

# THE *April 1, 2009* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Volume 85 ◆ Number 13

# Simon of Cyrene

*And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

Matthew 27:32

**T**he gospel narratives record the events of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion in great detail. Some of these details we might pass over as being unimportant. No doubt many who were eyewitnesses of our Savior's agony did just that. But the very fact that the holy writers were inspired to record these details in the gospel narratives indicates that these details are of great importance.

One such detail is the fact that Jesus did not have enough strength to carry His cross to the place of execution. And so the Roman soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it for Jesus. Had we been eyewitnesses of these events and were moved to write about them, we probably would have left out this detail.

Of what significance is this? Yet Matthew is moved by the inspiration of the Spirit to record this incident for us. In this incident we will learn a great deal about our Savior and our calling to be His disciples.



A humiliating task!

What an ordeal Jesus had been through for the past twelve hours.

He had been betrayed by one of His own disciples, Judas Iscariot. He had been abandoned by the rest of His disciples. The most prominent disciple, Peter, had even publicly denied that he knew Jesus.

Jesus had also been arrested and subjected, by the Jewish council, to a grueling trial that lasted all night. During this trial, false witnesses had brought horrible charges against Him. It all climaxed with a death sentence on the charge of blasphemy.

Then Jesus had been brought to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. The Jewish leaders charged Jesus with high crimes against the Roman state.

The crowds that gathered before Pilate's palace vehemently rejected Him. These were the people to whom He had ministered. He had taught them the gospel of the kingdom. He had performed many mighty miracles of healing among them. But they rejected Him, preferring that Pilate release to them the despicable Barabbas.

Finally, Jesus was publicly condemned to death by Pilate, after which He was whipped and mocked.

And now Jesus was being led away to be executed.

The Roman form of capital punishment was crucifixion. The Roman place of execution for the area of Jerusalem was a skull-shaped hill, called Golgotha, just outside of the city.

And so Jesus was led through the streets of Jerusalem to be executed outside the city.

The writer to the Hebrews sees in this the gospel of salvation. "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also,

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that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:11-12). The Old Testament law required that on the great Day of Atonement the carcass of the sacrificial animal, whose blood was shed on the altar for the sin of the people, be taken outside the camp (city) and burned. The writer to the Hebrews sees in this a picture of Jesus offering Himself as a sin offering for the people of God outside the city. Jesus, the Lamb of God, would not give Himself an offering for sin on the altar of the temple. He would do so outside the gates of the city. And so we must see Jesus being led outside the city as the Lamb of God. He was being led to Golgotha to die the accursed death of the cross that would atone for the sins of the church.

As Jesus was being led through the streets of Jerusalem, the Roman soldiers found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to carry Jesus' cross.

It was the custom that the one to be crucified must carry his own cross to the place of execution. The prisoners were generally led through the most populous streets of the city. The place of execution was near a highway, where many people would congregate. This was to shame and humiliate the victim.

Jesus, however, was not able to carry His cross the entire distance. Jesus was 33 years old, in His physical prime. Yet the ordeal of the past hours had sapped Him of His physical strength. Repeatedly Jesus stumbled. Finally, He could go no further. No amount of beatings and curses by the soldiers could move Him forward.

And so the Roman soldiers forced Simon to carry Jesus' cross.

Simon was a man of Cyrene. This means that he was born in Cyrene, a city in northern Africa

(present day Libya), about fifteen miles inland from the sea.

Simon was most likely a Jew. This is suggested by his Jewish name. Also, there was a large colony of Jews in Cyrene.

Perhaps Simon was in Jerusalem for the Passover week. Or he could have been a resident of Jerusalem. There were a number of Cyrenians living in Jerusalem. There was even a synagogue of Cyrenians in the city (Acts 6:9).

Evidently, Simon was nearby when Jesus fell and was not able to continue. A quick search of the crowd led the soldiers to Simon. We read that they "found" him.

Him the soldiers compelled to carry Jesus' cross. Certainly the *soldiers* would not carry His cross. This task was thrust on Simon. Perhaps it also delighted the soldiers to force another Jew to carry Jesus' cross. The result was that Simon followed Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem and then outside the city to the place of execution—carrying Jesus' cross.



A beautiful picture!

We have here a picture of true discipleship.

To be a disciple of Jesus one must take up his cross and follow Him. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 16:24: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." If you will come after Jesus as His disciple, you must follow Him. You must

follow His teachings. You must also follow the example He gave for godly living in the service of God. If you will follow Him, you must also take up your cross. To take up one's cross is to suffer for Christ's sake. It is to endure the same hatred and opposition that Jesus endured, which hatred and

opposition led to His crucifixion. This is the inevitable result of following Jesus. And the cross you will carry is really the cross of Jesus.

