

The Standard Bearer

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*The life of prayer is not only a command;
it is a privilege.*

*In our struggle, let us not forget that
ceaseless prayer is indeed a blessing of salvation!*

See "Pray Without Ceasing."

Pray without Ceasing

“Pray without ceasing.”

I Thessalonians 5:17

The difference between the words “continuous” and “continual” is important in understanding this brief text. To do something *continually*, is to start and stop on a regular basis. To do something *continuously*, however, is to start and never stop. The inspired command to the church in Thessalonica and to the church today is not unto a continual activity that stops periodically, but unto a continuous, non-stop activity. Pray without ceasing! What a command! Is that humanly possible?

Many weaken the force of this text by calling it a hyperbole—a figure of speech that exaggerates a point for emphasis and, therefore, is not to be taken literally. In that case, all we have here is Paul telling us that we need to pray more often. This softening of the command to unceasing prayer is probably due to the uneasiness

felt when we compare our lack of prayer life to such a seemingly impossible calling. We struggle enough in our bustling busyness to pray for mere minutes a day, and here we find that prayer ought to be a round-the-clock pursuit. That cannot be, can it? Yes, it can. Because of our sinful nature, there is really no command of God that we can obey perfectly. This one is no exception. But our inability to obey is no basis for diminishing this demand of unending prayer.

“Pray!” Jehovah, our covenant God, says. He means, “Communicate with Me while conscious of My presence!” As a true friend desires face-to-face communication with his beloved, so God desires the same with His covenant people. While we may not and cannot picture the face of God, prayer involves awareness of His eyes looking in favor upon us, and His ears open to our cries. With a mindfulness of His amiable presence, we communicate with God. That is the essence of prayer.

Normally, we communicate with words—words in our hearts and minds that we say both audibly and inaudibly. However, though the clearest communication is through words, we know from our interactions with spouse, children, and other loved ones that we communicate in a

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variety of ways. It is not only the content of our speech that communicates, but additionally, the manner of our speech. The tone, the facial expression, the eye contact, the body language all send messages. We say that actions sometimes speak louder than words. And so it is, that prayer to God, while often with words, may be through sighs and groans that we ourselves do not fully understand (see Rom. 8:23 and 26), with upward looks and by simple cries of “Help, Lord!”

Prayer not only *may* be through non-verbal means, but prayer *should* be such. This is how we “pray without ceasing.” Prayer becomes a way of life. Not needing to fold our hands and close our eyes, we continue through our days and nights with the consciousness of God’s face before us. Before the face of God (*coram Deo* in the Latin), we make every movement of our body and soul communication with God. Whether working, playing, or resting, life becomes one continuous prayer, until such covenanting with God is perfected in glory.

Such non-stop prayer may be illustrated in our advanced technological age by Skype, Facetime, or some other video-calling program or app. Ceaseless prayer is like having ceaseless video communication with God, with one difference: while He can see our every movement, we cannot see His. With this realization, we make our lives a constant communication of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication to the omnipresent God.

The calling to pray without ceasing is not a requirement to a live in monk-like seclusion, with our eyes closed and hands folded, doing nothing else in life except for private, focused prayer with words. If this is the meaning, then yes, the text would be physically and mentally impossible, not only for us but also for Jesus when He lived on this earth. In fact, if our life on earth consisted only of constructing sentences to God on our knees, we would be disobeying our Master in heaven who requires a much greater variety of work and service to Him. Therefore, let us live vibrant, full lives, directing every part as another meaningful expression of prayer to God.


But let us not abuse this idea either. Our naturally deceptive hearts can skew the holiest of doctrines to excuse our sins. Let us not take this teaching of ceaseless prayer to mean that there is no need for set times of

prayer in worship and devotions. Some imagine that since they pray continuously in the manner formerly described, there is no need to pray any other way.

But can we not sense and have we not experienced the reciprocal relationship between these forms of prayer? How do we jumpstart our day of ceaseless prayer except through focused, private prayer in the morning? How do we help ourselves and families in ceaseless prayer unless we have family devotions? How do we remember God’s presence ceaselessly unless we frequent His house of prayer? And what enriches the content of prayer in worship and devotions but prayer without ceasing? There is a mutual effect between ceaseless prayer and formal prayer.

The calling to unceasing prayer is for all believers. We might wrongly imagine that such holy living is only for those who have matured to a high degree of spirituality. But what we find in I Thessalonians 5:17 is a command to a church that was barely half a year old—recently converted from idolatry to serve Christ. Yet Paul does not shy away from calling these young Christians to such a life of prayer. This is the holy life every believer, young or old, must pursue in ardent love and thanks to God for gracious salvation.

In this way of ceaseless prayer, God by His Spirit also helps us in the battle against sin. The constant consciousness of God’s face in such unceasing prayer makes it more difficult to sin. How can we sin while praying before the face of God? When we “pray without ceasing,” we are led also to “rejoice evermore” and “in everything give thanks,” which “...is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thess. 5:16-18).

This life of prayer is not only a command; it is a *privilege*. In our struggle, let us not forget that ceaseless prayer is indeed a blessing of salvation! On our own, we sinners have no ability to pray, nor do we even have the right to approach a holy God. But Christ by His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven earned us that right and sends His Spirit so we are able to enjoy sweet communion with God—not only periodically but *without ceasing*! “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). 

Into Africa... Again

In 2010, the Committee for Contact with other Churches (CC) sent Professors R. Dykstra and B. Gritters to visit Reformed believers in Namibia who requested a visit from the PRCA. The believers there were very displeased with their denomination—the Reformed Churches of South Africa—and hoped the Protestant Reformed Churches were of like mind with them. What they had read of our churches gave them such hope. These saints in Namibia had heard of the PRCA through literature recommended to them by a minister in South Africa, Rev. Slabbert LeCornu. One couple, the Duvenhages, had asked his advice for a good Reformed book to give to their hunting clients. The Reformed minister recommended Rev. Ronald Hanko's *Doctrine According to Godliness*. That book began contact that resulted in an official request by six Namibian churches to visit them.

