am prepared.”

What? You were not in church this past Sunday? What? The news God calls “good” you call boring and a waste of time? You think church should involve more social interaction and less doctrinal preaching? You think going to church to hear preaching is not biblical but a man-made custom invented by hypocritical religious zealots, so that you sing, “How putrid are the feet of them that publish the gospel of peace?” You stayed home to play video games? You went to ONELOVE, the hipster “church” downtown? This is not good. You have bare feet on the hot, thorny, rugged, sometimes

corpse-littered battlefield. And your loins are not girt about with truth. Your breast is not protected with righteousness. You will not stand. Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might! Take the whole armor of God! Seek, hear, and believe the gospel of peace!

But I know you were in church Sunday, or if you were not, it was only because God’s providence kept you away. I know you love the gospel of peace. I know because you are reading right now. If you had no interest in hearing the gospel, the *Standard Bearer* would be rubbish to you. You are armed. Is your sibling? Friend? Relative? Co-worker? You have been taught war. Teach others to war.



Ministering to the saints

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Psalter revision: Proposed lyrical changes

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2018, p. 195.

I have explained the principles that the synods of the HRC, FRC, and PRC have adopted to guide the interdenominational Psalter revision committee in proposing changes to our Psalter. The committee’s proposed changes to Psalms 73-89 have been distributed. But what is yet to come? How does the committee envision applying these principles to the rest of the Psalter? I will introduce you to some of the changes being proposed to the versifications of Psalms 1-40 (Psalter numbers 1-112). These proposed changes fall into three categories: changes to existing lyrics, changes by adding new lyrics to existing songs, and changes by adding entirely new songs. In common, these changes improve the faithfulness of our Psalter to the Scriptures.

Archaic verb forms

Before I get to the main point of this article, an aside regarding archaic verb forms. In the proposed changes to Psalms 73-89, a number of archaic verb forms were modernized in places where the pronoun subject was not modernized; for example, “Thou didst” became “Thou did,” “Thou shalt” became “Thou shall,” and “Thou wilt” became “Thou will.” At its meeting in February 2018, the committee evaluated input from various people regarding these changes, and recognized that if

the pronoun subject form is archaic, the verb form must also be archaic. To restate, either the pronoun subject and the verb must *both* be modernized (“You did”), or *neither* may be modernized (“Thou didst”). The committee has already gone on record as saying that the pronouns “Thee/Thou/Thy” will not be modernized when they are used in reference to God. So the archaic verb forms will be restored in those instances in which they were changed.

Changes to existing lyrics

Some of these proposed changes in Psalms 1-72 (Psalter 1-200) involve changing only a few words of existing lyrics to make them more faithful to Scripture. In my first article on the principles regarding text (March 15, 2017), I pointed out one such change being proposed to Psalter 43:5. Currently, that stanza reads, “How vain their ev’ry confidence Who on mere human help rely; But we remember for defense The Name of God, the Lord Most High.” Psalm 20:7 reads, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” The committee proposes to change the first part of Psalter 43:5 so that we sing: “In chariots some have confidence, On horses others will rely....” If this proposed change is adopted, we

will sing the more vivid language of the Psalm itself, language that will reinforce in our minds the figures and types of the Old Testament.

Take Psalter 91:3 as another example:

Afflictions on the good must fall,
But God will bring them safe through all;
From harmful stroke He will defend,
And sure and full deliv'rance send.

This stanza versifies Psalm 34:19-20, which reads: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” Do you recognize that “harmful stroke” is a vague and general versification of Psalm 34:20? The committee recommends changing those words to “broken bones”—a more specific, vivid, and accurate versification. This change also underscores the Messianic character of Psalm 34:20 (fulfilled in Jesus’ death on the cross, John 19:36), which our Psalter currently fails to do. The stanza will then be:

Afflictions on the good must fall,
But God will bring them safe through all;
From broken bones He will defend,
And sure and full deliv'rance send.

These changes can be made easily within existing lyrics, because they involve a change of words or phrases. Other changes involve adding new lyrics to existing songs.