We have a beautiful picture of this discipleship with Simon. Yes, the cross Simon carried was Jesus' cross. Yes, Simon probably carried Jesus' cross unwillingly. The soldiers compelled him to carry the cross. However, Jesus' cross temporarily became his cross, placed on his shoulders by the soldiers. And with the cross Simon followed Jesus, sharing in Jesus' shame and humiliation. What a graphic picture of discipleship!

The discipleship that was only pictured in Simon's actions that morning may well have become a spiritual reality later on his life. There is evidence to suggest that this same Simon later became a true disciple of Jesus. Mark, in his account of this incident, identifies Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). The mention of Simon's two sons suggests that they were known to the readers of Mark's gospel. The testimony of the early church fathers is that Mark was written initially to the church of Rome. And there was a Rufus in Rome. Paul writes in Romans 16:13, "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." All this suggests that Simon

was later converted and, along with his family, became a member of the church of Rome. It is very well possible that Simon had already passed

on to glory by the time that Paul wrote to the church of Rome. Paul mentioned Rufus and his mother. If this is the case, Simon most certainly carried a heavier cross than he did to Golgotha. It was the cross of hatred and opposition for Christ's sake that every true disciple must carry.

*"...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."*



A necessary requirement!

Will you also be a disciple of Jesus?

If you will be Jesus' disciple, you must follow Him in faith. By faith you must embrace His teachings and confess them before men. By faith you must also live as Jesus lived—in all godliness in the service of the living God.

And then be ready to carry the cross of Jesus. What you teach will be offensive to many. It will exalt God rather than man. The unbelieving world will

hate you for this. How you live will also be an offense. It will condemn those who walk in sin. Many will hate and oppose you, as they also hated and opposed Jesus. It is not easy to be Jesus' disciple. It is the way of self-denial and cross-bearing.

But it is of extreme importance that you live as Jesus' disciple.

We have seen that Jesus was led outside the city to be crucified as an offering for sin. This offering was necessary for our salvation. We have all sinned

and are guilty before God. Jesus' crucifixion outside the city of Jerusalem is the only sacrifice that can cover our sins and secure our salvation.

But that salvation is only for the true disciples of Jesus. The salvation of the cross is received and enjoyed by faith only. That faith is the faith of discipleship. It is the faith that follows Jesus and carries His cross.

How heavy the disciple's cross can be.

But how great is the salvation of those that carry it!



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra

## Marriage, Divorce, and Children

**M**arriage is for life. Marriage is a special, truly astounding union of one man and one woman for as long as they both shall live.

God instituted marriage in the beginning. That work of God is recorded in Genesis 2, another essential reason for insisting that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are literal history. In Genesis 2 God reveals that He formed Adam as head of the race and king of the creation. Next, God wisely revealed to Adam that Adam needed a help that was fitting for him—something that he did not find in all the animals that God had created. In perfect wisdom, the Creator took of the very flesh of Adam and formed Eve—a perfect complement to Adam. When God led Eve to Adam, He instituted marriage as a creation ordinance—an institution that belongs to the very fabric of this creation.

God did something else. He personally united the first husband and wife in a bond that only He could break. Whether the next

words were spoken by Adam or are God's own pronouncement does not matter—it is God's word. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

Jesus confirmed the nature of marriage as a union of one man and one woman for life when the Pharisees, "tempting him," asked whether marriage might be broken "for any cause" (Matt. 19:3). After quoting the statement of Genesis 2:24, Jesus added, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (v. 6). That God unites and "let not man put asunder" is not to say that man *can* put asunder but ought *not*. Rather it warns against man's attempt to separate a husband and wife, because what God has joined, man *cannot* put asunder. As the inspired apostle Paul makes clear, only death breaks the marriage union. Only God unravels what He has knit together.

With wisdom and purpose God made this lifelong bond an essential characteristic of marriage. For God determined this blessed relationship to be the clearest picture of the covenant of grace that God establishes with His people in Christ. Like the picture of a husband living with his wife, Christ's life with His people is one of love, fellowship, and astounding intimacy. He whispers to us His secrets (Ps. 25:14). And, very significantly, that covenant relationship cannot be broken. God promises, "My covenant will I not break" (Ps. 89:34).

Because of God's wisdom, marriage is truly beautiful. One sees its beauty in a strong young man and his lovely bride as they marry in the Lord, promising before God to love and be faithful to each other until "death do us part." The beauty of marriage is glimpsed in the young wife and mother, and the young husband and father, seated together with "children like olive plants round about [their] table" (Ps. 128:3).



Behold the faithful husband and wife, now sporting graying hair and deepening wrinkles, laboring with tears and prayers to bring their children through the trials and crises of their teenage years. The beauty is that these pressures do not separate, but by God's grace, press them more closely together. And, united, they give good instruction to their children.