During that visit some six years ago, we gave speeches introducing the PRCA: PRC history; the unconditional covenant doctrine we embrace; the error of the doctrine of common grace; and Reformed worship. We learned of the Namibians' commitment to the Three Forms of Unity, Reformed worship including Psalm-singing, the Church Order of Dordt, and their determination to give church office only to men. To read more about

that visit, see the *Standard Bearer* editorials of December 15, 2010, and January 1, 2011. To learn a little about the family that made original contacts with us, google "Kalahari Trophy Hunting." This will give you the Duvenhage's family website that gives almost as much testimony to their faith as it does about hunting in Africa.

After our initial visit, the hope of official and formal contacts dimmed. These saints and their six churches remained a part of their large denomination. Communication between churches goes through denominational committees answerable to synod; and it was the decisions by their synod, which they believed were unbiblical, that motivated them to contact the PRCA.

But informal contacts continued. A few Protestant Reformed members or families visited both in Namibia and their southern neighbor, South Africa. Some of our ministers also maintained correspondence that resulted, late last year, in an invitation to speak in South Africa on the Protestant Reformed view of the covenant; specifically, for Prof. R. Cammenga to give lectures summarizing his thesis on Herman Hoeksema's view of the covenant.

In the providence of God, as the Contact Committee was contemplating that invitation to visit South Africa, the churches in Namibia informed us that five of the

six churches we visited in 2010 had now separated from their denomination and would like us to visit them again. This made another delegation from the CC not only possible but almost obligatory. For the Constitution of the Contact Committee speaks of our "sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible."

The Contact Committee asked Professors Cammenga and Gritters to visit in May and June of 2016.



The first week we visited the churches in Namibia, this time limiting ourselves to the central part of the country near the capital, Windhoek, and the Kalahari Desert in the east near Botswana. In 2010 the travel was more extensive, for we spent three weeks in Namibia, visiting all six churches. These congregations are widely scattered—from the Namib coast on the Atlantic to the border of Botswana almost 500 miles east; and from the capital of Windhoek in the center of the country to a pair of churches about 250 miles north toward Angola. None of the six churches is closer than an hour from another (only one) and most are at least three or four hours of travel from their nearest neighbor. In 2016 we visited only two areas, and members from the other churches travelled to see us at an all-day Saturday conference.

Before the conference, of course, we had opportunity to spend many hours in informal discussions with leaders in the Namibian churches. We answered many questions and set forth the Protestant Reformed viewpoint on significant issues.

At the conference this year the topics were of their choosing. The saints wanted to know the PRCA's viewpoints on four matters: how properly to celebrate the Lord's Supper; marriage, divorce, and remarriage; the place and authority of the seminary professor; and the use of Article 8 of the Church Order when ministers are in short supply.

It may be surprising that the Reformed Christians in Namibia are first of all interested whether the PRCA use a common cup or little individual cups (*kelkies*) in celebrating communion. But one of the signs of departure in their former denomination was an apparent carelessness regarding the proper administration of the sacraments, the second mark of the true church. Vitally important to the Namibians is the *unity* of believers in the supper, manifested by the *one* cup. "*The cup of blessing...*" is Jesus' own instruction for commemorating His death. Not *cups*, many, but *cup*, one. At the same time, they use one loaf of bread, from which each breaks a piece. Symbolizing, of course, that the people of God as the *family* of faith are *united* in the body and blood of Jesus. Most of history is on their side. In the PRCA in generations past, as our older members will recall, a common cup was used. Unity! We heard the brothers' (and sisters')

plea that unity be expressed in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Even if a congregation is too large to use one cup, they urged, let the members sit at many tables and share one cup and one loaf at each. We are one, as the Form for Administration of the Lord's Supper emphasizes:

Besides, that we by this same Spirit may also be united as members of one body in true brotherly love, as the holy Apostle saith, "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread...one meal is ground, and one bread baked, and out of many berries...one wine floweth...so shall we all...be altogether one body, through brotherly love."

We explained that the PRCA do not use the common cup, and view this aspect of the administration of the supper to be a part of each congregation's liberty to judge what is "most conducive to edification," as the Church Order indicates (Art. 62). Especially in large congregations there would not be room even to have many tables. In these cases, we explained, unity may better be manifested by all partaking at the same time in their pews. Because of their history, not only was it painful for them to hear of the PRCA's practices in this regard, but they also would regard the one cup and one bread to be part of the "outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word [that may] not be changed," as the Church Order also instructs (Art. 62). No official decisions were made, of course, but it appears that these churches would not consider it a sin for us not to use

the common cup, but would urge us to do so, if at all possible, in order to express unity in the way the church of the past did.

Then we explained further the PRCA's view on remarriage of divorced persons. *Further*, because some had heard us in 2010, and some had read PRCA literature. But others heard for the first time, listening with great interest to our exposition of Matthew 19 and related passages. By those who participated in the discussion widespread agreement was expressed. What difficulty any had was not with the exegesis or theology of the position, much less with seeing the practical importance of maintaining marriages in a day of rampant divorce and remarriage. Rather, they wondered how to treat the few members in their congregations who had already remarried. We related the PRCA history on the issue—that those who were already remarried were allowed to remain, but no others were permitted to join, nor were present members allowed to remarry while their spouse was living. We pray these explanations will be helpful for the new gathering of churches to come to one mind on the vitally important doctrine of marriage.

Their other questions related to church government. The third mark of true churches is the proper exercise of Christian *discipline*, and since discipline is an aspect of church government, their questions relate to a vital aspect of Reformed church existence. First, they asked the PRCA's view of the 'office' of professor. Seminary professors, in their judgment, had become too in-

fluent at their assemblies, wielding more authority than ministers and elders. Their professors, they believed, were leading the churches astray regarding the Lord's Supper and women deacons, for example. So the brothers wondered, "What is the PRCA view of the 'office' of professor of theology?" We explained that the PRCA in 2000 had changed Article 2 of the Church Order to read "the offices are of *three* kinds" instead of *four*, that the professor of theology was not a fourth office but a labor of the *minister*, and that in the PRCA, although professors are asked to attend and speak in the assemblies, they do not have a vote.

Finally, they asked our judgment about Article 8 of the Church Order, and admitting men into the ministry who have not had full seminary training. The five scattered churches have a shortage of ministers. When we visited in May, the churches were served by only one minister who lived in Windhoek, a somewhat central location. But remember, the churches are scattered across a country twice the size of California. Thankfully, shortly after we left, the Lord provided for them two more ministers. One minister from South Africa accepted a call from the churches in the north. Another man who had been released under Article 11 of the Church Order was fully reconciled and readmitted to the ministry in the church in the east part of the country. But that still leaves only three ministers for five churches. Thus, they wonder about our view of the Church Order, Article 8.

