

The Standard Bearer

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Remembering the Days of Old

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

Deuteronomy 32:7

Just before Moses ascended Mount Nebo to see the promised land and then die, he sang a lengthy song to Israel. In this song Moses set forth the faithfulness of God. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (v. 4). But then in contrast, Moses spoke of the unfaithfulness of Israel, unfaithfulness that had manifested itself already in the wilderness. Moses also demonstrated how the Lord would chastise Israel through affliction and then have compassion on them after they humbled themselves before God.

The verse that we consider for this meditation is found at the beginning of this lengthy song. These words were addressed to the younger generation of Israel, including

the children. They were to remember the days of old and consider the years of many generations. The idea is that they were to remember and consider the works of salvation God had performed and the revelation God had given in the days of old. To that end, they must ask their fathers and elders who would show and tell them. The unstated purpose is that they may know Jehovah, His gracious works, and how He deals with apostasy so that they remain faithful.

We consider this passage in connection with the beginning of another school year and catechism season. Although this passage is addressed to the younger element in the church, it implies a calling to all the members of the church. The children are to ask their fathers and elders about the glorious works of God in the past. And the older generation is to show and tell of the days of old. Although this passage has broader application than our Christian schools and catechism classes, it does set forth the principles that stand as the basis for our Christian schools and the catechism program. And that is good to consider as both are about to begin.



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“The days of old” and “the years of many generations.”

This refers, first, to the works of salvation that God had performed in times past.

For Israel at this time, the days of old were rather limited. They included God’s leading Abram out of Ur into Canaan, and then the wonderful covenant promises given to Abraham and his seed. There was God’s preservation of Israel in Egypt, followed by His gracious works to deliver Israel out of Egypt, preserve them during the forty years in the wilderness, and finally bring them to the border of Canaan.

As the history of the covenant progressed, there would be more works of God that belonged to the days of old and the years of many generations. There would be the work of God to chasten Israel in the period of the judges. These would include the work of God to establish the house of David as kings in Israel. There would be the work of God to destroy an apostate Israel and to chasten an unfaithful Judah through captivity. Later, there would be the work of God to send Jesus Christ into the world to secure the salvation of the church by His death and resurrection—works that were only hinted at and prefigured in the Old Testament. And there would be the work of God to bring salvation to the Gentile world.

The days of old and the years of many generations also include the revelation of God given through the prophets, through Jesus Christ, and also the apostles. God not only performed great works of salvation, He also explained them through divine revelation. In the Old Testament He did that by the prophets, who explained how God’s great works of salvation looked ahead to greater works to come. In the fullness of time God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to accomplish these greater works of salvation and explain what He was doing. After Jesus’ exaltation He raised up the apostles who completed His revelation concerning the works of salvation in Jesus Christ.

All this revelation has been infallibly recorded for us in the Bible by divine inspiration.

All these works and the revelation of them are included as we consider the days of old and the years of many generations.



Remember and consider.

There are many things that happen that we forget. To

remember them is to retain them in our memory so that they are constantly before us. This we are to do with the works of God’s salvation as revealed in Scripture.

Implied here is the need of having a thorough knowledge of God’s saving works in Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture. One cannot remember what he does not know. But then, knowing, we must also remember. It is good to examine ourselves in this. There are many things we remember and often speak about, for example, the death of a loved one, the behavior of our children, sports, wrongs done to us, etc. How much is the revelation of God and His salvation on our mind and in our memory? How often do we speak of it?

But we are also to *consider* these things. To consider has the basic idea of distinguishing one thing from another. It emphasizes the idea of discernment, perception of how things are related to each other, and thus, of understanding. Joined to remembering, considering emphasizes that you analyze and understand what you know and remember. This also is what we must do with the revelation of God in Scripture. We must be students of Scripture, so that we come to an ever-clearer understanding of its teachings and how they relate to each other. And we must also apply these teachings to our lives.



“Show” and “tell.”

This passage speaks of fathers and elders.

The term “father” can refer to one’s biological father or grandfather. It can also refer to one who has had great influence on others, either providing for their care or shaping their perspective. A teacher was called a father. Probably father is used here in the sense of one’s biological father or grandfather.

Next, there is elder. The term “elder” can refer simply to older people (both male and female). But it also was used to identify those who held an office of authority, a position held because of age and experience. In these senses, there is probably no limitation on the term elder in this passage.

The younger generation is to ask their fathers and elders. They are to ask them to show and tell about the saving works of God from time past.

To show means to bring something to the foreground so that it is conspicuous before a person. Usually it refers to something previously unknown. The younger genera-

tion in the church is to ask their fathers and the elders in the church to make known in a very clear and conspicuous way the great works of God revealed in Scripture.

To tell is the common word for speaking and emphasizes that this showing is to be spoken.

In this connection there are two questions.

First, why must the younger generation come to the older generation with their questions? The answer is, because they have the experience and wisdom to show and tell the younger of the great works of God.

Secondly, why must the younger generation come not just to their fathers (and mothers) but also to others, especially the elderly members of the church? The reason is that no father has all the gifts necessary to provide for the proper instruction of his children; they must receive the instruction of others as well.

Moses indicates that the fathers and elders will show and tell the younger generation that asks. They will do this because of their love for the youth of the church and for the sake of God's covenant.

Implied here is a calling to fathers and elders. Make sure that you have the knowledge to show and tell what the younger generation asks and needs to know. Make sure that you make the time for this show and tell. And be approachable. Cultivate a good relationship with the younger generation, so that they are encouraged to ask about the days of old and the years of many generations.

How is this show and tell to be done?

This is to be done by fathers and mothers teaching their children in the home. Repeatedly, parents are commanded to teach their children the realities of the covenant and of salvation. It is the parents' obligation to instruct their children in the home; there first of all is where the children ought to be asking for show and tell. This is also on the foreground in this passage.

This is also to be done by mothers and fathers teaching their adult children who are raising their own families. According to Titus 2:3, 4 elderly women must "be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children...." Let adult children ask their parents concerning the days of old and the years of many generations. And let their parents continue to show and tell.

This asking and telling can be done through Bible study societies. There is value to having the old and the young together in Bible study groups. This becomes a natural way to implement the principles of this passage.

This asking and telling is to be done in the catechism instruction given by the church to her children. The church has a calling to instruct her youth. This is done in the catechism room where the pastor and elders show and tell the youth of the days of old.

Finally, this asking and telling is done in the good Christian schools. The Christian school movement arose out of several principles.

First, our covenant children need to be instructed in many disciplines that parents are ordinarily not qualified to provide. We must be in the world, but not of the world.

Second, our covenant children need to be instructed in these disciplines from the viewpoint of Scripture. This is especially true if they will be not of the world.


Finally, the entire covenant community is responsible for this instruction—not just the fathers but also the elders.

Out of these principles arise our Christian schools, which have been a great blessing to our children.



To be faithful!

The song of Moses in which our passage is found was a warning against apostasy that would arise in Israel's future. At the beginning of this warning, Moses instructed the church to remember, to ask, to show, and to tell. This is God's prescription to faithfulness in the church. Israel's subsequent history demonstrates this. Repeatedly Israel departed from the Lord. Invariably, it was the result of a lack of remembering, asking, showing, and telling.

Let us take this to heart and be zealous to heed the exhortation of this Word of God. We see apostasy abound also in the church world today and the church is under God's judgment for it. This apostasy is rooted in an appalling ignorance of the Word of God. For the sake of the faithfulness of our future generations, let us heed the instruction of this Word of God. 

Visiting (YOUR) Mission Fields (1)

Missions is one of the essential works to which Jesus Christ has called His church. Christ's church is the body of believers. Thus, believers, missions is your work. No, that does not mean that all believers are called to be missionaries. On the contrary, ordained ministers are called to be missionaries in order to do this official mission work of the church. But even then, "how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:15). The church sends them out, as Paul and Barnabas were sent out, the Holy Spirit commanding the church in Antioch, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Then the passage records: "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2, 3). Missions is the work of the church, of believers, working through the institutional church, that is, the special offices in the church.