And then take note of the beautiful harmony in the marriage of the godly grandparents. Their love has weathered the storms of life. Their marriage is steadfast. Content, happy, and blessed they are in their God-given unity.

Two individuals, two lives made one. What God has joined together.

## Divorce

Then there is divorce. Jarring; ugly; tearing apart; dividing and separating. It conjures up images of unspeakable bitterness, heartache, and turmoil.

The "one" divides unnaturally into two partials. One home becomes two. One family has two parts. One set of parents is torn apart into one man versus one woman, at enmity.

Divorce is not only ugly, it has serious effects. The family has been the basic unit of all societies from the beginning. Sad to say, divorce is rampant in western society, and its disastrous effects are obvious. As more and more marriages end in divorce, the whole fabric of society is left tattered. Thousands upon thousands of broken homes and fragmented families dot the landscape of virtually every society. The whole culture of unfaithfulness to marriage vows has resulted in two additional notable evils: 1) marriage is increasingly disregarded altogether, and 2) marriage is being redefined to allow for legal homosexual "marriages."

By God's grace, the Protestant Reformed Churches have taken an uncompromising stand. It is not a novel position. It is the biblical position, namely, marriage is for life. The Bible gives one ground only for divorce, namely, adultery. And there is no remarriage for a divorced man or woman so long as the spouse lives. Scripture's prohibiting of remarriage is due to the lifelong character of marriage.

This is one of the "hardest" teachings that the PRC maintain. One wonders how many people, though expressing love for the doctrines of sovereign grace, yet spurned membership in the PRC because of this teaching on marriage. They could not abide the implications that condemned a beloved divorced father, or sister, or child. These convictions on marriage have been the cause of the PRC turning away numerous others who confessed love for the preaching of the PRC, but were themselves divorced and remarried. In my experience, every such incident is hard for the pastor, for the consistory, and for the congregation or mission fellowship. But each occurrence also confirms the Bible's teaching.

## Children of Divorce

Recently, two books have led me to examine these matters from a different perspective, namely the effect of divorce on children. The books have given me additional reason to thank God for the grace that continues to sustain the PRC in their convictions on marriage and divorce. The first is *Child of Divorce, Child of God: A Journey of Hope and Healing*, by Kristine Steakley. The second, written by Elizabeth Marquardt, is *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*. The

books, both written by children of divorce, complement each other. Kristine Steakley's book is a personal account of her experiences, backed by various studies as well as by personal interviews of other children of divorce. Her perspective is that of a believer who knows that God is the only hope for children of divorce. Hence the title. Elizabeth Marquardt's work arose out of a national study she conducted of young men and women raised in divorced families.

Both of these young women are considered "successful." Their respective parents had what many would describe as a "good divorce." They were not totally abandoned as children. And their interviews were not conducted with children who had gone to pieces, leading to sexual immorality, drugs, or violence.

Nonetheless, both authors substantiate one common theme with incontrovertible evidence: divorce is devastating for children. These young women courageously stand up to the overwhelming flood of opinion expressed by countless psychologists and psychiatrists, books, newspapers, websites, and children's literature. The popular view is that "divorce will not hurt the children if you do it right." Steakley pointedly rejects that notion.

Not surprisingly, the proponents of this theory are parents who have divorced. I have yet to meet or hear of a child of divorce who has bought into it—we know better. There is not a "right way" to divorce so that no one gets hurt. It may be a nice idea, but the reality simply does not work that way. Our actions have consequences, and one of the consequences of divorce is the battered hearts of children whose homes

...divorce is rampant in western society, and its disastrous effects are obvious.

are broken when marriage vows are abandoned (10).

Writing from personal experience and her interviews, she confidently maintains that “having divorced parents permanently alters the reality of our world.... [T]he trauma of a family shattered by divorce lingers on in the broken hearts of those children as they grow into adults” (9).

I heartily recommend both books to all the SB readers. If I had the power, I would make them required reading for every believing couple looking to be married. They ought to know how serious a thing it is to vow to be faithful even unto death. Every married couple ought to read them—particularly when there is conflict between husband and wife. They should recognize that a good marriage is worth working for. Even a less than perfect marriage is far better for their children than divorce.


*...divorce is devastating for children.*

Every pastor, elder, and deacon should learn from these writings something of the inner turmoil and the burdens shouldered by these young, oh so young, believers, not to mention the effects lasting into adult life.

The church of Jesus Christ must face these issues and deal with them properly, which is to say, biblically. How can, how must the church officially (through the office-bearers) and unofficially (in the office of believer) help divorced members and their children? For all these purposes, the books are valuable, and we intend to discuss these issues in subsequent editorials.