Church government and the Church Order. Because of misuse of the Church Order in their denomination, this new gathering of churches must work through how to deal with Dordt's venerable Church Order. As is often the case in movements of reform, as theirs is, a temptation comes to question the wisdom of Reformed and Presbyterian church government. This will be an important part of our ongoing discussions with the brothers.

After the conference, we gave away many dozens of RFPA books and PRC pamphlets. Had we packed our luggage with books alone, we could not have satisfied the desire for good literature. If you want to travel to this beautiful country someday, please reserve a piece of luggage for books. "Bring the books!"



For the second week we flew about 800 miles east/southeast to Pretoria, South Africa, to visit with believers from the same denomination that the Namibians had departed. Most of the contacts in Namibia and South Africa are of Dutch ancestry (many generations past) and speak Afrikaans as their first language, which is a great deal like Dutch. But most are also able to speak English, which is a great help. We spent a week with a young family—the Oosthuizens—whose gracious hospitality paralleled their commitment to the Reformed traditions.

At the invitation of Rev. Le-Cornu (see above), we spoke for two afternoons at a small Reformed seminary, heretofore unknown to us. We presented two speeches on the theology of John Calvin (Prof.

Cammenga) and two speeches on preaching the Heidelberg Catechism (Prof. Gritters). All of them were received with great appreciation. At a small Reformed church Prof. Cammenga presented three lectures on the PRCA's view of the covenant—an important topic because the covenant views of Schilder are common. Prof. Gritters spoke one evening on the errors of neo-Calvinism and another evening on what makes a church *Reformed*.

What we found in South Africa was as encouraging as in Namibia. Small groups of Reformed believers are determined to maintain the Reformed traditions, the old paths, and are very keen to hear more about the PRCA. Many are well read and eager to read more of our literature. What we saw of family life—daily family worship, singing the Psalms, antithetical living—was heartening. Although the contacts in South Africa are not as long-standing as those in Namibia, we believe the prospects warrant continued contacts and further visits in the future.

God permitting, the Contact Committee will arrange more visits to Namibia and South Africa. But just as important will be to extend an invitation to representatives of these churches to visit the PRCA in our country. Perhaps as soon as next year. Walking together requires agreement (Amos 3:2), and agreement comes only when both parties know one another. What the Lord has determined for the future is known only to Him. But our calling is clear. We will work to manifest unity—a unity in the truth of the Reformed faith. ☞

Conditionality, Not Responsibility

In a recent blog post,¹ the Rev. Wes Bredenhof, a Canadian Reformed minister, contends that the Protestant Reformed objection to the covenant doctrine of the Canadian Reformed Churches is, in fact, a denial of personal responsibility. By their criticism of the Canadian Reformed—and “liberated”—doctrine of the covenant, the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) are guilty of denying human responsibility, particularly with regard to salvation in the covenant of grace. The PRC are strong on divine sovereignty, if not obsessed with it, but derelict on human responsibility.

The title of Bredenhof’s piece is “Personal Responsibility.”

His charge is that the PRC condemn as Arminianism a covenant doctrine that is, in fact, a doctrine that does justice to “human responsibility”:

So is it Arminian to insist on human responsibility? Of course, the Protestant Reformed allege exactly that. Followers of Herman Hoeksema, most notably David Engelsma, have insisted that we are essentially Arminian because we hold to the view that there are conditions in the covenant of grace.

It is nothing less than deplorable that at this late date in the history of the controversy of the PRC with the “liberated” Reformed doctrine of the covenant such a learned theologian as Wes Bredenhof still does not grasp the nature of the controversy. Either the PRC, and I in particular, have failed clearly to explain the nature of the controversy over the covenant, or Rev. Bredenhof misrepresents the controversy. Neither of the alternatives is pleasant to contemplate.

I will exert myself to be blunt and simple.

¹ <https://yinkahdinay.wordpress.com/2016/08/08/personal-responsibility>

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Let Bredenhof apply himself to understand the fundamental issue.

The issue is not human responsibility. Every baptized child of believing parents is called, seriously, by God to believe on the covenant Jesus Christ and in this way to know and enjoy covenant salvation in Jesus Christ and to live the life of the covenant in obedience to the God of the covenant. This is the responsibility of reprobate, profane Esau, as well as of elect, regenerated, holy Jacob.

Wes Bredenhof, the Canadian Reformed, and Klaas Schilder may hammer on this responsibility as strongly and endlessly as they think necessary, without objection from the PRC.

The issue is not responsibility!

The issue is not the responsibility of elect, regenerated Jacob to live the thankful life of covenant obedience.

Neither is the issue the responsibility of reprobate, unregenerated, but circumcised Esau to repent and believe and, thus, to live a life of covenant obedience.

We do remind Bredenhof and the Canadian Reformed that occasionally in their covenant theology they ought to do more with divine sovereignty than pay brief lip service to it, in order to commend their Reformed credentials. Bredenhof does this in his blog post. Having devoted the entire post to an enthusiastic advocacy of human responsibility, at the very end, in one brief line, he assures his readers that “I acknowledge God’s full and complete sovereignty.”

Mere acknowledgment is all there is about sovereignty. There is no advocacy of it. Especially, there is lacking an explanation of the relation of responsibility to God’s sovereignty in the covenant. In this piece on the covenant of God with the children of believers, there is not so much as a reference to Romans 9, certainly the *locus classicus* on the subject of Bredenhof’s article: the covenant of God with the children of believers, particularly the salvation of some of them in distinction from others.

Not only the Protestant Reformed readers of the blog, but also all Reformed Christians expect from Bredenhof recognition of Romans 9’s teaching that there are two

kinds of offspring of believing parents, elect and reprobate, Jacobs and Esaus, children of the flesh, who are not the children of God, and children of the promise, who are counted for the seed. Some are Israel; others are merely “of Israel.”

This is not a Protestant Reformed obsession with divine sovereignty in the treatment of the covenant promise and covenant salvation. This is the treatment of the subject of Bredenhof’s blog by the apostle Paul.