Since it is your work, believers, it is good that you be involved in the work and be knowledgeable of it. At the PRC Seminary, we are always pleased when members of the churches visit our classes, or even come for a brief tour of the facilities. We will often remind them, "This is your building, and this is your

work." We are happy that they take an interest in their (the churches') work of training young men for the ministry. Similarly, it is good that members of the church take an active interest in the mission work of the church, to the extent that they make an effort to visit the mission fields.

Some of the benefits of visiting a mission work were brought home to us (again) a couple months ago when my wife and I had opportunity to worship in Pittsburgh. This was an enjoyable time of renewing old acquaintances and meeting other believers for the first time. What planted the seed for this editorial was the presence of a number of visitors at the worship services that Sunday. Two elders from Southwest were present—not at all unusual. Travelers from Singapore were present—quite unusual. And what especially impressed me was the presence of four young adults from Crete Protestant Reformed Church, who came to the area for a race (a half marathon), and stayed over Sunday to worship and fellowship with the members of the mission. And the fellowship was excellent.

The goal of this editorial (and the next) is to encourage you, especially the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, to visit your mission fields. The

PRC have missionaries preaching in two areas—Pittsburgh, PA, and the Philippians. A visit to some of our smaller churches is included in this goal. Readers who are not members of the PRC should know you are cordially welcome to do the same, and the editorial intends to encourage you also to visit a mission work of the PRC, or a mission field of your own church(es).

Visiting a mission field is to be encouraged because of the many benefits it yields both for the field and for the visitors. This was reaffirmed recently in another connection. This past summer five seminarians had opportunity to live for three to six weeks on a mission field (or a small congregation in a mission-like situation, Covenant of Grace PRC of Spokane, WA). All the students returned aglow with enthusiasm for the work being done, for the saints they came to know and love, and for the worship they enjoyed in these places. Likewise, the reports from the fields/congregation expressed appreciation for the visits and labors of the students.

Obviously, the longer the visit, the greater will be the mutual benefits. But even a one-Sunday visit is usually better than no visit at all.

What, specifically, are the potential benefits of a visit to a mission field, or to a small congregation

with a good mission outreach mentality?

For the people on the field, the benefit, first and foremost, is encouragement. This includes a boost in the attendance at the worship services in the day, weeks, or months you attend. Probably only members of small congregations will fully appreciate this point, and yet, do not we even in large congregations enjoy visitors to the worship services? But in a small group, to have additional voices in the singing and confession of faith, more chairs filled, more fellowship before and after the service, add an unmistakable vivacity to the service. The benefits are perhaps difficult to quantify, but they are real.

In addition, the mission group is encouraged by your interest in them and in the work. Your presence indicates to them that *the churches* are aware of them and are behind the work, not merely the calling church, consistory, and mission committee. For the same reasons, your visit also encourages the missionary greatly. He can at times feel quite alone and forgotten in the work, far from family, from the calling church, and from the center of the churches' life. Your visit reminds him that he, his family, and the work are remembered and supported by the churches as a whole.

Furthermore, the personal acquaintances and friendships formed are important for people of the mission group. The PRC become more real and concrete when members of those churches visit the field. This enables these distant believers on a mission field more easily to iden-

tify with the PRC and to tie their groups in with the denomination in their own minds.

Another potential benefit is the good example of the visitors. Most often members of the mission group have been raised in homes that were not Reformed, and quite possibly not even believing. Many know nothing from experience of a godly marriage or of a believing covenant family. The visitors have opportunity to give small glimpses of the blessed covenant life which is essential for Reformed believers and the congregation.

Oh, and consider taking some "work clothes" along. More than one family or group of visitors have enjoyed helping in fix-up/landscaping/painting projects in Spokane and in Pittsburgh. What a boost for a small group with many demands on a relatively small number!

Although this next is, perhaps, in a special category of visitors, it can be noted that visiting ministers from the PRC benefit the field in a unique way. They come preaching the same doctrine as the missionary. While most everyone in the PRC will say, "but of course," this is not something that members of the mission group would take for granted, because in many denominations this would not be the case. The blessings for the field are obvious—the members of the group learn to trust the missionary and the denomination because of the consistent agreement in doctrine and life. Congregations who give up their pastor for a few weeks to preach and teach in the mission field should know that

this can be a significant benefit to the work.

But, truth be told, you probably will benefit more as a visitor than will those visited. How so? First, your understanding will be enlarged. If you are observant, you will begin to grasp what mission work is and what labors it requires. What does a missionary do? What essential role does the mission group perform? How is the calling church involved? How does this diverse group of people meld into a unified group, even a congregation? These questions for starters.

In your visits you will gain some knowledge of the struggles in the work of missions. These include, but are not limited to: getting family, friends, co-workers, or students *interested* to attend a Bible study, speech, or worship service; disappointments due to visitors who come for a while, and then simply, without notice, never come to another service; tremendous heartache and significant setback when a member (or family) of the mission who was a pillar of strength and vitality—inexplicably rejects what he formerly confessed; trying to correct the lies spread by others of what the PRC teach; sorrow over so many that come and express a lively interest, but then discover our biblical stand on divorce and remarriage, which teaching and practice touches them personally. You can read about these kinds of struggles in missionary reports, but visiting the field makes it real. The missionary, the calling church, and the mission group deal with these sorts of struggles on a regular basis.

At the same time, visitors will note progress and evidence of God's blessing in many ways as well. You will hear Protestant Reformed preaching on the mission field—proclaimed boldly and uncompromisingly. You will see new members who join with enthusiasm; regular attendees taking membership classes and being thrilled by what they are learning; children born into the group, raised in the fear of the Lord—a new generation receiving godly instruction in the home, catechism classes, and Christian education. If you stay for a longer period of time (or come back more often), you will be privileged to observe regular attendees and members growing in their understanding of the Reformed faith, and loving the doctrines God has given to the PRC to proclaim and defend.

And then there is the blessing of getting to know the members of the mission group—who they are, where they came from, and what love and zeal they have for the Reformed truth we love. This is part of a growth in appreciation for the church catholic—even more

so when it is a foreign mission. A visitor experiences that the church of Jesus Christ is indeed far broader than the predominately Dutch congregation where he worships weekly. At the same time, visitors to the field should be infected with the excitement for the work of Christ gathering, defending, and preserving His church by His Word and Spirit. From that day forward, it will be much easier to give his full support, including money—in synodical assessments or special collections—for the cause of missions. Now, indeed, he can pray with more understanding for the work of missions—generally, and for the field(s) he visited specifically, as well as for the church universal.

What other positive fruits might grow out of a visit to a mission? It may well plant seeds that produce good fruits. A young man encountering the exciting and powerful work of Christ gathering His church, and seeing the need, might give serious consideration to pursuing the ministry of the gospel. In others, the desire for more knowledge of missions may grow, so that they begin to read about missions

with zeal. The yearly *Acts of Synod* and the missionaries' reports are a minimum for all confessing members of the church. Some may well go beyond and read some good Reformed books on missions, such as *What is the Mission of the Church?* (by Kevin De Young and Greg Gilbert) or *Missions: The Biblical Motive and Aim* (by John M. L. Young). Perhaps such a visit might even motivate some members to move to a mission field to live and work. (Rev. Bruinsma has written on this, and pointed out that some churches find this a powerful good on a mission field.)

What we have written above is little more than a listing of the benefits of visiting a mission field. Much more could be said, but these should give some idea of the blessings.

Yet, one might ask, is it all positive, always beneficial to me and to the members of the mission group?

The answer, sadly, is no. There are potential pitfalls to a visit. Visitors can do damage to a work. About that I will say more, D.V., in the next issue. ☞

LETTERS

Preparing for Worldwide Missions

I wanted to write briefly to support Prof. R. Dystra's call for the PRCA to start prayerfully planning for the future deployment of her ministers. He is, of course, correct in saying that sending pairs of missionaries is biblical, that is clear from Paul's work.