Adding new lyrics to existing songs

The committee is proposing that, when possible, the first musical selection of a Psalm be a versification of that entire Psalm. This has been the reason why at times we have proposed combining two Psalter numbers into one song—for example, 225 and 226, and 37 and 38. Other times we are proposing to accomplish this by adding additional lyrics to a current versification of Scripture. Almost always these additional lyrics are being borrowed from other songbooks; in other words, the committee is not making the new lyrics.

Psalter 71 is a case in point. The lyrics of Psalters 71 and 72 treat Psalm 27 fully. We propose to keep both of those Psalters as selections 27A and 27B. But desiring that 27A (Psalter 71) be a full versification of Psalm 27, we are proposing to add lyrics found in the URC/OPC Psalter (with permission from these churches, and following appropriate copyright laws). These lyrics, which would become stanzas 6-10, are:

6. O hear me when I cry,
And answer me in grace!
Thou, LORD, to me hast said
“Inquire and seek my face.”
My heart in glad response will speak
“Thy face, O LORD, my heart will seek.”
7. Hide not Thy face from me,
Thy servant, LORD, I pray;
Since Thou hast been my help,
O turn me not away!
In anger, do not cast me off.
My Savior, God, forsake me not!
8. Though father may forsake,
The LORD will take me in.
Though mother may betray,
The LORD will be my friend.
LORD, teach Thy way and make me go
In level paths against my foe.
9. Do not surrender me
To plotting of my foes;
False witnesses arise
Who lies and slander pose
Against my life, they cause offense,
They breath out hate and violence.
10. If I had not believed
That I would surely see
The goodness of the LORD
With those that living be.
O, wait for GOD! Be strong in faith.
Be bold of heart; the LORD await.

Psalter 75

Another instance is Psalter 75. Bear in mind that Psalter 75 is the only versification of Psalm 28 in our Psalter, so it ought to be an accurate versification. To present

the matter better, I will put Psalm 28:1-5 and Psalter 75, stanzas 1-3 next to each other. You can see that Psalter #75:1, 2 accurately reflects verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 28:

Psalm 28

1. Unto thee will I cry,
O LORD my rock;
be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me,
I become like them that go down into the pit.
2. Hear the voice of my supplications,
when I cry unto thee,
when I lift up my hands
toward thy holy oracle.
3. Draw me not away with the wicked,
and with the workers of iniquity,
which speak peace to their neighbors,
but mischief is in their hearts.
4. Give them according to their deeds, and
according to the wickedness of their endeavors:
give them after the work of their hands;
render to them their desert.
5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD,
nor the operation of his hands,
he shall destroy them,
and not build them up.

Psalter 75

1. O Lord, to Thee I cry;
Thou art my rock and trust;
O be not silent, lest I die
And slumber in the dust.
2. O hear me when in prayer
Thy favor I entreat;
Hear, while I lift imploring hands
Before Thy mercy seat.
3. O let me have no part
With those that hate the right;
For as their works, so their reward:
Jehovah will requite.

Do you see that Psalter 75:3 does not fully versify Psalm 28:3-5? The committee proposes to replace the third stanza in our Psalter with three stanzas that are found in the 1959 edition of the Christian Reformed *Psalter Hymnal*. Those three stanzas read:

O draw me not away
With those of evil will;
With them who speak of peace indeed,
But still are plotting ill.
Requite them for their wrong,
Their evil deeds, O Lord;
O give them then their just desert,
And to their deeds reward.
Thy deeds they disregard,
Thy handiwork despise;
And therefore thou wilt cast them down
And never let them rise.

Although this versification is more complete, does it matter? Our current Psalter 75 does not contain an *extended* prayer for God's judgment on the wicked, but the essence of the prayer is found in the third stanza. Is it so important that we implore God at length for judgment?

The answer to that question depends on the answer to this: is our goal in singing from our Psalter primarily that

we sing words and tunes that we like? Or is it that we sing the Word of God, and learn to pray with Old Testament Israel for God's judgment on her and His enemies? By including these imprecatory sections, the Holy Spirit was teaching Israel to do the latter; we ought to do the same. Especially as we observe apostasy and lawlessness in the world and false church, the true church must sing—and must *desire* to sing—of her longing for judgment, and of her comfort in hearing that judgment will come.