It is no denial, or even weakening, of responsibility to observe, at the very least, that the only possibility of a child’s fulfilling his responsibility of loving and serving God is God’s work of sovereign grace, uniting him to Jesus Christ, regenerating him by the Spirit of Christ, and causing him to believe. And that God works His saving grace in those children whom He has elected in eternal love. “Jacob have I loved.” God Himself declares, concerning His saving work of the covenant regarding the children of believers, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.”

Treating of responsibility on the part of covenant children, of which responsibility faith and obedience are surely the outstanding response, Bredenhof has nothing whatever to say about sovereign, covenantal grace. About this, Bredenhof is silent. Except for the bare acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty, which, in view of his doctrine of the conditionality of covenant grace and salvation, rings hollow.

This clear teaching about, and emphasis on, divine sovereignty—concerning the children of believers, with regard to covenant salvation!—is not the special interests of the PRC and Herman Hoeksema, who suffer from a weakness concerning responsibility. But they are the gospel of Holy Scripture, which is concerned above all else to give the glory of the salvation of the children of believers to God.

The issue in the controversy of the PRC with the Canadian Reformed over the covenant is not responsibility. Not whatever!

The issue is *conditionality*.

Klaas Schilder taught, and the Canadian Reformed, including Wes Bredenhof, teach, a conditional covenant promise, a conditional covenantal salvation, and a conditional covenant.

Suspicious, dubious, and even reprehensible as the

term itself is, the issue is not merely the use of the term itself. If one meant by the term “condition”—*truly* meant by it—only that in His covenantal salvation of elect children God requires faith as the means of justification and obedience as the way of gratitude to God for His gracious salvation, that is, the responsibility of the regenerated child of the covenant, we would urge better, less misleading, terminology, but we would not, on the ground of the careless term itself, charge heresy. Orthodox theologians in the past used the term, occasionally, to express responsibility.

What the PRC object to in the covenant theology of Schilder and Bredenhof is the teaching that God makes His gracious covenant promise, “I will be your God,” to *all* the children of believers alike. Whether this promise is realized in the salvation of some children depends upon, or is conditioned by, the children’s faith. Faith is a condition upon which the general, gracious promise of the covenant depends for its realization. All the baptized children are the objects alike of the gracious covenant promise. Only in some is the promise realized. What accounts for the realization of the covenant promise in some only is their performance of the condition of faith.

Further, it is the covenant doctrine of Wes Bredenhof and the Canadian Reformed that God actually establishes His covenant in some, important sense, usually described as “legally,” with all the baptized children alike. Whether, however, the covenant comes to fruition in the salvation of children depends upon their fulfilling the condition of faith. Covenant salvation is conditional in that it depends upon the child’s faith. With all the baptized children alike does God establish His gracious covenant in an important sense. What accounts for the continuation and further development of the covenant in some only is their performance of the condition of faith.

Since the baptized must keep the condition of the covenant as long as they live, it is the covenant doctrine of the Canadian Reformed that final covenant salvation is conditioned by the faith of the children. Whereas God on His part graciously desires the salvation of all the baptized children alike, what accounts for the final, eternal salvation of some only is that they performed the conditions of faith and obedience to the very end.

It is to this conditionality of the covenant in “liberated”

theology that the PRC object. It makes no difference that, when pressed to the wall (and they must be pressed to the wall before they make the confession), the “liberated” Reformed confess that some children fulfill the condition with the help of God’s grace. In fact, this changes nothing: It remains the performance of the condition by the children that is decisive. In “liberated” theology, the covenant and its salvation still depend upon the children’s performance of conditions.

Conditionality, not responsibility!

Even if churches and theologians are wholeheartedly in agreement with the covenant theology of the Canadian Reformed and violently in disagreement with the covenant theology of the PRC, let them honestly represent the issue as conditionality, not responsibility.

I do not here prove my analysis of the covenant doctrine of Schilder, the Canadian Reformed, and the “liberated” Reformed. For one thing, I am confident that no one can challenge the accuracy of my analysis. For another thing, I have painstakingly demonstrated the “liberated” Reformed doctrine of the covenant from their own writings in several books, including *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers: Sovereign Grace in the Covenant*; *Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition*; and *Battle for Sovereign Grace in the Covenant* [all published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, www.rfpa.org].

I permit myself to demonstrate the grievous error of Schilder and of the “liberated” Reformed with one statement by Schilder himself, which I quoted originally in my *The Covenant of God*. “It belongs to the contents of the promise that has to be embraced in faith, that the *Holy Spirit desires* to sanctify us, (indeed) *imparting to us that which we have in Christ* (in the promise by rights).” This is Schilder’s explanation of the line in the Baptism Form that the infant children of believers, prior to their baptism, are “sanctified in Christ.” According to Schilder, the Holy Spirit has a gracious attitude toward all the physical children of believers. In this grace, the Holy Spirit “desires” the salvation of all the baptized children. Carrying out this gracious desire, God the Holy Spirit actually “imparts” to all baptized children that which they have in Christ, which can only be salvation in some form or other. But all of this gracious desire and gracious imparting are conditional, that is, depend for

their saving efficacy and fruition upon the children’s act of believing.

This has nothing to do with (Reformed) responsibility. It is Arminian conditionality: The saving grace of God, which is wider than election, depends for the fulfillment of its purpose and for its efficacy upon the faith of the sinner.

The doctrine of the covenant of the “liberated” Reformed, which Wes Bredenhof promotes, is the denial of particular, sovereign grace, with regard to salvation in the covenant. The covenant doctrine of the “liberated” Reformed is exposed by Romans 9 and condemned by the Canons of Dordt.

The doctrine of the covenant of Wes Bredenhof and the Canadian Reformed is the conditional theology of Arminianism, with specific reference to the gracious promise to the children of believers and with specific reference to the saving of the children of believers. The gracious promise of salvation, the gracious desire of salvation, and even the beginning of gracious salvation are unavailing unless the children perform the condition upon which all depends. Grace—*baptismal* grace—is not sovereign. The Canons of Dordt in its entirety condemns this doctrine.

For Bredenhof, faith is not a God-given and God-worked gift to the elect children, by which *means* God bestows the grace of salvation. But faith is a *condition* by which the child himself effects the fulfillment in himself of God’s desire concerning all the baptized children that they be saved. Ignore the notion of merit, about which the “liberated” Reformed are loud in their claim that they deny it. A condition upon which the saving work of God depends is as much a heresy as Roman Catholic merit. Indeed, condition and merit are alike the offspring of Pelagius and Arminius. Condition as much as merit sins against the gospel of grace. The Canons of Dordt expressly deny that “faith...is...a condition of salvation” (Canons I, Rejection of Errors, Error 3).