Something else exemplified by Paul and which he writes about in Romans 15:20 is his ambition to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named. As someone interested in world missions for many years, I can tell

you such places still exist, but to target them will take a huge effort in preparatory planning. It seems to me that up to the present, PRCA mission endeavor has followed the "Macedonian call" pattern, in that where a group of Reformed people has sprung up and a need for a missionary/pastor has been expressed, that is where they have been deployed.


However, in my reading about world mission matters, one overarching need is seen worldwide, and that is for well trained pastor/missionaries who can teach the whole

counsel of God. Reformed men, such as those we train in the PRCA Seminary are the ideal, and to my mind, the best men for this work in all the world. The principle of II Timothy 2:2, which I believe is enshrined publicly in a noticeboard and in the work of the seminary practically, must be multiplied worldwide. [The text is engraved in stone at the entrance to the Seminary—ed.] We hear mention of the need for a Far Eastern Protestant Reformed Seminary—yes, this is vital to oversee and put the finishing touches on, to prepare future ministers in Myanmar, the Philippines, India and elsewhere—Lord, make it happen! Lord, prepare the future professors (as well as those necessary for the PRCA Seminary in Grand Rapids!)

What we are talking about is formalizing what is already taking place on the field in the Philippines, Myanmar, and India, where theological input is being

carefully and caringly taught to present and potential officebearers. Among these men there are those who will, Lord willing, receive a formal qualification, and then be passed to administer Word and sacraments by their local classis and synod.

Please professors, ministers of the PRCA, officebearers, and members—including those in the CERC and CPRCNI—pray toward, work toward, and bring into being a great last-days expansion of our mission work by these means. Unreached peoples exist; they can be targeted; they can be reached; they **MUST** be reached before the end comes!

Sincerely in Christ,
Dr. Julian Kennedy,
Covenant Protestant Reformed Church,
Northern Ireland 

SPECIAL ARTICLE

PROF. RONALD CAMMENG

The Minister and His Marriage (1)

Introduction

Dear graduate, colleagues of the faculty, members of the Theological School Committee, fathers of synod, family and friends of the graduate, and brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, we rejoice together tonight in the goodness of God. We rejoice in the goodness of God in giving to the Protestant Reformed Churches another man who is qualified to serve in the office of the ministry of the gospel.

Qualified, I say, to serve in the office of the ministry of the gospel. In the past several days, you have demonstrated beyond any doubt in your oral examination before the synod that you possess the gifts that are necessary for the ministry of the gospel. You have given clear evidence

that you meet the biblical qualifications for a pastor/teacher in the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of your examination was certainly to evaluate whether you possess the gifts necessary for the ministry and the qualifications to serve in the office of teaching elder. Synod's approval of your examination and its declaring you to be a candidate for the ministry in our churches must be understood to be synod's positive judgment of your gifts and qualifications.

The synod is not the only body to have rendered such a judgment regarding your gifts and qualifications. Prior to synod's examination of you, there were others who made a similar positive judgment concerning you. Your pastor and consistory recommended you to the Theological School Committee (TSC) some four years ago for entrance into the seminary. At that time the TSC itself interviewed you, examining you with a view to your gifts and qualifications. On the basis of that examination, the TSC recommended to the Synod of 2011 that you be admitted to the seminary as a diploma

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. This is the first installment of the address that was given on the occasion of the graduation of Candidate Mr. Ryan Barnhill from the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 11, 2015.

pre-licentiate student, that is, a student seeking candidacy in the PRCA. That recommendation the synod adopted. And beginning in the Fall of 2011 until the present, the faculty of the seminary has also participated in the ongoing assessment of your gifts and qualifications, encouraging you along the way and at the end of your four years of study heartily recommending you to the Synod of 2015 for examination.

Neither is this the end of the church's evaluation of your abilities and qualifications. A consistory, at least one consistory, the Lord willing, will judge that you possess what is required for the office of the ministry; they will put you on the trio that they present to their congregation. And at least one congregation will judge that you possess what is required for the office and extend to you a call to serve as their next pastor. Finally, the classis will examine you and, God willing, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, approve your *peremptoir* or decisive examination, and recommend that your calling consistory proceed to your ordination into the office of the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

I want tonight to focus on one important qualification for the minister of the gospel. That one important qualification is that he be "the husband of one wife" (I Tim. 3:2). Literally, he must be a "one-wife husband." This is one of the first qualifications that the apostle mentions in I Timothy 3, as well as in Titus 1. The apostle also mentions this qualification in connection with the deacons in I Timothy 3:12. I note in passing that the qualification is the *husband* of one wife, not the *wife* of one husband.

The qualifications that the apostle lists in I Timothy 3 for the elder, both ruling elder and teaching elder, may be divided roughly into three categories: 1) those qualifications that concern the elder's personal life; 2) those qualifications that concern his family life; and 3) those qualifications that concern his life in the congregation and beyond, even in society at large.

Personally, the minister must be vigilant and sober, not greedy of filthy lucre, and not covetous. He is not to be a novice, lest being lifted up in pride, he fall into the same condemnation of the devil, whose root sin was pride. In his family life, he is to be the husband of one wife, he is to be a man who rules well his own household, and he is to have his children in subjection. And in his life more broadly and publicly, he is to be blameless, of good behav-

ior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not a drunkard, no striker or brawler, and generally a man of good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The minister, then, is to be "the husband of one wife." That does not mean only that from a formal point of view the minister is to be monogamous. But it means that he is to be a *husband*, with all that that word implies and all that Scripture teaches, a *faithful* husband to his one wife, the wife that God has given to him. Additionally, it means that in his marriage the minister is to be an example. He is to be an example among the believers within the congregation. And he is to be an example before the world, the wicked world that despises God's truth concerning marriage and perverts God's holy institution.

Called to Defend the Biblical Truth concerning Marriage

The minister of the gospel is called by Jesus Christ to uphold and defend the biblical truth concerning marriage. He is called to do this in his public preaching, teaching, and writing. And he is called to do this in his study, when counselling young couples who are seeking to be married or married couples who come to him because their marriage is strained.

He must defend the truth of marriage positively. He must teach that marriage is an institution of God, a divine institution. Marriage is not merely an arrangement that early humans found advantageous to the development and preservation of the human race, which arrangement has by our day served its usefulness and can safely be dispensed with by modern man. No, marriage has its origin in the will and creative work of God. He must teach that marriage is between one man and one woman, that it is an exclusive relationship. He must teach that marriage is a life-long relationship and that nothing but death dissolves the marriage relationship. He must teach that marriage is itself a covenant relationship and a picture of God's everlasting and unconditional covenant of grace. In his *Sermons on Genesis*, when describing God's provision of a wife for Adam, John Calvin says:

Moses, when mentioning the companion provided for Adam, again places a value on marriage so that we may better know that it was a singular gift of God. Men must be blinder than blind because of ingratitude if they do

not realize that God showed he was abundantly generous when he joined the human race together in such a beautiful covenant in his desire that marriage would be the means for maintaining the human race...with a man having an individual helpmate and the woman also having the companionship of her husband.¹

He must teach that the purposes of marriage include the friendship and companionship of husband and wife, the bringing forth and bringing up of the covenant seed in a home at the foundation of which is a stable marriage, and the glory of God as the outstanding purpose of marriage. He must teach that marriage is God's remedy to sexual immorality and impurity. In his sermon on Genesis 2:18-21 entitled, "Eve, Adam's Companion in Marriage for Their Mutual Advantage," Calvin says:

It is certain that if we had remained in our pure and controlled condition, such as it was then, men and woman would not be aroused to animal-like emotion[s].... Marriage was established by God to remedy the intemperance which arose from sin. So marriage is given as a remedy, and even though it was shameful for the man and the woman to live together, it is no longer called sin when marriage intervenes. God had pity on our weakness and, when establishing marriage, wanted it to be like an honourable veil to cover that lewdness, by which we could be dismayed.²

But besides being positive, the faithful minister must proclaim God's condemnation of the awful impurities and sins of depraved men and women that are an attack on and a defilement of holy marriage. He must boldly pronounce the judgment of God on every perversion that is approved today—men glorying in their shame: gender confusion, homosexuality and lesbianism, sodomy, same-sex marriage, bestiality, pedophilia, pornography, to say nothing of unbiblical divorce and remarriage, which is hardly noticed any longer, the rate of divorce and remarriage being as high or higher among professing Christians as unbelievers. Society and the church approve of these evils and the government provides protection for the grossest forms of immorality: "men with men working

that which is unseemly" (Rom. 1:27) and "going after strange flesh" (Jude 7).