Above all, the books, whether intentionally or not, demonstrate the wisdom of God in establishing marriage as a lifelong relationship. Although neither author expresses it explicitly, they touch on a truth of marriage that is well known to every Reformed

believer. Marriage is not only a lovely picture of God’s covenant of grace; in addition, one of the primary functions of marriage is the nurturing of the covenant seed. Godly fathers and mothers are united so that together they may rear children in the fear of God’s name.

Near the close of the old dispensation, the prophet Malachi rebuked apostatizing Israel for their despising of marriage. Jehovah told Israel that He would no longer receive any offering from their hand. Why? “Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant” (2:14). Then the prophet adds, “And did not he make [husband and wife] one?... And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed” (v. 15). And he concludes, “the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away” (v. 16). 

## Letters

Rev. Kenneth Koole

### Saved unto newness of life

As stated in an earlier editorial (March 1, 2009) we intend to use the Letters to the Editors column to bring to a conclusion our response to a respondent’s reaction to AIM’s recent video introducing the PRC to the viewing public.

The respondent voiced problems with two matters highlighted by the video, the first having to do with the value and need for creeds and confessions in the church’s great battle to maintain the testimony of the Truth, the other having to do with the need and importance of membership in the church institute.

In the February 15 issue of the SB we responded to this second all too common sentiment today that minimizes the vital impor-

tance of church membership, and in the March 1 issue we responded to the spirit that disparages both the need for confessions and creeds as well as the calling of believers to subscribe to these great statements of faith.

But we still want to say something about the biblical proof on which the respondent hangs his critical perspective of almost everything related to the church institute, in particular his reference to Romans 10:9.

To refresh our memories we quote the pertinent part.

The video said that God saves people by the administration of the sacraments (Baptism and the Lord’s Supper). And that is why it is important to find a good church. If the Bible is the only standard of truth, what about

where it says “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

I can’t find a passage of Scripture that states we must do anything other (or additional) than believe on Jesus Christ for our salvation.

We respond along the following lines.

First, it is apparent that the respondent has decided to embrace a very deficient definition of the salvation a true believer ought to be interested in. The last phrase makes plain that the brother has decided to speak of salvation simply in terms of being saved from condemnation, i.e., not being sent to hell. Saved

in the sense of being justified, one's sins forgiven. As if, once that has been achieved, with that the true believer can be content. "I am not going to hell, but am heaven-bound. And that's all I am interested in or that the Lord Jesus requires of me."

We ask, is this indeed the sum and substance of the apostolic faith? The believer has no more calling than to see to it that he is not going to be condemned when he dies? And the apostles certainly would not lay upon one who confesses a faith in *their* Lord Jesus any more burden (calling) than that?

Well, that may be the brother's brand of Christianity at the moment (as a reaction to what he did not like to be reminded of by the video), but, he may be sure, it is not the apostolic brand, and we would pray it does not remain his own.

The respondent states he cannot find a passage that requires that one who would be saved is called to anything more than to believe (confess a faith in Christ). Therefore no one has the right to lay on the professing disciple of Christ any other requirement.

All he wants is one? We offer the following for his consideration—Acts 2:37, 38 (which comes at the conclusion of the apostle Peter's sermon on Pentecost). "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter...what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, *and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

No less authority than the apostle Peter expected the true believer to add baptism to his faith. Evidently the apostle expected that true faith would want and seek baptism, not argue whether or not it was really necessary. How the apostle Peter would have responded to

one who on Pentecost fervently professed his faith in Jesus as the Christ and then disputed the need for his being baptized I leave to the respondent's imagination.

And significantly, the reference in Acts 2:38 is to *baptism*, one of those sacraments referred to in the video, the administration of which ties one in with the instituted church and her Christ-ordained officebearers. There is no New Testament record of mere believers baptizing each other; Christ-ordained officebearers were always involved.

What Peter required on Pentecost, in keeping with his Lord's words in Mark 16:16 ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"), was to be the pattern for believers and the apostolic church from that day on.

No, we do not teach (nor does Scripture) that only one who has received baptismal water can be saved. There are infants of believers who die prior to being baptized. Some have confessed Christ on their deathbeds. But not being baptized due to exceptional circumstances is not the same as *refusing* to be baptized. "I said 'I believe.' That is enough. I don't need the sacraments."

Such is what marks true faith? "I have confessed the Christ. I am saved. Don't talk to me about anything else I am called to do."

We assure the brother, it does not.

A quote from old Bishop Ryle (in connection with Luke 12:41-48) is much to the point. "The point is not [simply] what a man should do to be saved, *but what ought a saved man to do?* (emphasis Ryle) A saved man ought

to be 'careful to maintain good works' (Tit. 3:8)".