The issue of the PRC with “liberated” and Canadian Reformed covenant theology is not responsibility.


The issue is *conditionality*.

I frankly confess that I am doubtful that this, or any other critique, will convince Bredenhof and his Canadian Reformed colleagues of the error of their covenantal ways. The reason for my doubt is the recent rise of the heresy of the Federal Vision, which by its own forthright and very

public acknowledgment is simply the further development of the doctrine of the covenant of Schilder and the “liberated” Reformed. All the theological world recognizes that the Federal Vision is the open, bold denial of the gospel of grace, in all the “five points of Calvinism,” as confessed by Dordt. If Bredenhof and the Canadian Reformed Churches will not recognize the essential heresy of their conditional covenant theology from the development of it in the Federal Vision, they will not acknowledge the false doctrine in response to anything that I write.

The Canadian Reformed Churches and theologians not only are unable to condemn the Federal Vision but also defend the heresy, exactly because they recognize the Federal vision as the legitimate development of their own covenant doctrine—the doctrine of a conditional covenant.

What the Canadian Reformed Churches will not admit, the Federal Vision has proved conclusively.

The issue is *conditionality*. 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENG

Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility (17)

“What Saith the Scripture:” The Bible’s Necessity

Scripture’s Necessity

The Bible is the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men. The Bible is an entirely unique book. There is no other book in the whole world that is like this book. There is only one book that can be called “the Word of God.” There is only one book written in human language, one book that can be read, studied, and meditated on that is “the Word of God.” That book is the Bible, or Holy Scripture, or just Scripture.

Because the Bible is God’s Word, it shares in the perfections of God. Reformed theology and the Reformed confessions traditionally identify five outstanding perfections of sacred Scripture. They are Scripture’s authority, Scripture’s necessity, Scripture’s perspicuity, Scripture’s sufficiency, and Scripture’s reliability or trustworthiness.

The perfections of Scripture are interdependent. Scripture’s necessity depends on the other perfections of Scripture. If Scripture is not the authoritative Word of God, neither can it be necessary for faith and life. It might be an extremely valuable book, an interesting

book, a book containing worthwhile insights and helpful advice. But it would not be an absolutely necessary book, one’s life temporally and eternally depending on it. Only if Scripture is clear and understandable, can it also be a book necessary to read and know. If the Bible is not understandable, it might be necessary, but its necessity would be lost on its readers, at least on most of its readers. Only if the Bible is clear can it effectively function as a book that is necessary to read and know.

Further, only if Scripture is sufficient, containing the full revelation of God to man, can it alone be a book necessary for the child of God to believe. If Scripture is not the sufficient revelation of God, at the very least something else must be added to the Scriptures. And only if Scripture is trustworthy, can it also be functionally necessary in the life of the child of God. A book that is unreliable, filled with errors and untruths, cannot be truly necessary in the life of the believer. Rather than be necessary, it ought to be rejected and burned.

In the last two articles we treated the first of Scripture’s perfections, its authority. In this article and the next, we want to consider Scripture’s *necessity*.

By Scripture’s necessity, we mean that Scripture is *in-*

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Previous article in this series: August 2016, p. 445.

dispensable. It cannot be set aside or replaced by something else. What is written in its pages and the message it contains is unlike that which is written anywhere else. It provides answers to the most searching questions that human beings can ask. It gives guidance for the most perplexing problems, guidance that cannot be found in any other book. It imparts knowledge of truth that cannot be obtained from any other source. And it provides comfort that cannot be derived from any other religious text.

For What Scripture is Necessary

For what is Scripture necessary? Scripture is necessary for everything, absolutely everything of importance in the life of the child of God. Chiefly, Scripture is necessary for the right knowledge of God. Jesus teaches in John 17:3 that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” But God cannot be known—known fully or truthfully—apart from the Bible.

By comparison with God’s revelation in creation, what is commonly referred to as general revelation, God’s revelation in Scripture is a much fuller, more complete knowledge of God. And in distinction from general revelation, God’s special revelation in His Word is necessary *for salvation*. God cannot be known *savingly* from His revelation in creation. Neither can a saving knowledge of God be derived from an inner voice, a special speech of God that comes from within a person. Rather, what is necessary is that God be known from His Word, the sacred Scriptures. And apart from the Word there is no saving revelation of God. This is Scripture’s necessity.

All this has to do with God’s purpose in special revelation as compared to His purpose in general revelation. God’s purpose in general revelation is simply to reveal enough of Himself in order to leave unbelieving men without excuse. In general revelation, God makes known His deity—that He is God. Connected with that, He makes known something of His greatness, His glory, and the duty of all men to serve Him. But in general revelation, there is no grace. It is only in His revelation in Scripture that God makes known His mercy and His love in Jesus Christ. That is the great difference between God’s revelation in the creation, on the one hand, and God’s revelation in Scripture, on the other hand. In Scripture, God makes Himself known in a saving way.

He makes Himself known in the cross and death of His Son, Jesus Christ, as well as the calling of all men to believe on Jesus Christ. That distinguishes special revelation from general revelation, and that makes special revelation—Scripture—necessary.

Since Scripture is necessary for the right knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, Scripture is indispensable for salvation. Apart from the Scriptures and the revelation of God contained in the Scriptures, there is no possibility of salvation. This is the distinctive message of the Christian religion. This means that the truth claims of the Christian religion stand apart from the truth claims of any other of the world’s religions. It is not the case that the other religions contain some of the truth and, therefore, have a positive religious contribution to make. They are not stepping stones to THE truth. They are *false* religions. Their adherents are guilty of worshipping gods that are no gods. They must repent and turn from their idolatry in order to worship the true God who is revealed in Scripture. There is only one true religion, and that is due to the fact that there is only one authoritative, infallibly inspired, religious book. It is not the *Book of Mormon*, or the *Koran*, or the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is the Bible and the Bible alone.

Besides the revelation of Himself and the way of salvation in Scripture, there are other important reasons on account of which Scripture is necessary. Scripture is necessary for the faith and life of the child of God. The Bible contains all that we are to believe (faith) and the complete will of God for how we are to live in this world (life). To put it another way, the Bible is necessary for doctrine and for ethics. Apart from Scripture we would not know what to believe or how we ought to live.