Landmark decisions have recently been handed down by our nation's Supreme Court legalizing same-sex marriage across the entire country. The ruling effectively negates thirty-one state marriage amendments plus other states' laws safeguarding marriage as the relationship of one man and one woman, requiring every state to issue marriage licenses and recognize same-sex marriages. And the result of this ruling? The main result is that those individuals and churches who oppose the abomination of same-sex marriage will more and more be made to suffer. There will be consequences for faithfulness to the Word of God on these issues. We may expect it. We must be prepared for it. And we ministers must prepare God's people for the persecution—that's what it is—that is coming because of our commitment to the revealed will of God on these matters.

The Reformation's Recovery of Marriage

The Reformed minister is called to uphold and defend the truth of marriage as that truth was restored to the church by the Reformation. The Reformers, especially Martin Luther and John Calvin, restored the honor of marriage, and especially the honor of the marriage of the clergy, to the church. Both Luther and Calvin married. Luther married the former nun Katherine von Bora (or, as he affectionately called her, "Katie, my rib"). And Calvin married the former Anabaptist widow Idelette de Bure-Storder. Luther and Katherine had six children together. Of the six, a daughter died soon after birth and a second daughter, Magdalene, died when she was thirteen years old. That was especially difficult for Luther. What the devil, the pope, and the emperor could not do, the death of his dear daughter nearly did: drove Luther to despair. Instead, by the grace of God, Luther was not swallowed up in his sorrow, but comforted and enabled to carry on in the cause of the Reformation. Calvin's marriage was equally as difficult. Idelette, at the time that she married Calvin, had two children by her previous marriage to John Storder. She bore Calvin three children, all of whom died soon after they were born. And after being married for less than ten years, Idelette herself died.

The Reformers restored God's institution of marriage

¹ John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis: Chapter 1-11:4*, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 1:191.

² Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis*, 1:194.

to its rightful and honorable place in the church of Jesus Christ. They railed against Rome's perversion of marriage, especially her forbidding marriage to the clergy and all the corruption that resulted from that unbiblical prohibition. They publicly reproached Rome for the scandalous immorality of its clergy as the judgment of God on a church that elevated a commandment of men to the status of the law of God. This is what we must also say in regard to the sex scandals that have rocked the Roman Catholic Church in recent years. Rome has refused to repent of her sins. And the result is not only that the chickens are coming home to roost, or even that having sown to the wind, Rome is reaping the whirlwind. But the judgment of God is being visited on Rome, her clergy and her people, for their sexual sins and their conniving at sexual sins. As the angels warned Lot and his family to flee out of Sodom, so do we call the members of Rome to come out of that Sodom, lest they perish in its overthrow.

Both Luther and Calvin took the position that vows of celibacy were rash and sinful vows, vows therefore that ought not be kept by the clergy (priests, monks, and nuns) who left the Roman Catholic Church. Both

Reformers encouraged ministers to marry and defended the right of the clergy to marry. They appealed to the fact that officebearers in the Old Testament married. Prophets, priests, and kings often married; some were even commanded by God to marry. Indeed, the coming of Christ depended on the marriage of those who stood in the royal line of David, the line of Christ. Among the apostles, the Reformers appealed to the example of Peter, who clearly was married. Matthew 8:14ff. records the miracle of healing that Jesus performed on Peter's wife's mother (his mother-in-law), who was sick of a fever. I Peter 5:13 refers to Marcus, Peter's son. And in I Corinthians 9:5, Paul says: "Have we not power (literally, "the right") to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and of Cephas?"

They promoted marriage among the clergy. They promoted marriage, not only as a curb on fornication; but they promoted marriage because of what they considered to be the positive contributions of a wife to the ministry of her husband.

... to be continued. 

GOD'S WONDERFUL WORKS

REV. JAMES LANING

Foundational Principles (3)

Forbidden to Subtract from God's Word

In both the Old and New Testaments, God warns us about adding to or subtracting from the Scriptures:

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

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

words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

Last time we considered ways in which many people add to God's Word. In this article we consider ways in which people attempt to subtract from it.

Examples of subtracting from the Word of God

There are numerous ways in which people try to subtract from the Word of God. Some of the common ones in the past and in the present are as follows:

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1. *Denying that Scripture is the Word of God*

Multitudes deny that the Bible really is a revelation from the one true God. This, of course, is a blatant subtraction of all that God has made known to us.

2. *Denying that the events recorded in Scripture actually took place*

To say that an event recorded in Scripture did not happen is to deny that that portion of Scripture is the Word of God. There are many, for example, who deny that the miracles recorded in Scripture actually happened or that the events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Genesis really took place. That amounts to saying that those parts of Scripture are not the Word of God, but rather are mythical stories arising from the minds of men.

3. *Claiming that the Bible contains incorrect statements about the creation*

There are those who like to say that “the Bible is pre-scientific.” Below are some quotes that summarize what is often meant by those who say this:

The Bible often speaks in accordance with pre-scientific views that are not literally correct.

The Bible in fact speaks only in accordance with ancient views that, while once held to be incontestably true by many peoples, are now proven incorrect.

It is a mistake for Christians to expect the Bible to make literally correct statements about science two thousand years before the advent of modern science.

A revelation from God must be given in terms that are comprehensible, and thus in principle we should not expect that the Bible outpaces ancient, pre-scientific concepts about the structure, function, or age of nature.¹

To say that the Scriptures contain incorrect teachings about the creation is to say that it contains statements about the creation that are not the Word of God but the word of men. It is to be guilty of subtracting from the Word of God all the statements about the creation that men today view to be “incorrect.”

¹ Jeremy Royal Howard, author of *Holman QuickSource Guide to Understanding Jesus*, holds a Ph.D. in Christian Apologetics and Worldview Studies from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He summarizes here what he taught at a recent conference in Birmingham. <http://jeremyroyalhoward.com/2014/04/13/scripture-and-the-pre-scientific-worldview/> Accessed May 29, 2015.

Furthermore, with regard to the specific statements that are quoted above, we ought to note the serious implication of saying that a “revelation from God” could contain statements that are incorrect. That would mean that God Himself has told His people things about the creation that are not true. If that were the case, there would be no way for us to know what else He has told us in the Scriptures that is incorrect. In fact, this would strip us of the “certain knowledge” of faith. We could not have certain knowledge, but rather would always be in doubt as to whether this or that statement that God has made to us is really true.

4. *Claiming that something God has revealed belongs to the hidden things we cannot know*

There are many who refuse to preach about election and reprobation, claiming that God’s decree of predestination belongs to the secret will of God that cannot be known by us. Yet the truth concerning predestination is spoken of frequently in Scripture. To ignore this teaching is effectively to subtract it from the Bible.

We must remember that God commands us to preach all that He has revealed to us, without subtracting anything:

Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD’s house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word (Jer. 26:2).

To refuse to do this is a grievous sin.

5. *Claiming that one of God’s commandments was merely a cultural requirement*

Another way that people commonly subtract from the Word of God is by taking a command that Christ has given us and saying that we do not have to abide by it. For example, our Lord has clearly told us that only men may be ministers of the Word, elders, or deacons (I Tim. 2:8-15; 3:2-12; Tit. 1:6). There are many, however, who deny that God requires this, and who insist that this was merely a cultural requirement for those who lived at the time that the New Testament was being written.


Those who use such arguments may think that they have cleverly disposed of God’s Word on this subject. Yet what they are doing is as foolish as what Jehoiakim king

of Judah did when he took the scroll that contained the prophesy of Jeremiah and threw it in the fire, because he did not like what it said. The scroll was burned, but the Word of God remained:

Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words (Jer. 36:32).