Not all are eager to see the Psalter revised. But all ought to recognize this fundamental weakness of the versifications of our 1912 Psalter, and be dissatisfied with our Psalter at least in this respect: *time and again, it weakens or silences the imprecatory (divine judgment) language of the Psalms.*

Next time I intend to introduce the three new selections being proposed for Psalms 1-40.



A word fitly spoken

Rev. William Langerak, pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Salvation

Jesus is salvation! Let there be no doubt. His name literally is: “I Am Salvation” (Ps. 35:3; Matt. 1:21). There is salvation in no other name (Acts 4:12). Of this salvation the prophets diligently searched, and declared that one day the ends of earth would see it (I Pet. 1:10). Taking Jesus in his arms, Simeon testified: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30). Stopping on His way to the cross, Jesus told Zacchaeus, “Salvation is come to your house” (Luke 19:9). Salvation is in Jesus and belongs to Jesus (Ps. 3:8; 62:7). Jesus is the Lord, the Author, the Captain, and Defender of salvation, the Helmet, the Shield, the Rock, the Horn, and High tower of salvation (Deut. 32:15; Luke 1:69; Heb. 2:10; 5:9). His glory is great in salvation (Ps. 21:5)!

He is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Completely. It is salvation of both body and soul from sin. It is salvation from sin’s right to rule, its shame, and blood-guilt by the imputation of His own righteousness (Ps. 24:5; 51:14). His salvation is from sin’s dominion and power by the implanting of His own Spirit, whereby the saved are brought from captivity, delivered from wickedness, gathered into the church, led in the truth, helped, and taught by God (Ps. 25:5; 53:6; 38:22; I Chron. 16:35).

Since those saved are by nature dead and undeserving sinners, salvation is pure mercy and grace. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Tit. 3:5). Even when we were dead in sins, God has quickened us together with Christ; by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:5, 8). Besides, we are appointed, not to wrath, but to obtain this salvation that is in and by Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5:9; II Tim. 2:10).

Salvation has been fully accomplished, yet is being perfected, so that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24). Jesus first came to be offered bearing the sins of many; and will come a second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:28). This perfection of salvation is certain, for we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pet. 1:5).

By an eternal priesthood Jesus is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25). And being now justified by His blood, much more we shall be saved from wrath through Him; for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (Rom. 5:9-10).

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12). According to His own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, He has saved us and called us with a holy calling (II Tim. 1:9). Being clothed with salvation, we are called to show forth His salvation from day to day, to see, rejoice in, and also wait in hope for salvation (Gen. 49:18; Exod. 14:13; I Sam. 2:1; II Chron. 6:31; Is. 61:10; Ps. 96:2). We are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (II Thess. 2:3). Godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation (II Cor. 7:10).

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation (Heb. 2:3)?! To us and to the ends of the earth is this salvation sent by the foolishness of preaching (Acts 13:26; I Cor. 1:18-21). The way of salvation is revealed by the Word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith; and by the preaching of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Acts 16:17; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 3:15).

Therefore, if you shall call upon the name of the Lord, confess Jesus with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, you shall certainly be saved (Rom. 10:9-13). For Jesus is salvation, Jesus whom you love, and in whom, though you see Him not, yet believing, may rejoice with joy unspeakable.

For the end of faith is perfect, full and free salvation (I Pet. 1:8-9).



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Holstege, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines.

Opportunities to witness, the book of Romans, and Roman Catholics

Having turned off the Isuzu Crosswind, I stepped out and walked up the stairs to the front door of the house, Bible in hand. Darkness had settled over the Orient, and thankfully the tropical heat had relented. This particular neighborhood in Metro Manila was peaceful and quiet. I had just driven about half an hour from our house in Antipolo City, in the low mountains east of Manila. I drove down the mountain, past multitudes of colorful jeepneys, noisy trikes, and crossing pedestrians, and arrived at the house. But I forgot that Filipinos usually eat supper around 7:00 P.M. or later. I had already eaten with my family at home. My Filipino host, who had been attending our Wednesday night class on the Canons of Dordt, warmly welcomed me and three other Filipino brethren into his house and invited us to eat supper with them. “*Kain muna tayo!*” (“Let’s eat first!”). Of course, we obliged, and I enjoyed a second supper of delicious Filipino food. Living in the same house with my host were his brother, his brother’s wife and children, and his aged mother. Also present that night were his sister from Los Angeles and his other brother from Toronto. These last two were the reason I was asked to come that night. They are still Roman Catholic, and my host requested that I bring the gospel to them.