Scripture is necessary for the right worship of God. That is an important aspect of Scripture’s necessity. God is to be worshiped, not as we see fit, but as He reveals it is His will to be worshiped. And He has revealed His will for worship in His Word. The nature of worship, the form of worship, and the elements of worship are all made known in Scripture. Apart from Scripture we would not know whom we are to worship—the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither would we know the way in which we are to worship Him. Both the object of worship and the manner of worship are contained in Holy Scripture.

For all these reasons and more besides, Scripture is necessary, absolutely necessary.

Scripture's Necessity Proven

Scripture and the Reformed confessions teach Scripture's necessity. To the unbelieving leaders of the people Jesus says in John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." In the Scriptures is to be found eternal life, and apart from the Scriptures there is no eternal life and salvation. The necessity of the Scriptures for eternal life is due to the fact that "they are they which testify of me"; that is, in the Scriptures Christ is revealed. And the clear implication is that outside of the Scriptures, Christ cannot be known.

Similarly, Simon Peter confesses in John 6:68 that in Christ are to be found "the words of eternal life." These are not simply words about eternal life, but words that impart eternal life. Still today, Christ "has the words of eternal life." He has them on the pages of Holy Scripture. They who read and believe the words of Scripture have eternal life. They have it in the sense that they are assured of it, already now possess it, are preserved in it, and will one day inherit it. There is no other book about which it can be said that its words are "the words of eternal life."

Toward the end of the Gospel according to John, the apostle writes:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30, 31).

That which is written in the pages of the Bible is written for the purpose that those who read will believe that Jesus is the Christ. Believing that Jesus is the Christ, they will "have life through his name." The implication, once again, is that apart from that which is "written in this book," there is no possibility of faith in Jesus Christ and no enjoyment of eternal life. For the possession and enjoyment of these blessings, Scripture is necessary.

In perfect agreement with the teaching of our Lord and His beloved disciple John is the teaching of the

apostle Paul. Writing in Romans 10:17 he says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is necessary for salvation. Only believers are saved. But faith "comes," that is, faith is worked and produced by "hearing," the apostle teaches. The hearing that he has in mind, of course, is the hearing of the preaching of the gospel. But faith and the preaching that is the means unto faith are dependent on "the word of God." Apart from the Scriptures there is no possibility of faith and no possibility of the salvation that is enjoyed through faith. So indispensable are the Scriptures!

Both of the classic passages on the inspiration of Scripture teach Scripture's necessity. In II Timothy 3:15-17, the apostle teaches the profit of inspired Scripture. The God-breathed Scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The implication is that apart from Scripture there is no enjoyment of the profit mentioned here: right doctrine, godly reproof and correction when one strays, and instruction in the way of righteousness. Neither is the man or woman of God properly furnished unto all good works to the glory of God and the well-being of the neighbor. All of this invaluable profit is imparted by Scripture and by Scripture alone. Clearly, Scripture is necessary, abundantly necessary.

In II Peter 1:19-21 believers are admonished that they "do well" to "take heed" unto Scripture "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." And again, apart from Scripture there is no light shining in this dark and evil world. The only light that penetrates and dispels the darkness, the only light that lights the way so that the child of God can safely walk that way, is Holy Scripture. So necessary is Scripture that apart from the light that it sheds, there is only darkness—nothing but darkness.

In line with the teaching of Scripture, the Reformed confessions teach the necessity of Scripture. The Belgic Confession, in Article 2, speaks of the two means by which God is pleased to reveal Himself, His revelation in creation and in His sacred Word. By comparison to His revelation in creation, "He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word." The article goes on to say that this revelation is "as far as


is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.” Scripture contains that which is “necessary for us to know” both for “His glory and our salvation.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith also affirms Scripture’s necessity. In the very first paragraph of the first chapter, the Confession teaches that “for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary.” Scripture is “most necessary” for the preservation and propagation of the truth and for the establishment and comfort of the church. “Most necessary,” that is altogether necessary, indispensably necessary, with a necessity that cannot be replaced or set aside.

In the sixth paragraph of the Confession’s first chapter,

the Westminster divines state that “[t]he whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture....” “All things necessary” for God’s glory and man’s salvation are set forth in Holy Scripture. This is Scripture’s absolute and irreplaceable necessity, a necessity that sets it apart from every other book that has been written.

With grateful heart my thanks I bring,
Before the great Thy praise I sing;
I worship in Thy holy place
And praise Thee for Thy truth and grace;
For truth and grace together shine
In Thy most holy Word divine,
In Thy most holy Word divine.

(*Psalter*, #381, stanza 1) 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

Family Prayer

Many have written about the importance of prayer in our personal lives as Christians and for the church of Jesus Christ corporately. In this article we continue a short series on family worship.

Prayer should be central to our family worship, along with the reading and study of the Word of God. The family should routinely be gathered together to devote itself to prayer. Time and application must be given to this important spiritual activity in our homes. Our prayers should never be mere formal recitation of stock phrases, hurriedly uttered before we go off to our daily occupation and activities. Times of prayer must be heartfelt, earnestly seeking the face of God, worshiping Him, and continually giving Him thanks and praise.

The reality of the covenant of God in our homes is

experienced in sincere family worship. Prayer is holy conversation with our covenant God through faith in our Lord Jesus. The true godliness of our family is promoted by prayer. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us that prayer is the chief part of our thankfulness to God. Such gratitude is hardly possible without regular, hearty, zealous prayer to God.

The biblical pattern is morning and evening prayers. Daniel prayed while living in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. He prayed regularly three times in his own apartment. In the busyness of his life and in the carrying out of his important daily responsibilities, he found time for prayer, realizing the urgent need for it. Many in the palace knew about Daniel’s prayer life. No one could stop him from this practice, not even his persecutors.

It is true that the Christian should be continually praying throughout the day. He should live a life of prayer. Many silent prayers arise from our hearts to God especially as we face various difficult circumstances of life and feel deeply our dependence on the Lord.

Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2016, p. 374.

But though we may pray many personal prayers during the day, we need also to have set times of prayer with our family. These take on a more formal character, making mention of the great things of God, which the biblical examples of prayer teach us.