Adhering to the Word of Wisdom, our life

When we make confession of faith, we vow never to

take away from the words our Lord has taught us, but always to adhere to them. We promise that we will heed the exhortation of our heavenly Father: “Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life” (Prov. 4:13). We believe and know that the words our Lord has taught us are our life. To cling to those words is to cling to the Lord Himself. He is Life. He is *our* Life. In the way of taking fast hold of His instruction, and never letting go, we enjoy the true life, the true communion with our God, and begin to experience the true joy of that heavenly life which our Lord has promised to those who love Him. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. RICHARD SMIT

The Second Coming of Christ and Missions

We are reminded, according to I John 2:18 that we live in the last time. That we are living at the very end of time is becoming more evident according to the God-ordained signs of the second coming of Christ.

This certain and imminent return of our Lord has a significant relation to and an important effect upon faithful mission work in our day and age. That there is an important relation between the second coming of Christ and missions was revealed by Jesus Himself in Matthew 24:14, where He says, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” The Lord teaches that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached unto all nations. Once the Lord by that gospel preaching has accomplished His purpose and obtained all His good fruit, His final appearing shall come to pass without delay.

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Since foreign missions is one part of the Lord’s work of preaching the gospel of His kingdom, we understand then that foreign missions is closely connected to the final appearing of the Lord. Several ways in which the two are related we plan to explore in a few articles, the Lord willing.



First of all, we understand that faithful missions is the official proclamation of the gospel by an ordained and church-sent minister of the Word in a specific field of labor. We expect that such faithful Reformed missions would ordinarily proclaim the final appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. A Reformed missionary is expected to proclaim the truth about “...the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (I Tim. 6:14b-15). He ought to proclaim that truth routinely, because it is a necessary part of the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation (Acts 20:27).

Since the final appearing of Christ is approaching according to God’s counsel and by His sovereign provi-

dence, the content of the preaching must include the admonition to repent. Preaching about the coming Christ and His Kingdom was accompanied by the call of the gospel. This was done by John the Baptist: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:1-2). Another compelling illustration is Jesus Himself, as recorded in Mark 1:15, who preached, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

Both examples of Jesus and John the Baptist show that the announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God, especially in its final appearing, includes a compelling reason for the need to repent: the coming of judgment which always accompanies the coming of the kingdom. That righteous judgment of God is the reckoning for all mankind with God concerning all the things that they have done, whether good or evil. That reckoning results in punishment and wrath for those whom God condemns, and in salvation and blessing for those whom God justifies. Faithful missions must declare that righteousness of God in regard to the kingdom of man’s darkness, of man’s false religions, of man’s unrighteousness, of man’s foolishness, and of man’s totally depraved will. It must declare that righteousness of God in regard to the need to repent from sin, to forsake the world, and to crucify the old nature of man. Along with the call to repentance, there must be the necessary proclamation of the particular and blessed promise of God regarding salvation for those and their children who, as ordained by God, repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone (Acts 2:38-39).

Concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, faithful missions not only proclaims that Christ is coming again as the promised Lord and Saviour of His people, but also as the righteous and holy Judge (II Cor. 5:10). In the final judgment, Christ will judge righteously according to God’s decrees and eternal good pleasure set forth in the book of life (Rev. 20:12-15). He will condemn His enemies in the kingdom of darkness. He will justify those and those only for whom He died, fulfilled the divine and just demands for their redemption and reconciliation unto God, and in whom He lives and works by His Spirit. He will in His wrath cast His enemies into everlasting shame

and punishment in hell, but every one of His sheep He will bring into eternal joy with Him (Matt. 25:46; Belgic Confession, Art. 37).

In addition to those sobering things, faithful missions needs to be teaching the truth regarding the divinely regulated rate at which the final appearing of Christ and the final judgment are approaching. The apparent delay, from a human viewpoint, concerning the return of Christ ought never to be considered as slowness or laziness in the Lord. Such an evaluation is not correct because “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9). Here we learn that the divinely regulated rate at which the Lord works towards His final appearing, according to God’s eternal purpose, is not “slack,” but “quick.”

This same idea about the rate of Christ’s return is revealed elsewhere in Scripture. In Revelation 22:20a we read that “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly.” This testimony of Christ stands in harmony with the descriptions of His second coming in Matthew 3:2 and I Peter 4:7 as “at hand.” Again, this same idea is repeated in I John 2:18, where the apostle John writes that we are, according to a literal translation of the Greek, “in the last hour.”

In response to what the Lord says regarding the rate of His return, the church must proclaim: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20b). “Even so” means “even in the same way that the Lord has described His return.” Accordingly, in obedience to Christ, faithful missions will desire that the Lord return as He Himself described and so declare the same truth of “quickly.” Furthermore, faithful missions needs to set forth the biblical conclusion of “quickly,” namely, that we who now live in the morning of the seventh millennium of history—the third of our New Testament age—do not expect that the Lord will continue history much longer.

Accordingly, we expect that in the coming of the heavenly kingdom of God at the final appearing of Christ, this old creation, filled with death, with many memorials to man and his sin, and with many visible scars from man’s total depravity and God’s judgment upon man’s great depravity, will be destroyed by God’s fire. From that destruction, Christ will create miracu-

lously in a moment the new heavens and earth, in which will be established forever His heavenly kingdom of righteousness and peace. Faithful missions ordinarily proclaims that goal to which history is being moved quickly by the Lord.



In the service of the swift movement of history to its appointed end, faithful missions needs to demand from its hearers awareness of the unmistakable proofs of that approaching end. In fact, according to Matthew 24:14, the gospel preaching itself is one sign or proof of the final return of Christ. This understanding is supported by the truth of the opening of the first seal in Revelation 6. The white horse and rider of the first seal in Revelation 6 represent the gospel preaching, which runs its course through the earth, along with the other three horses, under the direction of the Lord at God's right hand. Since His ascension, the Lord has directed that gospel preaching along its pre-determined racecourse to its goal of His final appearing.

Besides the preaching, there are the other signs of the return of Christ. There is the sign of growing apostasy in the church and a growing unity in the church world in heresy and false doctrine (II Thess. 2:3). There are the signs of the coming again of Christ in the growing lawlessness, increasing public immorality, and increasingly open defiance against creation ordinances. (II Tim. 3:1ff.). War and rumors of war abound. There is the increasing development of the anti-Christian kingdom toward a worldwide government and a worldwide religion in fulfilment of its Old Testament types as prophesied in the book of Daniel. There is an increasing attempt to silence the church from preaching the Word of God against immorality and false religions in the world. In society, there seems to be an increase in strife and civil unrest. In the creation, there are the increasing signs of storms, earthquakes, diseases, and even destructive phenomena in distant stars and galaxies. And more examples of the signs could be given.


All of the signs appear to the eye of faith as infallible proofs that Christ is coming again soon. When the signs occur, they do not set before us deceptions about the second coming of Christ. These things reflect plainly—to those who repent and believe—that Christ's final appear-

ing, the end of history, the final resurrection, and the final judgment are just over the horizon of history.

Faithful missions, in the content of its preaching, needs to be true to these increasingly occurring, unmistakable proofs of the coming of the Lord in judgment. It should truthfully demonstrate from the signs that we indeed are in the last hour and at the end of time and history. It must refute the false mirages of a future pre-millennial or a post-millennial kingdom of God in the world. Faithful missions must nurture proper watchfulness with godliness as regards the clear signs of the coming of Christ, the Judge. It needs to set forth the biblical, Reformed confessional expectations regarding the great tribulation, the death of the two witnesses in the streets, and the establishment of the worldwide anti-Christian kingdom—Satan's last and vicious attempt to overthrow the kingdom of Christ.

In so doing, then, believing households, ingrafted into the church of Jesus Christ out of worldly religions, cults, and superstitions, will not be deceived about the future. Instead, they and their generations will be prepared spiritually for the coming and most difficult period of history for the church: the great tribulation before the final appearing of Christ.