What should I say to these people?

Opportunities for witness come to us constantly, do they not? The apostle Paul exhorts us to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:5-6). When the time comes, the opportunity for witness, how can we redeem that time? What should we say? How should we approach this?

It depends on the situation.

Sometimes the opportunity for witness comes when our neighbor has suffered a loss, hardship, or tragedy. Perhaps your coworker recently lost his wife. They did not attend church very much. They preferred the plea-

tures of this world. But now she is gone, and he suffers the pain of bereavement. He feels the truth of life without God, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit!” But he remembers you. Yes, he remembers your hope! He saw that hope manifested in the past when you suffered loss. He knows that you are a Christian because your conversation has been honest among the Gentiles, your light has been shining before men. So he comes and asks how you can have such hope in the midst of such great loss. Suddenly, the opportunity to witness faces you. What should you say to this man? How should you approach this? The gospel of the resurrection of Christ comes to mind, does it not, and the hope of life everlasting? The words of Romans 8:28 might be fitting: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

At other times the opportunity comes when our neighbor has committed a sin against us, or near us. Maybe your employee has been watching pornography on one of the computers owned by your company. The manager notices the Internet history of that computer. Someone was viewing pornographic websites. He is outraged. He discovers the perpetrator and drags him before you, in the spirit of certain scribes and Pharisees who brought a woman before Jesus. He says to you in so many words, “Master, this guy was taken in pornography, in the very act. Company policy says he should be fired. What should we do to him?” Suddenly, the opportunity to witness faces you. What should you say to the accuser? What should you say to the sinner? How should you approach this? The gospel of forgiveness comes to mind, does it not? The words of Ephesians 4:32: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

On still other occasions, the neighbor may be interested in religious conversation with you, and the opportunity comes. Maybe he is an agnostic, one who says

he does not know whether there is a God or not. He believes in science. He believes in reason. He believes in proving things, but not with the Word of God. He cannot prove that there is a God. But he cannot prove either that there is no God. Therefore, he tells you, he is an agnostic. He thinks truth is relative to each individual. There is no absolute truth, or if there is, we cannot know it. As far as we are concerned, truth is relative. He thinks all religions have some good and some bad, and we Christians should not try to convert people, but celebrate the good in other religions. He thinks everyone should be allowed to choose his own sexual orientation and to marry whichever gender he chooses. Suddenly, he asks what you think. The opportunity to witness faces you. How should you approach such a man? What can you really say? Perhaps you are at a loss for words with such a person. But perhaps the words of Scripture come to mind, when God Himself says, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Is. 46:9). And, when Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

What should we say in these moments? We should simply say what the Lord has already said in the Bible. We should carry the Word of God in our hearts wherever we go. For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword.

But what should be our focus? We should focus on the gospel. We might want to focus on intellectual arguments at times. We may be inclined to focus on moral failures or social evils at other times. We might even be disinclined to focus on anything at all because we fear mockery or rejection, or we are skeptical about the receptivity of our neighbors. But our focus should always be on the gospel. Christ has called us ordained ministers to preach the gospel in all the world. And He calls all of us to hold forth the word of life to our neighbors through personal witnessing.

Many opportunities to witness come to us as missionaries in the Philippines. Last summer, as mentioned above, a Filipino brother asked me to come to his house and preach the gospel to his family, particularly his sister who was visiting from L.A. and his brother from Toronto. They are still Roman Catholics. Roman Catholics are taught a false gospel, another gospel which is no gospel, a gospel of salvation by masses and prayers to the saints and other works. Roman Catholics, if they understand what their church teaches, should live in fear of purgatory and hell. What, then, should I say to these people? How should I approach this opportunity to witness?

The situation and audience, as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit, led me to choose the book of Romans and the heart of the gospel.

The book of Romans is a beautiful portion of Scripture. Paul wrote in the first chapter, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:15-17).