*Titus* is chock-full of the 'good works' to which young pastor Titus was to call his church (congregation). Amongst these was obeying the exhortation to stand against doctrinal errors (v. 10 speaks of rejecting heretics), while living in communion with like-minded believers (cf. chap. 2).


One final point. Whether the respondent realizes it or not, he does an injustice to Romans 10:9, as if (as stated above) the salvation the apostle has in mind is simply being saved from being under God's wrath. That is part of it, but not the whole.

There is reason why the apostle, in reference to the Jesus we confess, uses the title "Lord" here. "Lord" is a confession whereby one places the whole of one's life under the authority of this Risen Jesus.

Indeed, he who confesses with his mouth Jesus as his Lord shall be saved—saved from condemnation first of all, but then unto newness of life as well. And that means a believer is not content until the whole of his life has been brought into conformity with what the apostles require of New Testament believers.

One is reminded of Saul of Tarsus' question put to the Lord Jesus, who was calling him on the Damascus road. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

And a life of service in the gathering of Christ's church followed, gathering believers who would unite themselves in a common understanding of and confession of this Lord Jesus and of living the Christian life.

Let every saved man take heed. 

*Indeed, he who confesses with his mouth Jesus as his Lord shall be saved—saved from condemnation first of all, but then unto newness of life as well.*



## Persecuted Pilgrims

**O**n our pilgrim journey through this life we face many hardships. Ours is not a prosperous, peaceful, and trouble-free life. From the cradle to the grave, we encounter countless and great struggles.

Persecution is one of the main hardships we face. Because we are not of the world, we are hated for the sake of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself experienced this, and concerning it He said, "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). And again, "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

In his first epistle, the apostle Peter also speaks of the persecution we can expect. He mentions that we will be "in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1:6); the ungodly will "speak against us as evildoers" (2:12); we will "suffer for righteousness sake" (3:14); we will "suffer in the flesh" (4:1); a "fiery trial" will try us (4:12); we will be "reproached for the name of Christ" (4:14); and so on.

But Peter does not speak only of the fact of persecution. He also gives us the ultimate reason for it. It will come upon us, not simply because of the hatred of ungodly men, and not simply because of Satan's raging against the church of Christ, but "according to the will of God" (I Pet. 4:19). It has been decreed and will be sent upon us by God Himself. That

is why we are told not to think it strange when the fiery trials of persecution come our way (I Pet. 4:12).



All of this was very real for the early New Testament church. Think for example of Saul, who, prior to his conversion, was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1). Persecution also came from the Romans, who under the leadership of Nero punished the saints for crimes they did not commit. Believers were subjected to extreme tortures and painful deaths, and that for the amusement of the citizens of Rome.

Some of God's people today suffer in the same way. The world hates true Christianity, and in some countries that hatred means that those who confess Christ are opposed at every turn. In such places the people of God, by meeting to worship their King, risk the loss of all they have—possessions, jobs, families, and even their own lives.

While most of us do not suffer so severely, yet we are still persecuted for the sake of Christ. The world in which we live is one that tolerates anything and everything, except those who truly confess Jesus Christ and His truth. Pilgrims are hated because they will not validate and support sin. Pilgrims are mocked because they will not participate in the language and lifestyles of modern society. Pilgrims are denied work because

they are determined to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Other forms of persecution come our way, too. We oppose abortion as a breaking of the sixth commandment and are accused of being uncompassionate. We condemn the sin of homosexuality on the basis of God's Word and are charged with hate crimes. We confess the truth that God created the universe in six days and are scorned as ignorant and unlearned men. We rejoice in God's covenant by having large families (if possible) and are labeled as unwise. We are mocked because of our reverent worship and reverent use of the Lord's Day. In the eyes of the world we are "intolerant," "bigoted," and "narrow minded."

Such forms of persecution, however, are in reality rather mild. What we must reckon with is the fact that as time advances toward the end, persecution will become much more severe. We will not always have the freedoms that we now have as Christians. We can expect opposition to grow until it comes against, not just part, but all of Christ's church. That will be the case

especially once the Antichrist arises, for "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no,

nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). Suffering will be very great. Men will be unbelievably cruel. The wicked will turn their inventive minds toward producing highly sophisticated ways of torturing

*Pilgrims are hated because they will not validate and support sin.*

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God's people in the hopes of getting them to deny Christ. The place of the church in the world will become very narrow indeed.

There is the very real possibility that some of us living today will face this great tribulation. It is not pleasant to think about that, for it will be a most terrible time for the saints. Our flesh shrinks from it. We fear it. Perhaps that is why we tend to put it out of our minds. But the fact and the severity of it ought to be believed by us, and thought upon. For we need to prepare ourselves and our children for that time. And we need to remind ourselves, in light of it, that we are pilgrims on this earth, who live with a view to a better and an eternal life.