The father has a significant role in leading his family in prayer. He exercises his spiritual headship in his home when he leads his family in prayer. Father, by his daily prayers, will teach his children many spiritual lessons. It is often heartening to hear children using the same phraseology of their fathers' prayers in the home. These prayers will reflect the kind of concerns that father commonly brought to the throne of God's grace.

Scripture forbids carnal and worldly prayers that reflect the covetousness that is in the heart of man. Many prayers that one hears in public are full of carnal and, at times, even silly and foolish requests. God is not honored by such prayers. The biblical pattern for all prayer shows the lofty and exalted concerns that must always be primary. We must pray for the glory of God's name, the performance of His sovereign will in the earth, and the coming of His glorious kingdom. Nothing should be more important in our prayers.

What a high calling we have in our homes and families to pray for the church of Jesus Christ among us! We must pray for her faithfulness to the Lord and for her holiness in this ungodly world. We must pray that the Lord will give her boldness and courage in these times of great apostasy. If father's prayers hardly ever rise above the petty concerns of this life and our own earthly prosperity, how will he instill in his children the consciousness of the greatness and holiness of God and the proper attitude of fear and reverence before Him?

In our family prayers we teach our children to pray for the preaching of the Word in the local church, for the important work of the officebearers of the church, and for peace and unity among the members of the church. In our regular daily prayers we teach our children to pray for the coming of the kingdom. Our prayers must reflect the understanding we have of the greatness and majesty of the kingdom of Christ, and the ardent longing we have in our hearts for the coming of this kingdom.

Many prayers are wrongly uttered for our nation as though America were actually a Christian nation that has God's constant blessing upon it. How many prayers

wrongly equate the progress, success, and prosperity of America with the causes of Christ's kingdom? Scripture speaks of the great wickedness that abounds in our land and of the coming of God's righteous judgment on it. Rather, must we teach our children that our hearts are to be set on the majesty and glory of the kingdom of Christ, its perfect righteousness and truth, and its final glorious triumph over all the nations of the world.

In our times of prayer as a family we should teach our children to pray regularly for the cause of missions, the powerful work of the preaching of the gospel among the nations for the salvation of God's elect and beloved people. We ought not expect that our children will be interested in this ongoing mighty work of our exalted Lord if we do not speak of these things often in our family prayers.

In the communion of saints we must care for one another and, therefore, pray for one another. Real, godly love and concern for members of the church is kept alive in our homes by daily prayer for those who are going through severe trials in their lives. We as adults can be terribly self-centered in our lives. We need to be ashamed of how much of our daily time and concern and effort is focused on ourselves.

We often have great concern for the success and accomplishments of our children. We take pride as parents in the achievements of our children. But we must show by our prayers that we also have great spiritual concern for our children, for how they live and whether or not they are serving the Lord in their lives. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind each esteem the other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things but also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3, 4).

We have not yet addressed directly the need for the family to pray for itself and for each one of its members. Our prayer together as a family must be *personal*. Our Christianity must not be cold and doctrinaire; this leads to the great evil of dead orthodoxy. The personal nature of our Christianity should be revealed in the prayers that we pray together as a family. Husbands must pray for their wives. Fathers must teach their children to pray for their covenant mothers in the home. Mothers must teach their children to pray for their fathers and his uprightness in his daily occupation. Parents must pray that


the Lord will keep their children from the temptations and vanities of this world as well as from the wiles of the devil. At times, we must pray for one another by name.

Family worship ought to include daily confession of sin. Parents must be an example of deep humility and real godly sorrow over sin. In the life of the covenant home there are sins committed every day. These must be repented of through prayer. There is no unrealistic ideal in any of our homes. Awful sins can and do appear even in our families. There is the evil of sibling rivalry among the children. Even the smallest children in the Christian home will display sins of pride and anger. At times, they speak evil of one another. Sometimes sins in the family are so grievous that they cause deep divisions and enmity among the members of this family. These sins must not be allowed to continue for days or even years without reconciliation. The covenant home should be the place of intimate covenant fellowship with God and a place of personal love and care for one another. There is great urgency of continual confession of sin in our homes—the sins against God and against one another. If we do not do this, our families will be unable to serve God’s wonderful purpose for the spiritual wellbeing of the members of the family. One of the chief ways intimacy, love, and blessed unity are promoted in the family is through family prayer. We must know how to bring each other as covenant family to the cross of Jesus Christ to find reconciliation to one another, and joy and peace in each other’s fellowship.

A matter that ought to be mentioned regularly in family prayers is the great need for God’s grace to endure the trials of our daily life. When great crises and difficult

trials come in the covenant home in the providence of God, these must be the occasion for special prayer. The realization of the deep need for this should arise spontaneously. When there is serious sickness, when accidents happen to family members, the family should pray much together. Death takes away loved ones; grandparents, even parents at times are suddenly taken away. Covenant children so dear to our hearts are sometimes suddenly taken away. These are all traumatic experiences for the family. The genuineness of the faith of father and mother will be clearly manifested in how the family deals with these trials. Prayer keeps the family from falling apart and being overwhelmed with sorrow. Fathers and mothers must lead their children through these, and inspire in them real trust in the Lord.

Do we as parents find our hope, strength, and comfort in the Lord in times of great trials? Do our children experience this trust in the Lord in the depths of their being when they watch the behavior of father and mother? Prayer is such an important part of real trust in the Lord. Our children desperately need this kind of support and encouragement in times of trials.

Finally, we give great encouragement to each other when we continually give thanks to God for each other. Parents give thanks for serious godly children, and children give thanks for devout parents who have great spiritual concern for them and make so many personal sacrifices for them. This strengthens the bond of our covenant homes. Prayer is a wonderful blessing in the believing family. 

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Sister-Church Activities

The fourteenth biennial British Reformed Fellowship Conference held in late July was the largest and perhaps the best one yet! A total of 125 people stayed at the conference center at least one night, with most

staying the entire week. There were also 47 day visitors who enjoyed the activities of the conference, which had as its theme “Behold I Come Quickly: The Reformed Biblical Truth of the End.” Speakers were Prof. David Engelsma, Rev. Andrew Lanning, Rev. Martyn McGeown, Rev. Angus Stewart, and elder Peter Adams. Those in attendance were from Northern Ireland, the

USA, Singapore, England, Wales, Australia, Republic of Ireland, Canada, Hungary, and the Philippines! Two day trips departed from the conference center, which was a Victorian castle situated above an 80-acre lake in a 1,300-acre forest with the Mourne Mountains in the distance. Quite a place! Plans for the next conference have already begun. Sounds like a “must-do”-list

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

idea! Make a note on your calendar for July 21-28, 2018.