Paul then proves that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). But then we learn the heart of the gospel. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). And "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). For "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And

whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.... If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Rom. 8:30-37).

Supper was finished. Our host invited us into the living room and introduced me more fully. Then he gave me the floor. Briefly, I summarized the grand truths of the book of Romans, focusing on the heart of the gospel, that we are justified freely through faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, and that we know that all things work for our good because God foreknew us and predestinated us to glory. I issued the call of the gospel and explained our reasonable service to God not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.

After a short time of questions and answers, one of the three Filipino brothers who had accompanied me invited the family to attend our worship services at Provident Christian Church. He encouraged the two Roman Catholics from overseas to attend the Protestant Reformed Church nearest to their homes in Los Angeles and Toron-

to. Will the Lord use this for the salvation of these souls? That is the desire of our hearts. But we also trust that as many as are ordained to eternal life will believe.

Our host gave me a small gift of appreciation, and we parted ways. I climbed back into our Isuzu Crosswind, fired up the diesel engine, and headed back up the mountain to Antipolo City. I joined the throng of jeepneys, trikes, cars, trucks, and pedestrians once again. What a privilege to be one of the Lord's witnesses among the millions here in the Philippines!

You too, believing reader, are a witness of God in this world. Count it a great privilege! May the Lord give you opportunities to hold forth the Word of life. Redeem those opportunities and focus on the gospel. Speak the words that God has already spoken in Scripture. Fear not what man might say to you, but rejoice that you are witnesses of the living Lord. Know that He will be with you and bless you when you let your light shine before men.



Church and state

Mr. Brian VanEngen, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney

The other side of the coin: The Supreme Court considers freedom of conscience in the light of *Obergefell*

We have previously looked at the United States Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*,¹ in which the Court found that the rights embodied in the U.S. Constitution included a right for homosexuals to marry ("The Supreme Court Finds a Right to Homosexual Marriage [1-3]," Dec. 15, 2015; Feb. 1, 2016; May 15, 2016). As was noted at that time, when one such right is recognized, it raises the question of the limits of that right in relation to other recognized rights. The Supreme Court recently had an opportunity to look at the other side of the issue, the religious rights of those who believe homosexual practices and marriage are wrong. In early December 2017, the Court heard arguments in the case of *Masterpiece Cakeshop Ltd., v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*,² In this case, the clash is between the rights of homosexuals and the religious rights of a baker who refused to make a wedding cake celebrating a homosexual wedding. We will review the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, including

the facts of the case, the arguments of the parties, and the Supreme Court's statements in *Obergefell* that may give indication on how the Court will come out on this and similar cases.

The Masterpiece Cakeshop is a bakery in Lakewood, Colorado that makes cakes, including cakes to celebrate such events as weddings, anniversaries, and graduations. The bakery is a family-run business owned by Jack Phillips. Mr. Phillips had previously refused to create cakes that had a message that would conflict with his religious views, such as cakes with Halloween themes or that celebrated a divorce. In July 2012, a homosexual couple entered the bakery and indicated that they wished to order a custom cake for their wedding celebration. Jack Phillips indicated that they were welcome to purchase any other merchandise in the store, but that he could not custom design a cake promoting a same-sex wedding because of his religious beliefs. The couple left the store and ordered a cake at another business, but filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. The bakery explained that it was not refusing to serve homosexuals, but that it was the *message* it could

1 *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. ____; 135 S.Ct. 2584 (2015).

2 *Masterpiece Cakeshop Ltd., v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, United States Supreme Court, Docket No. 16-111.

not convey. Nevertheless, the commission ordered the bakery to either make cakes for same-sex weddings or stop making wedding cakes altogether. Jack Phillips and his staff were required to go through a “re-education” program and fill out quarterly reports telling the government when they declined to make a cake and the reasons why.

The Alliance Defending Freedom began defending Jack Phillips, and on December 5, 2017, the case was argued before the Supreme Court. Lord willing, we will examine the ruling in a future article after the Supreme Court issues its decision. For now, we will examine the arguments made in this case, as they are significant for what they show us about the development of this line of case law.