The reason for persecution is that God has made us (as we noticed in a previous article) holy pilgrims. God's work of grace has set us apart from the ungodly among whom we live. We speak a different language, live a different lifestyle, have different interests, pursue different goals, do different things. We are not interested in making this world our permanent home. We resist participating in ungodliness. We do not seek things here below, but have our eyes fixed on things eternal. And the ungodly world around us hates everything it sees and notices in us.

If we want, we are able to avoid persecution, or at least to lessen the amount of it. All we need to do is fail to live as pilgrims in this world. If we conform ourselves to the ungodly world, the wicked will leave us alone. If we speak their language and join them in their evil activities, instead of condemning them,

the ungodly will not mock and ridicule us.

If we find we are not being persecuted, we do well to ask ourselves whether we are living as pilgrims ought. Perhaps your

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life is not as godly as it should be. Perhaps you are conforming yourself to the world. Perhaps, without even realizing it, you are doing so in order to avoid opposition and hatred. It should not be

that way. For "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12).

The ungodly persecute us because they hate Christ Himself. When we live a godly life, our lives are Christ-like. That is what the world sees and hates.

They also persecute us because we condemn them. We do this every time we speak the words of Christ, for the word of truth that we believe and confess condemns all their unrighteousness and sin. But even apart from what we say, the holy life of the pilgrims is a condemnation of the ungodly. Our witness, both through word and deed, pricks the consciences of the ungodly so that they turn against us and do all they can to get us out of their lives. They seek to silence the godly so that their own consciences might not be troubled.



As we contemplate such persecution, it is natural to be filled with dread. But like the apostles, we should count it a privilege that we are found worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41). We should rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings (I Pet. 4:13).

This is possible, first of all, when we realize that persecution is good for us as pilgrims. It is

part of God's work in preparing us for glory. We are sanctified through persecution. It causes us to long for our home in heaven, where we will no longer face it. Often our longing is not as it should be. God uses persecution as a means to cure us of our worldliness and to turn our minds to contemplate what is coming, and to increase our desire for it.

We can also rejoice when we are persecuted because suffering for Christ's sake serves to assure us that we are Christ's. We are to rejoice inasmuch as we are "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (I Pet. 4:13). As we partake of Christ's sufferings, we are assured of the fact that we are united to Christ Himself, for we suffer exactly because it is clear to the ungodly that Christ lives in us. Our suffering as Christians confirms for us that we belong to Him.

Pilgrims can also rejoice when they face persecution because of the confidence of divine protection.

You may wonder, "Will I be able to stand when the pain and loss and suffering becomes unbearable? Or will I cave in on account of terrible torture, so that I deny Christ in order to escape torments from the ungodly?"

We cannot stand on our own. We are weak and helpless against the pressures of the ungodly. But by the power of our almighty God, we will stand and persevere. He has promised never to leave or forsake us. Having paid the price of our redemption through the death of His own Son, He will not abandon us in the time of our greatest need. No one will be able to pluck us out of His hands. They may destroy our bodies, but our souls are secure because of God's sovereign care and safekeeping.

Finally, whenever we suffer we need especially to keep before our minds the hope we have as

pilgrims and strangers here below. We have been begotten unto a living hope (I Pet. 1:3), the hope of heaven and life eternal. Because of our hope, we should not focus on all the sacrifices we must make and on all the sufferings we must endure, but rather consider the things that await us in heaven.

In light of that hope, we can say, "So what if they hurt my body; they cannot touch my soul! So what if they destroy my earthly home; I have a mansion in heaven! So what if they take away all my possessions and prevent me from buying and

selling and obtaining my daily food; I have riches in glory that will never be destroyed! So what if they end and take away my earthly life; as soon as they do I will be with Jesus in glory!"

Hopeful pilgrims are able, by the grace of Christ, to face and endure suffering for His sake.



Believing and Confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

## Our Misery Exposed by the Law

### Lord's Day 2

Q 3. Whence knowest thou thy misery?

A. Out of the law of God.

Q 4. What doth the law of God require of us?

A. Christ teaches us that briefly, Matthew 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Q 5. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

A. In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor.

**T**he heading above this first section of the Heidelberg Catechism is, "Of the Misery of Man."

Do you know your misery? Or we could put it another way: Do you know your need of Jesus Christ?

That question is personal, directed, dear reader, at you.

A person could easily look around in society and observe that there is sin and misery and conclude that this world needs a Savior. But this is about your

need and about mine. Every one of us needs Jesus Christ.

How do I come to know that I need Jesus?

This is what Lord's Day 2 teaches. We know this need by knowing our sin, by knowing who and what we are by nature. Unless we know this, we are like the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:17, which said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Whereas, the truth is, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

It is the law of God that teaches us our sin.

Do you love the law of God?