Young People's Activities

Advance Notice: The 2017 Young People's Convention will be held August 7-11 at the Michindoh Conference Center in Hillsdale, MI and will be hosted by First PRC of Holland, MI.

Seminary Activities

Classes in the Protestant Reformed Seminary began on August 29 with convocation held on September 7 in Grandville, MI PRC. The seven senior students are in place for their internships that run through December 31. The year began with three second-year students from the PRC and one first-year student from the CERC in Singapore

School Activities

Many PR Christian schools have once again opened their doors and begun fall classes. Of note is the beginning of the school year at Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School in Doon, IA, which began its 50th year of covenant education on August 23. God be praised for the gift of Protestant Reformed schools in our denomination!

Delicious. Delectable. Delightful. That's how the September version of The Taste II was advertised. This tantalizing event will be held as a fundraiser for ACHIEVE, the special education program for the Protestant Reformed School located in Crete, IL, and is open to adults from the three area churches. Bite-size samplings of appetizers and des-

serts found in the PRCS Volume II Cookbook will be available for trial and review, "sandwiched" by a main course planned by the committee. Mmmm, inviting indeed!

Supporters of Eastside Christian School were invited to celebrate a new school year with a "Picnic on the Patio" at First PRC of Grand Rapids, MI on September 1. A buffet dinner of hamburgers, hot dogs, salads, and dessert was provided by the Eastside Christian School Foundation. Supporters were able to encourage their students, teachers, and parents as they praised God together for His provision and care.

Minister Activities

Rev. Cory Griess, pastor at Calvary PRC of Hull, IA, recently considered the call to be our denomination's third foreign missionary to the Republic of the Philippines. After asking for a one-week extension, Rev. Griess declined this call on August 28. We are thankful that God is sovereign and in control of all things...including answers to humanly difficult situations, as this one was to Rev. Griess.

After his furlough to the USA, Rev. Andy Lanning and his family have again taken up their labors in the Covenant ERC of Singapore.

Rev. Michael DeVries and his wife spent the month of August in Ireland and Northern Ireland while Rev. Martyn McGeown vacationed in the United States. On his "vacation," Rev. McGeown chaperoned the Young People's Convention and preached five times in three PR churches.

First PRC of Holland, MI formed

a new trio consisting of the Reverends Allen Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC, Redlands, CA), and Rodney Kleyn (Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, WA). On August 28, the call was extended to Rev. B. Huizinga. May God bless the congregation at Holland and Rev. Huizinga as he considers this call.

RFPA News

The RFPA has just released a new book, *A Spiritual House Preserved: A Century in the River's Bend (1916-2016)*. This commemorates 100 years of existence for Hope Protestant Reformed Church. But this is more than a record of Hope's history. More importantly, it reveals the secrets of why she continues as a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ today: secrets that if heeded give Hope and like-minded churches hope for tomorrow. *This book was not a Book Club offering.* However, if you would like to purchase this book, it is available through the RFPA website located at: <http://rfpa.org/blogs/news/tagged/a-spiritual-house-preserved>

Congregational Activities

Speaking of book clubs, the book club of the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA recently began discussion of the book *The Bondage of the Will* by Martin Luther.

For those of you who are Apple computer/tablet/phone users, there is now a Psalter app for iOS devices that can be downloaded from the App Store. Search for

“Psalter” and choose the item with Tian Loong Woon’s name under it. It is free, but you can choose to give a contribution after downloading

it. Tian Loong is a member of the Covenant ERC of Singapore. There is a similar app for Android devices.

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratitude to our heavenly Father, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

GORDON and HERMINA VINK,

on September 22, 2016. We are thankful for their godly example and instruction and for His blessing them through many years of marriage. It is our prayer that our God will continue to keep them in His care in the years ahead. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

✿ Christopher and Amy Vink

Jonathan, Emma, Matthew, Sarah, Susannah

✿ Joel and Barb Vink

Allyson and Tyler Ophoff

Meghan, Ethan

✿ Darren and Stephanie Vink

Abigail, Brook, Micah, Brendan

✿ Daniel Vink

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving to the Lord of the harvest, we remind our fellow saints of the 45th anniversary of the ordination and installation into the ministry of:

REV. RODNEY G. MIERSMA.

He and his wife, Sharon, have faithfully served our churches in Isabel, SD; Pella, IA; Holland, MI; Wellington, NZ; Lacombe, AB; Foreign Missionary to Ghana; and Loveland, CO. Our emeritus minister continues to serve our churches in northwest Iowa.

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me" (Ezekiel 33:7).

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CLASSIS WEST

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Randolph, WI, on Wednesday, September 28, 2016, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 27 (see announcement below for topics). All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should contact Randolph's clerk, Mr. George Vroom, 920-296-9634, mailto:george@vrooml.com.

Rev. Doug Kuiper,
Stated Clerk of Classis West

Classis West Officebearers Conference **Biblical Counseling**

Tuesday, September 27
Randolph PRC, WI

Schedule & Speakers
9:00 A.M.

An Overview of Biblical Counseling for Elders (1)
Pastor Jeff Doll

10:30 A.M.
An Overview of Biblical Counseling for Elders (2)
Pastor Jeff Doll

12:00 P.M.
Lunch

1:00 P.M.
The Practice and Goal of Biblical Counseling
Pastor Gary Eriks

2:30 P.M.
Implementing Biblical Counseling in the Local Church
Pastor Rodney Kleyn

Collection will be taken
to cover conference expenses

Men, women, young people—you are all cordially invited to attend the **Reformed Free Publishing Association's** **ANNUAL MEETING**

Rev. Joshua Engelsma will speak on

“Lord Grant Boldness”: The RFPA's Witness in the Sexual Revolution

September 29, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Providence Protestant Reformed Church

This meeting provides the opportunity for men to join the Association.

SW PRC Lecture

Keeping the Sword Drawn: Our Calling as the Church of the Militant Christ

Rev. Brian Huizinga

September 30, 2016

Grace Community Church
3500 New Holland St.
Hudsonville, Michigan

7:30 P.M.

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Southwest PR Church
For livestreaming: southwestprc.org