The news in recent years has featured many stories about cases similar to this one, each involving a baker or florist or photographer who does not wish to participate in a homosexual wedding ceremony. It would be easy to dismiss these cases as having little or no significance for the church overall. However, one should not mistake the importance of this case for its effect on Christians in the years to come, as the Supreme Court’s ruling will have an impact on many areas besides the business that provides incidental services to weddings. Commentators on both sides of the issue have expressed the importance of the Supreme Court’s ruling in this case. As one law professor on the side of the anti-discrimination laws stated:

The case, though, is about more than just cake—it is an important and dangerous battle in the broader war between religion and speech rights that conservatives claim on one hand, and LGBT rights, contraceptive access and compliance with health-care laws on the other.³

To understand the importance of the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, it is helpful to go back to comments made by the Justices in their respective opinions in the *Obergefell* case. Justice Alito ended his dissenting opinion with the following warning:

Most Americans—understandably—will cheer or lament today’s decision because of their views on the issue of same-sex marriage. But all Americans, whatever their thinking on that issue, should worry about what the majority’s claim of power portends.

Justice Alito was obviously contemplating the clash that would occur when the homosexual rights identified in *Obergefell* came into conflict with the religious

freedoms of those who oppose homosexual marriage. As is often the case, Justice Anthony Kennedy was the deciding vote in *Obergefell*, siding with the four liberal justices. Justice Kennedy has been a strong proponent of freedom of religion as well as other rights, and he included the following language in his majority opinion, presumably to counter concerns such as those expressed by Justice Alito:

Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.

While this language seems reassuring, as Justice Alito also pointed out in his dissent:

I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools.

As this statement of Justice Alito points out, Justice Kennedy’s reassurance only indicates that believers will be able to “advocate” that same-sex marriage should not be condoned, “teach” these principles, and continue their family structure; but it does not mention the ability to carry out business or other activities in a way consistent with their faith. In other words, the question remains as to whether we can merely teach these truths or if the freedom of religion means we cannot be forced by the government to participate in practices we disagree with. This is the true issue at stake in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case.

The First Amendment protects both the Freedom of Religion and the Freedom of Speech. The arguments put forward by the attorneys for *Masterpiece Cakeshop* focus more on the Freedom of Speech, probably because the Supreme Court has found limitations on the Freedom of Religion, as in cases involving discrimination based on race, and cases involving the religious use of hallucinogens by Native Americans.⁴ Instead, they focused on the concept that forcing the bakery to make a cake for a same-sex wedding would force them to use their artistic talents to send a message contrary to their

³ Craig Konnoth, “No matter how the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case is decided, gay rights win,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 2017.

⁴ *Employment Div., Dept. Of Human Resources of Ore. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990).

beliefs, that creating a cake for such a message would send the message that they condoned same-sex marriage when they do not. They pointed out that the bakery did not discriminate against homosexuals, as they would sell them products, but would not create a cake celebrating a same-sex wedding. The Trump administration's solicitor general argued that letting the ruling stand would mean that an African-American sculptor could be forced to make a cross for a Ku Klux Klan event. The bakers also pointed out that the civil rights commission had previously considered whether bakers could refuse to create cakes with anti-homosexual marriage messages for opponents of same-sex marriage, and had ruled that they could.

Those arguing for the civil rights commission argued that, if discrimination against homosexuals was allowed on religious grounds, the same could apply to discrimination on the basis of race. In the past, some have attempted to use religious grounds to discriminate based on race, and the courts have found this impermissible. The attorneys for the bakery argued that discrimination based on race is different. In oral arguments, the Justices asked if there is a legal test that could be used to determine when discrimination is allowed on religious grounds, but such a test is difficult to delineate. Supporters of the civil rights commission ruling argued that to allow an exemption on religious grounds would threaten to undo the entire legal framework of anti-discrimination laws.

The second point that those on the side of the civil rights commission made is that the bakery is a public accommodation. Generally speaking, when a business or organization holds itself out as open to the public, it brings itself under the requirement to treat all members of the public equally. We have previously looked at the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*⁵ case, in which the court found that the corporation could refuse to offer contraceptives in its health plan for religious reasons, even though the contraceptives were required by the Affordable Care Act.⁶ However, the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case is different in that it involves discrimination against a class of people, rather than denial of benefits required by law.