Do you love it as the psalmist in Psalm 19 who said of the commandments, "More to be

desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"? Can you say with Psalm 119:97, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day"?

We are continually confronted with the law: in our conscience, at church when the law is read and the Word of God is preached; by family and church members who have the courage to exhort and admonish us when we pass a speed limit sign; and in many other ways. What is our response? Is your response, "Oh, how I love thy law!" If when you slander, someone says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," is this your response, "Thank you, that is just what I needed to hear"?

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The law is good for us. We should love the law because the law shows us our misery, which in turn shows us our need of Christ, which in turn brings us to the Cross of Calvary.

### **A Law Environment**

What is the law? When we speak of the law, we refer to the ten commandments. These give a summary of all the other commands and requirements in God's Word. The law is the standard and norm that God has set for our life. The law sets down the God-ordained parameters for our happy existence.

Everything in this creation must operate according to the will of its Maker. God has set a law for the planets and the sun, for clouds and rain, for plants and seeds, for every creature. These laws define the boundaries of the creature's existence, and so long as the creature stays within those boundaries it can happily function. Take, for example, a fish. God's law for a fish, and also for a whale, is to live in the water. A fish out of water, or a beached whale, cannot live.

Just as God has made a law for every creature, so He has made a law for man. This law is more than the law for a fish, because God made man a moral rational creature after His own image, able to communicate and enjoy the fellowship of covenant life. The law for man defines not only his physical existence and purpose in relation to other creatures, but also sets down the boundaries and parameters of his moral and spiritual relation to other men and also to God Himself. In the beginning God gave this law to Adam and Eve. Not only did He write the law on their hearts, so that they knew His commandments, but He also gave them specific commands concerning the trees in the garden. So long as they stayed inside the circle of obedience to

God's law, they would be happy and live with God's blessing.

Essentially, it is the same for us today. The law sets the boundaries for our happy living with each other and with God. God has given us a law for family life, a law for our possessions, a law for our worship of Him, and so on. So long as we live within the parameters of the law, we will live happily. Children live in the same kind of environment of law. A young child is put in a playpen, and there he is safe; but if he climbs out, he may put his life in danger. Teenagers live under the rules of their parents, and this is a place of protection for them in a sinful world.

### **God's Law Abides**

The world that we live in, though, is different from the world of Adam and Eve before the fall. Now we live in a fallen and sinful world. And that raises a question: In this sinful world we do live outside the parameters of the law, so, does the law still stand? Does God still maintain the requirements and boundaries of the law? After the fall, Adam and Eve began to die just as a fish out of water dies. What happened to the law? Did God come to them and change things, and say, "I see you live the existence of a beached whale, dying, so I will change the law for you so that you can be happy lying on the beach?"

The answer is, No. The law remains. God doesn't change the law, and the reason is that the law is a reflection of the perfection of God's own character, and so God cannot change the law. God cannot deny Himself. The commandments still stand as the parameters for our happy existence. When Jesus came, He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus maintained the law, and explained the

deepest requirements of the law, and kept and fulfilled the law Himself perfectly.

Satan would very much like it if we would set aside the law and say, "Since salvation is all of grace, the law doesn't matter." But God maintains the law, and His purpose is to show us our misery. In maintaining the law after the fall and placing the cherubim with flaming swords by the Garden of Eden, God showed Adam and Eve their misery, and told them that this was because of their own sin.

### **The Law is Deep**

How does the law show us our misery?

To begin, we should understand that the law is more than a "list of do's and don'ts."

In Matthew 19, a young man comes to Jesus with this question, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus' answer is, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.... Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

To this, the young man responds, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Why did he say that? How did he dare to say such a thing? It was because he had a superficial understanding of the law. He understood the law as a list of do's and don'ts. He had never taken a knife and stabbed someone, he had never committed adultery with his neighbor's wife, he was not a thief. But was that true obedience to the law?

Jesus' response shows that it was not. He said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." The point is that God's requirement in the law is not shallow, it is not merely external,



not what satisfies the outward appearance, but God maintains His law in this way, that He requires obedience from the heart, He requires a perfect heart of love for God and the neighbor.

Jesus' summary of the law, which is quoted in the catechism ("Love God and your neighbor"), shows this depth of the law of God. The Pharisees' understanding of the law was external and shallow. They had taken all the commandments and had ranked them in order of importance, because they thought that some of them contradicted others. For example, they said, "I am required to admonish my brother sometimes, but I am forbidden to work on the Sabbath, so should I admonish my brother on the Sabbath?"

In Matthew 22 they try to trick Jesus by asking Him which commandment is the greatest. Jesus' answer shows that they look at the law the wrong way and that the important thing in obeying the law is the motivation for obedience. That you love God with your whole being, that you love your neighbor as yourself, that you put away selfishness—this is what the law requires. This is the foundation of true obedience. The catechism asks, "What does the law require?" The answer is, "Wholehearted, selfless love for God and the neighbor."