It will not be a strange sound when faithful Reformed missionaries proclaim in the name of Christ to hearers: "Are you ready to meet this swiftly approaching Lord?" It will not be abnormal to hear an authoritative call to sinners outside the church institute that they repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, lest they "be ashamed before him at his coming" (I John 2:28). The gospel declaration will be a welcome sound to those who by the grace and Spirit of Christ do repent, believe, abide in Him, and find their refuge in Him alone for this life of tribulation.

When foreign missions, in the sphere of world religions and idolatry, is faithful in the promiscuous proclamation of the particular promise and the general call of the gospel of Christ's heavenly kingdom, it will undoubtedly, in its effects and fruits, serve the actual coming of Christ itself. This second aspect of the relation between missions and the second coming of Christ we plan to consider next. 

Liberty

We sons of God possess a glorious liberty (Rom. 8:21). Glorious because it is true liberty. All other liberties are mere pictures or illusions. If the Son makes you free, you are free indeed (John 8:36). Such liberty cannot be taken by revolution, earned by merit, infringed upon, or ever revoked, but is an everlasting gift of God's grace (Rom. 3:24). It is a freedom not possessed by everyone, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there alone is liberty (II Cor. 3:17). This true, glorious liberty is exclusively Christian liberty.

Christian liberty is not freedom from authority or rule of law. Mankind, following Mother Eve, supposes liberty is self-determination, freedom to do as you please. That's a lie. And Christians should find revolting any notion of liberty as independence. No man can live free from God. If not subject to His law, His grace, or His Christ, we are enslaved by the devil, sin, and death, free only from righteousness (Rom. 6:20)—the cruelest bondage. And even when liberated as the Lord's free men, being free, we nevertheless are the Lord's servants (I Cor. 7:22).


Nor is Christian liberty mainly freedom with regard to things God neither commands nor forbids (so-called *adiaphora* or 'things indifferent'). Scripture recognizes such liberty, but the term is not biblical. And God is never indifferent. He may not expressly command or forbid what clothing to wear, monies to spend, beverages to drink, or even to marry or not, but still has much to say about modesty and stewardship, drunkenness and addiction, marriage and single life. And even things not expressly forbidden or commanded are still only permitted if the conscience is strong—and denied, if it tempts weaker consciences to sin (I Cor. 8:4-13).

Christian liberty is the everlasting blessedness of life by the Holy Spirit, whereby one is willingly subject to the rule of Christ and freed from sin in every form and consequence. It is, therefore, a liberty far more glorious and extensive than freedom merely to eat meats offered to idols. Christian liberty describes the whole of our

salvation from justification to sanctification, and encompasses the whole of our life from regeneration in this life to eternal glory in the next.

Christian liberty begins with freedom from the legal consequences of sin. The sinner who believes in the atoning death of Christ is justified by faith and thus freed from all charges of sin (Gal. 3:13-14). There simply is no condemnation of those in Christ Jesus, for the Spirit of life frees them from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Freed from all condemnation, the Christian is also liberated from the guilt of sin, the shame of sin, and even fear of sin, including fear of sinners, the devil, and death (Belgic Confession, Art. 23; Heb. 2:14). And because Jesus is the one sacrifice for sin, this liberty also frees us from the Old Testament ceremonial law (Gal. 2:4). Nevertheless, because this liberty also makes us servants of Christ, His law to love Him and our neighbor remains.

Christian liberty is, therefore, also freedom from the power of sin, that is, the gift of the Spirit willingly to serve God and keep His commandments. Marvelously, this liberty that began with freedom from death, is perfected by death. By baptism, our old man is crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be destroyed (Rom. 6:6-7). Being made thus dead to sin, we are freed from being servants of sin in our flesh to being servants of righteousness unto God in our new man (Rom. 6:18-22). Although this freedom is not made perfect until the body of sin is destroyed in the grave, nevertheless it is true liberty, a real desire and ability to do good works that we could not do before (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 44). And it is not freedom from God and His law, but is the freedom of heart, mind, soul, and strength actually to serve God and keep His commandments (Ps. 119:45), the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), the truth which sets us free (John 8:32).

So being thus called, let us not use our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness (I Pet. 2:16), or as an occasion to the flesh to serve ourselves, but by love to serve one another—for all the law is fulfilled in one word: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Gal. 5:13-14). Liberty indeed. 

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The Lord's Supper

Lord's Day 28

Question 75. How art thou admonished and assured in the Lord's Supper that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?

Answer. Thus: That Christ has commanded me and all believers, to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, adding these promises: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes, the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup communicated to me; and further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.

Question 76. What is it then to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ?

Answer. It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin, and life eternal; but also, besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone*; and that we live, and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.

Question 77. Where has Christ promised that He will as certainly feed and nourish believers with His body and blood, as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

Answer. In the institution of the supper, which is thus expressed: *The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: eat, this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying: this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

This promise is repeated by the holy apostle Paul, where he says: *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; because we are all partakers of that one bread.*

The Catechism spends a lot of time and space on the sacraments. Its purpose is not only negative, to set forth the biblical doctrine of the

sacraments over against errors, but also positive, to teach us what the sacraments are and how they operate, so that our partaking of them can become more meaningful. The danger with the sacraments is that we focus on the externals, that we go through the motions and partake of the elements without believing in our hearts the spiritual re-

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alities to which they point. This, due to our regular and repeated celebration of it, is especially the case with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This makes it important for us to go back to the biblical basics of this sacrament.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

This sacrament goes under a number of different names, the most biblical ones being, "communion" (I Cor. 10:16), "the Lord's Table" (I Cor. 10:21), and "the Lord's Supper" (I Cor. 11:20). Even though "Eucharist" is a biblical idea connected to the Passover, we avoid using this term because of its association with erroneous teachings on this sacrament, (the Roman Catholics and Lutherans call it the Eucharist), and also because we do not actually find this title given to the sacrament in the Bible. The term "Mass" is of completely human origin, is used almost exclusively by the Roman Catholics, and really has nothing to do with this sacrament.

All three of the synoptic gospels, (Matthew, Mark and Luke), and I Corinthians 11:23-25 speak of the institution of the Lord's Supper. There are also many other biblical passages that allude to this sacrament and help us to understand it (for example, John 6:32-58; I Cor. 10:16-17; Rev. 2:17; 19:7-9). From the institution of the Lord's Supper we learn these things.

1. The Lord's Supper was appointed by Jesus Christ in connection with the Passover. After Jesus had celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples, He used the bread and wine of the Passover table to institute this New Testament sacrament. The Lord's Supper is the New Testament continuation of the Passover with these two differences; a) the Passover looked forward to the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God, whereas the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of this sacrifice, and b) the Passover was a bloody sacrifice, but in the Lord's Supper there is no blood or sacrifice because Jesus death was the final, once for all, sacrifice (Heb. 10:10-12).

2. The Lord's Supper is more than a mere human ceremony of remembrance. By recording the institution of this sacrament four times in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit not only commands us to use this ceremony as a sacrament, but also gives us scriptural warrant and authority to do so. The spiritual and gospel significance of the Lord's Supper elevates it as a sacrament above other ceremonies.

3. The Lord's Supper is to be continually and repeatedly celebrated until Jesus comes again. I Corinthians 11:26 speaks of eating this bread and drinking this cup "often" and by this shewing the Lord's death "till he come." How frequently a church should celebrate it is not stipulated in Scripture, but our practice according to the Church Order is to do it "at least every two or three months" (Church Order, Art. 63).

4. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance that is to be observed in the public gatherings of the church for worship as an element secondary to the preaching of the Word. The first Supper

was instituted by Christ in a public gathering with His disciples, and throughout the New Testament it is at the church's gatherings for worship that the sacrament is administered (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Also, the preaching of the gospel is primary and explains the meaning of the symbols in the sacrament. Apart from the gospel, the sacrament has no meaning or power.

5. Believers are "commanded" by Christ to partake of the Lord's Supper. The sacrament is instituted in the imperative, "This do...," "Take, eat...," and "Drink ye all..." The fact that it is commanded does not mean that we are compelled against our will to partake, but simply highlights that God knows what is best for us, and that true believers should not doubtingly hold themselves back from what Christ has intended for their assurance.