The issue of public accommodations is very important to our churches and schools, as the same argument can be made if we open our facilities to the general public. For instance, if a school gymnasium is available

for other groups to rent for parties or tournaments, the whole facility would likely be considered a public accommodation. This could have implications if individuals later seek to use those facilities for purposes we do not approve of, such as same-sex weddings. The public accommodation issue could also affect our ability to deny admission or employment to individuals whose lifestyles are contrary to Scripture.

As with the *Obergefell* case, Justice Kennedy is likely to be the deciding vote in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case. During the oral arguments, Justice Kennedy appeared to struggle with the two positions, on the one hand, being concerned about the effect of overturning the law on anti-discrimination laws and, on the other hand, being concerned that the state could bully those of religious beliefs. Both Justice Kennedy and Chief Justice Roberts seemed concerned that there must be tolerance on both sides, and that those claiming discrimination should also tolerate religious beliefs. Justice Kennedy commented that the state of Colorado had been neither "tolerant nor respectful of Mr. Phillips' religious beliefs."

A broad decision either for the civil rights commission or for Mr. Phillips could have far-reaching implications. It may be possible for the Court to narrowly tailor its ruling to the facts of this case. The Court could follow the argument that the work of the bakery in creating custom cakes is artistic speech, and provide protection under the Free Speech clause. Such a ruling would obviously leave many businesses exposed to legal attack, as only businesses that make an artistic statement in their work could claim protection. The Court could also find that the actions of the civil rights commission were heavy-handed, and that a more tolerant solution to the issue was warranted. If the Court does not make a broad religious exemption, but finds another path to provide relief to the bakery in this case, it all but assures that each situation will need to be litigated as the courts determine where to draw the line between the newfound rights of homosexuals and the rights of believers to refuse to take any actions condoning what they believe is a sinful lifestyle. We will look more closely at these issues when the Court issues its ruling in this case, Lord willing.

⁵ *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, 573 U.S. (2014).

⁶ Brian Van Engen, "The Supreme Court Says Corporations Can Exercise Religion," *Standard Bearer*, vol. 91, no. 1, (October 1, 2014), 16-18.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

On September 20, 2017 Rev. Douglas Kuiper was installed as a professor in the PRC seminary. Including the current professors, how many men have held that position and taught in our seminary throughout its history? Answer later in this column.

Young adult activities

Hope PRC in Redlands, CA will be hosting a Young Adults' Retreat this summer on the dates July 2-5. Registration opened online on March 1. They, and the young adults who will attend, look forward to a great time of fun and fellowship!

The Young Adults Bible study group at Byron Center, MI PRC invited the Jr. and Sr. Young People to a special joint meeting after the evening service recently. Prof. D. Engelsma was invited to come and speak on the topic of complacency. This was to be a discussion with the opportunity to ask questions. All were encouraged to join in and give some thought to questions regarding complacency in the church today.

Congregational activities

The Activities Committee of Hudsonville, MI PRC hosted an open gym night for adults out of high school and older at Hope School on Friday, March 23. Many came to enjoy volleyball, spike ball, basketball, and 9 Square along with refreshments and snacks.

On a Saturday in early March the congregation of Grace PRC in Standale, MI held a cleaning bee to clean

their new auditorium and addition. Some of the things needing cleaning were doors, walls, windows, carpet, trim, etc. Now they can enjoy and appreciate the new addition, which they did on Sunday, March 4!

The congregation there also has opportunity to camp this August at Dutch Treat Campground in Zeeland—reservations were coming in.

Evangelism activities

The Reformed Witness Committee of the five Siouxland-area churches met in Edgerton, MN on February 19, at which meeting new officers were elected. This body is responsible for airing the Reformed Witness Hour broadcast on radio stations in Sioux Center, IA and Pipestone, MN, as well as sponsoring the Young Reformers Bible Study on Wednesday evenings at Dordt College. The five local congregational evangelism committees cooperate in other joint ventures, such as annual lectures, while also working on individual projects in their own churches, such as summer Bible camps and outreach Bible studies. There is much “behind the scenes” work that often goes undetected. We thank evangelism committees such as this one wherever they labor! May God be glorified by their efforts! And let's not forget to support these efforts financially, as we have opportunity to do so.