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

A sacrament is the gospel in symbolic form. There are

The Lord's Supper is more than a mere human ceremony of remembrance.... The spiritual and gospel significance of the Lord's Supper elevates it as a sacrament above other ceremonies.

at least four different aspects to the spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper, all represented in the symbols that Jesus instituted. It is important for us to know these so that when we come to the sacrament we may properly "discern the Lord's body" and benefit spiritually from the sacrament.

First, the breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine remind us of what Jesus has already done for us. When Jesus says, "this do in remembrance of me," (Luke 22:19), He has in mind especially that we remember His death on the cross, for He adds, "my body...is given for you" and "my blood...is shed for you." Even though the sacrament is neither a re-enactment of the cross or a re-sacrificing of Christ, it should remind us of the death of Jesus in which He gave His life's blood for us.

Second, in the elements of bread and wine, Jesus shows us what He continues to do for us as our Savior. Just as He used the simple and every-day element of water in baptism to teach our spiritual washing, so Jesus uses the simple and everyday element of bread to teach us that He daily and constantly sustains us spiritually. All our salvation is in Him and from Him, not only in what He has done, but in His continual work for us in heaven and in us by His Holy Spirit. "Without me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). In the element of wine Jesus teaches us how great our salvation is and how far it will take us. Wine in the Bible is always a picture of prosperity and feasting, of joy and gladness, and so in the wine Christ tells us that in salvation He gives us not only the basic necessities for our spiritual survival, but also an abundance and joy. In Christ we have not only all we need, but "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Wine is a promise and seal of the heavenly joy and eternal feasting to come.

Third, and easily overlooked, is the sign of a table and a meal, which are symbolic of our fellowship with God. So important is this element that the sacrament is called "the Lord's table" (I Cor. 10:21). A meal in the Bible is representative of close, even family, communion. God is

our Father, and through His Son, Jesus Christ, He brings us into rich communion and fellowship with Himself. A part of this communion is our spiritual fellowship with the other believers with whom we partake of this sacrament. This is what Paul is teaching in I Corinthians 10:17, "For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." That "one bread" is Jesus Christ, and being spiritually one with Him means we are one with all other true believers.

A fourth element of the sacrament, which has spiritual significance, is our partaking of the bread and the wine. Food and drink are of no benefit without our eating and drinking. When we take the bread of the Lord's Table into our own hands and put it to our mouth, we are making a sign of our faith in Jesus Christ. The saving work of

Jesus on the cross is of no benefit to us without faith. There is not, as Roman Catholicism teaches, an automatic blessing in receiving the elements of the sacrament. Rather, we benefit from the Supper only when we by faith, which is "the hand and mouth of our soul" (Belgic Confession, Art. 35), receive and believe on Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus means in John 6:53 when He says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." He does not mean we become cannibalistic flesh eaters,

as the Pharisees thought, but that we "come" to Him and "believe" on Him (John 6:35).

The Purpose of the Lord's Supper

Why did Jesus institute this sacrament? He gave this sacrament as a constant reminder of His death in our behalf and of our living union to Him. These are the things we need to know in order to have assurance.

Have you ever come to church burdened with the guilt of your own sins? Have you ever cried out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Have you ever sat through a service contemplating your own unworthiness because of your anger, your lust, your earthly-mindedness, your envy or

*In the element of wine
Jesus teaches us how great
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your discontent? Have you ever questioned whether God can really love you as a sinner? Have you ever felt that you are an utter failure in your calling as a parent or a spouse? Have you ever wondered how or if you could go on as a Christian? If so, you need the Lord's Supper.


Because Jesus knows our sinfulness, and because He knows the daily weakness of our faith, He has given us this sacrament. The purpose of the Lord's Table is both to affirm in our minds that our sins are forgiven through the complete and perfect sacrifice of His own

body and blood, and to assure us that He will sustain and strengthen us spiritually as we go on as sinners in a world and life of trouble.

These are the promises that are represented and sealed to us by Christ in the sacrament. The first that He died for me and my sins, the second that He will strengthen and keep me to everlasting life (Q&A 75).

What sheer delight and deep gratitude, then, should fill our souls when we come to the Lord's Table!

Questions for Discussion

1. How is the ceremony of the Lord's Supper different from other important ceremonies like marriage or confession of faith? What makes it different?
2. What are the biblical names for this sacrament and what do they mean?
3. How is the Lord's Supper a continuation of the Passover? What differences are there?
4. How frequently should the Lord's Supper be celebrated? What are some arguments for and against celebrating it weekly?
5. Under what circumstances might a church postpone the celebration of the Lord's Supper? What if a church never celebrated the Lord's Supper?
6. Would it be permissible to administer this sacrament at a hospital bedside or in a prison? Why or why not?
7. How do Jesus' words in the institution of the Lord's Supper also compel us to make profession of faith and seek membership in the church?
8. What are we remembering in the Lord's Supper? What does it mean to "remember" this?
9. What spiritual reality do the symbols of bread and wine represent?
10. Why is this sacrament called a "table" and a "supper"?
11. As we take the bread and wine and partake of it, what should be our focus?
12. Is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper only for confident and assured Christians or also for those who struggle with doubt and temptation? How can this sacrament encourage us in our doubts? 

GUEST ARTICLE

REV. HEATH BLEYENBERG

Providence PRC Purchases Church Building

It was a good Sunday. All Sundays are good. This particular Sunday was especially memorable. The children of the congregation had been asking their parents when this day would come. The adults anxiously awaited it too.

The particular Sunday was July 5, 2015. It was the

first worship service in Providence PRC's own church building!

Earlier this spring, no one imagined that God's plan would mean we would be worshiping in our own church building so soon. Ever since our organization in the summer of 2008, worship services were held in the music room of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI. In late 2010 we purchased ten acres of land, including a parsonage, south of Jenison, with the intent that one day we would build a church on this land. Preliminary

Rev. Bleyenbergh is pastor of Providence Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.



Providence PRC, Hudsonville, Michigan

church plans were even drawn up. And we were getting so close to our financial goal of building that very church drawn up on paper!

But then another church came up for sale. A church that would fit our needs as a congregation very well. A church only four miles down the road. A church so providentially placed in our path by the Lord that we were convinced we ought not let this opportunity pass us by. And as a few of our congregations already know, it is far less expensive purchasing an existing church than building one new.

Within the course of several weeks we submitted an offer for the church, had that offer accepted, and finally—after a few delays—closed on the property.

The church building now owned by Providence PRC was built in the early 1990s. It sits on approximately six acres of land. The sanctuary holds up to 250 people and has room for future expansion when needed. Many small classrooms are found within the church. A nice-sized kitchen adjoins the sanctuary, as does a nursery (with its own restroom). And because the former church had disbanded, we purchased the building with all its contents—chairs, tables, nursery toys, a fully-stocked kitchen, and even a riding lawn mower.

We are thankful that God has been faithful to us throughout the years. First, by giving us patience to wait

there were very few young families. This has become the sad state of many churches today. May God evermore bless our church, and churches, with families who love the truth and teach that truth to the children, that generations may arise who know the Lord, love the Lord, and gather together on the Sabbath to extol His name.

Over the past years Providence has been the recipient of so many acts of kindness—for which we are also thankful. For the generous financial support from other churches through collections and special disbursements. For the gracious use of Faith PRC's facilities for many of our church activities. For the use of the music room at Heritage School for our worship services—a room which served us very well for many years. We are blessed to be part of a family of believers who care for each other and look after one another's needs.

Come see our new church at 1569 44th Street SW, in Hudsonville! We invite you to an open house on Saturday, September 12, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. Look over the building and grounds, and enjoy coffee and refreshments. And by all means, join us in worship the following evening, September 13, for our dedication service that will begin at 6 P.M. 🌿

upon Him and to trust that He would provide a place of worship in His own time. Second, by keeping us as a *church*. I mention that specifically, because the reason this building became available was due to the former church disbanding. As I understand it, the membership was declining and

Sister Church Activities

Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, and his wife Mary spent nearly a month in the USA from early July through early August. Rev. Stewart preached in five PR churches while in the States and also gave presentations about the work in Northern Ireland. During this time Rev. Carl Haak, pastor of Georgetown PRC, Hudsonville, MI, and his wife traveled to Ballymena, Northern Ireland from July 18-August 4 to provide pulpit supply in Rev. Stewart's absence.

Denominational Activities

Classis East plans to meet in regular session September 9, 2015 at the Byron Center, MI PRC. Classis West plans to meet September 30, 2015 in the Edgerton, MN PRC.

Minister Activities

Rev. Allen Brummel, pastor in Heritage PRC of Sioux Falls, SD, had been considering the call extended to him by the calling church in Doon, IA to be the second missionary to the Philippines. In his letter of decline read Sunday morning, July 26, Rev. Brummel expressed heartache for Rev. Daniel Kleyn and his wife Sharon in hearing another decline. He also expressed thanksgiving to God who gave peace with the decision to remain at Heritage. May God continue to bless Rev. Brummel's labors

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

in Sioux Falls and bring the man of His choosing to our mission field in the metro Manila area, using the labors of the calling church in Doon, IA to this end.

Peace PRC, Lansing, IL announced a new trio on July 19. Their trio consisted of Rev. Daniel Holstege (First PRC, Holland, MI), Rev. Steven Key (Loveland, CO PRC), and Candidate Ryan Barnhill, who recently graduated from our Seminary. On July 27 the congregation at Peace voted to extend their call to Candidate Barnhill. On August 9 Candidate Barnhill announced that he had accepted the call to Peace PRC. We thank our God for this confirmation of the internal call Candidate Barnhill felt long ago, and pray for him going forward as God continues to prepare him for the gospel ministry. We rejoice also with Peace PRC that God is caring for them in this way. Candidate Barnhill will be examined when Classis West meets next in Edgerton, MN on September 30, D.V.

Congregational Activities

Many of our congregations recently approved improvements to their properties. In Lynden, WA new carpeting and lighting in the church were items of change. In Loveland, CO it was decided to carpet the basement of the church, and in Grandville, MI PRC approval was given to replace windows in the parsonage as well as two heating and cooling units at the church. In Edgerton, MN the congregation approved the replacement of some

basement windows and window wells, rocks, and shrubbery. In Doon, IA the remainder of the church parking lot has been paved, and at Peace PRC, Lansing, IL landscaping was approved.

A summer singspiration, "God is King Forever," was held at First PRC of Grand Rapids, MI on July 26. Selections that night reminded those who attended that the Lord reigns and is in control of all things. The Majestic Brass accompanied the singing and there were instrumental and vocal special numbers. In a time of natural catastrophes, rapidly changing cultural standards, and changing attitudes toward Christianity this was certainly a timely theme, and an encouragement to those who joined in praising God there that night.

Young People's Activities

The annual Young People's Convention, sponsored by Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids, was scheduled from August 10-14, with the pre-convention singspiration slated for the evening of August 9 at Fairhaven Ministries in Jenison, MI. A gym night was arranged for August 8 at Covenant Christian High School. We are thankful for this opportunity given to the youth of our denomination to make new friends and rekindle acquaintances past.

School Activities

Many small Midwestern rural towns hold annual celebrations. Doon, Iowa is no exception, with two plus days of festivities attended

by many from the surrounding area. And when Doon Days takes place every fourth weekend in July, the Ladies' Circle of the Northwest Iowa PR School springs into action. Their pizza stand in the Doon city park is well known and welcomed by a large crowd. Serving pizza by the slice along with soda, the group does a fine business. Annually, in just over two hours' time, over 100 large Pizza Ranch pizzas are sold and devoured. The pizza stand—a fine place to head when the grand parade is finished!

Summertime and fishing certainly go together. School groups combined the interest in fishing with the opportunity for good fellowship in at least two cases. On August 8 the Annual Hope Foundation Bass Fishing Tournament was conducted, while the 5th Annual Adams Foundation Charter Fishing

Tournament was scheduled to take place on August 22. Possibly by the time this issue hits the press you will have heard fish stories of immense proportions. We hope the anglers had a good time, and that they left a few fish in the lake for next year's competition.

Evangelism Activities


The Grandville, MI PRC Evangelism Committee planned a timely speech with Rev. Ronald Van Overloop speaking on the topic "Teaching Our Children and Grandchildren to Witness." This speech took place in Grandville PRC on August 4 and was directed to all ages.

Missionary Activities

A one-day conference was planned on August 21 in Provident Village in Marikina. August 21 was a Philippine public holiday and

Prof. R. Cammenga from the PRC Seminary was on hand to give a conference on the topic of "The Theology of John Calvin." August 31 was another public holiday. Members of the Berean PRC, PRC in Bulacan, Maranatha PRC, and Provident Christian Church gathered under the covered basketball court in Muzon (PRCB) to engage in sporting competitions including basketball, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, chess, and darts. Great to hear that the churches in metro Manila can get together for fellowship in ways like this. Sounds like a very enjoyable time.

Oh, the mangos have stopped falling in Beverly Hills subdivision! The Kleyms seem to be glad.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Don and Jackie Windemuller in the death of Don's sister,

MRS. RUTH RODENHOUSE.

We pray that they may receive comfort and assurance from the word of God in Psalm 121:1, 2, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Adult Bible Society of the Doon PRC expresses their sympathy to fellow members Phil and Laura Kuiper and Char Van Edgom in the death of their mother and mother-in-law,

GRACE VAN DEN TOP.

May comfort come from the words of Psalm 116:15 "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

The Adult Bible Society

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC extend their sincere sympathy to Tom and Christy VerStrate and their children in the passing to glory of their father and grandfather,

MR. PETER HOEKSTRA.

We pray that they may receive comfort from Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The congregation and Council express their sympathy to Joyce Rietema, Bud and Faye Korhorn and their families in the death of their sister,

NANCY ONDERSMA.

"Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy" (Psalm 33:18).

Rev. William Langerak, President
Jerry Van Baren, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Rev. Wayne and Phyllis Bekkering in the death of their brother-in-law,

MR. JOHN KAMPS.

It is our prayer that they may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit in Psalm 73:16, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hudsonville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Judy Hoekstra and family, fellow officebearers Elders Ed Hoekstra and Rich Hoekstra, Deacon Marlin Hoekstra and their families in the death of their beloved husband, brother, and uncle,

PETE HOEKSTRA.

May comfort come from the words of Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. Garry Eriks, President
Dan Nagelkerke, Clerk

Standard Bearer

1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Heritage PRC wish to convey their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Ron and Carol Streyle, their son Mike, and granddaughter Kadence in the passing to glory of Carol's mother,

LORRAINE COLLMANN.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

Rev. Allen Brummel, President
Mr. Ed VanEgdom, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express our sincere sympathy to Mr. David Ondersma in the death of his beloved wife, and to David and Amy Ondersma and family, and Kevin and Sally Timmerman and their family in the loss of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. NANCY ONDERSMA.

It is our prayer that the words of Isaiah 12:2 may bring comfort and assurance to them and to the Georgetown church family, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express our sympathy to Rev. Bernard Woudenberg and his wife Fran in the passing to glory of her sister,

DEANE SCHIPPER.

It is our prayer that they may take comfort from God's Word to us in Psalm 91:4: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."

Rev. Carl Haak, President
Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton, MN on Wednesday, September 30, 2015, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Edgerton's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

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

Rev. Richard Smit will speak on

*"The Role of Reformed
Literature in Reformed Missions"*

September 24, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.

Trinity Protestant Reformed Church

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

Seminary convocation

■ September 16, at 7:30 P.M., in Southwest PRC. Prof. Cammenga will be giving the address. An Open House at the Seminary will follow.

Reformed Witness Hour September 2015

Date	Topic	Text
September 6	"True Faith"	II Timothy 1:12
September 13	"The Creation"	Genesis 1:1
September 20	"The Secret Providence of God"	Psalm 57:21
September 27	"Who Is Jesus?"	Acts 4:12