School activities

CCHS Foundation assists Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, MI) in providing our children a distinctly Reformed education. You are hereby encouraged to support this cause at “Taste of Covenant X,” Thursday, April 19, at Hudsonville PRC. Punch bowl is 6:30 P.M., with dinner following at 7:15 P.M. For details, to make a reservation, or sponsor a table, you can contact Dewey Engelsma at (616) 635-6147 or by email at dengelsma@hotmail.com.

Minister activities

Rev. Brian Huizinga was led of the Lord to decline the call extended to him from Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. The new trio is Rev. A. Brummel, Candidate J. Langerak, and Rev. Jon Mahtani.



Classical activities

Classis East reconvened for unfinished business on February 28. Minister-elect David Noorman's classical exam was also scheduled for that day in Hudsonville PR Church. After opening devotions, he preached his specimen sermon and his oral exam commenced after the sermon was approved. The brother unanimously sustained the examination. The consistory of Southwest PRC held a special worship service for Wednesday, March 7, at 7:00 P.M. for the purpose of the ordination and installation of minister-elect Noorman. Prof. R. Cammenga led the worship service and conducted the installation.

Classis West met March 7 in Loveland, CO PRC. Delegates to Synod were chosen.

Young people activities

In our Canadian churches, Family Day coincides with President's Day in the United States. The young people at First PRC of Edmonton, AB hosted their annual pancake breakfast that morning. Delicious pancakes, sausage, eggs, and rolls were a great way to start the day, with proceeds assisting the young people who plan to attend the PRC Young People's Convention and Retreat.

The Western Young People's Retreat, hosted by the Lynden and Spokane young people, is planned for July

2-5, 2018 at Camp Sanders in Tensed, ID. There will be plenty of camping and cabin possibilities for families at this new venue. More information regarding registration will be coming soon.

Mission activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines met Monday, February 26 in the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela City. The delegation from Doon PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee, on their annual trip, were privileged to attend this meeting. Those delegates were Rev. Cory Griess along with Joel Van Egdom, accompanied by his wife Michelle. The next Classis meeting will be held in June, D.V.

Trivia answer

Professor Doug Kuiper was installed as our seminary's tenth professor. Those installed before him were: Rev. George Ophoff, Rev. Herman Hoeksema, Rev. H. C. Hoeksema, Rev. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert Decker, Rev. David Engelsma, Rev. Barrett Gritters, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Ronald Cammenga. More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Wedding anniversary

With thankfulness and gratitude to God, we rejoice with our parents and grandparents, **John and Sandra Heys** as they celebrate 50 years of marriage on April 5, 2018. We are grateful for their guidance, instruction, love, and support, which they have shown to us throughout our lives. Our earnest prayer is that God will continue to bless them with His love for years to come. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Corinthians 13: 4-7).

John and Tracy Heys

Dustin, Randy, Cheyenne, Callie

John and Lorinda Tolsma

Aliyah, Bailey, Silas, Regan

Nick and Sonja Meelker

James, Jorie

Brian and Trisha Kotman

Brayden, Haylee

Berthoud, Colorado

Announcements continued

Wedding anniversary

With thanksgiving and praise to our God, **Allen R. and Sharon Brummel** celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on March 12, 2018. We as children and grandchildren thank our heavenly Father for the many blessings God has given to them and to us through them. God has been faithful to His covenant promise to continue His covenant in succeeding generations. We thank God for their godly example of faithfulness and love. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless and uphold them. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Genesis 17:7).

Five children and spouses,

35 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild

Edgerton, Minnesota

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.

PRC Synod 2018

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2018, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Rev. Ron VanOverloop
O-11243 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(rvanoverloop22@gmail.com)

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. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 9, 2018.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

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.

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

- Apr. 1 "Not Faithless but Believing"
John 20:24-29
- Apr. 8 "The Redeemer and His Work"
Ruth 4:1-10
- Apr. 15 "May God Bless Your Marriage!"
Ruth 4:11-12
- Apr. 22 "A Blessed End to a Beautiful Book"
Ruth 4:13-22
- Apr. 29 "The Power and Necessity of the
Preaching of the Gospel"
Romans 1:16