### Looking at Ourselves in the Law

Do you love God with all your heart, so that all your affections and desires follow the course of your desire to love and serve the Lord? Do you love God with all your mind, so that all your thoughts are directed and controlled by your love of God? Do you love God with all your strength, so that with feet and hands, mouth, ears and eyes, with all the strength and energy you have, you serve God?

And how about your neigh-

bor? Do you love your neighbor as yourself, so that you don't think of yourself above and before him, so that you don't put your needs above his? Do you love your neighbor so well that you are never envious, never selfish, never covetous, never bitter, never hateful or slanderous?

Do you keep the law of God? Wholeheartedly? Selflessly?

When we ask ourselves these questions, we find out how deep and penetrating the law is. It shows us not only what should be, but what is. How far we fall short.

This is the law. It is like a mirror that shows our failures, the outlines of who we are in ourselves. The law describes me. It starts on the outside, with my life, my tongue, and my use of holy things. It addresses my priorities and desires when God says, "Worship me alone" and "Keep my day holy." It addresses my heart when it tells me to show honor and respect and not to covet. It is asking me whether I truly love God and the neighbor. And every time another commandment comes, it shows us another part of who we should be but are not. It shows us our sin.

### What Is Sin?

Sin means to miss the mark, to fall short. It is an easy figure to understand. An archer has a number of arrows. There is a target. The small center on it is the bull's-eye. You shoot! One goes way off to the left, another way off to the right, another falls short. We never hit the target.

That is our life. The arrow is each new day, fresh and unused. Today your target is to live faithfully in your marriage, or your target is to honor your parents, or not to covet, or to uphold the

good name of your neighbor. We never hit the target. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God.

### An Impossible Law

Can we keep the law perfectly? Emphatically, the answer is, NO! "I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor." This is a strong description of our depravity. In Romans 8:7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

This shows the impossibility of obeying the law of God. That is where we stand at the end of this second Lord's Day. We cannot do it. Not only that we *do* not do it, but we *cannot* do it. We are like the beached whale, dying, and we can do nothing about it.

The Canons of Dordt put it this way,

In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses. For though it discovers the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from misery, and thus being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace (III/IV, 5).

So does this leave us depressed and downcast? No, God leads us into the knowledge of our sin so that He may also lead us into the knowledge of His Son. This is why we need the law. Perhaps the law tells us to do the impossible, and tells us things about ourselves that are unpleasant, but it also shows us our need in order to bring us to the cross.

Again, in the Canons of Dordt,

*God leads us into the knowledge of our sin so that He may also lead us into the knowledge of His Son.*

What therefore...the law could not do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as

well under the Old as under the New Testament (III/IV, 6).

The law leads us to an impossible situation, but God comes, in His mercy, and shows us the only way of salvation through His Son.

With wave upon wave of mercy He brings us from our state of misery outside the law into the blessed life of salvation through His Son. He brings us into the waters of life, where we can live.



### Questions for Discussion

1. What is necessary before we can really see our need of Christ? Does the natural man know his sinfulness? How does God dispel our ignorance?
2. What is the law?
3. How is God's law for man different from His law for other creatures?
4. Did Adam and Eve know and need the law in their original creation?
5. Does man's sinfulness and inability remove or change the law?
6. Is it possible for someone to keep the law if he really tries hard? What about the rich young ruler?
7. Does God's standard have to do with our actions or our thoughts?
8. If the Ten Commandments and Jesus' summary of the law are essentially the same, why does the catechism discuss Jesus' summary here and the Ten Commandments later?
9. What is sin? What does it mean that we are sinners?
10. If it is impossible to keep the law, why does God maintain the law? Is there a positive purpose relating to our salvation?

*Taking Heed to the Doctrine*

*Rev. James Laning*

## *The Millennium of Dispensationalism (2) The Heavenly City Hovering Over the Earthly Land*

**T**he millennial view of the dispensationalists manifests their view of God's covenant. God's covenant promises, they say, will not be fulfilled unless an earthly millennium for the Jews takes place. This shows that the errors dispensationalists

make with regard to eschatology are related to their wrong view of God's covenant.

One of these errors is their carnal view of God's covenant promise concerning the promised land. Dispensationalists assume it as a matter of common sense that this land must be referring to a piece of real estate on this present earth. This assumption leads them to problems when they come across the places in

Scripture where God Himself interprets His own promise, and explains that the earthly land of Canaan was actually a picture of the heavenly land that He has promised to all His people.

Rather than embracing God's interpretation of His own promise, the dispensationalists divide the people of God into two groups that will enjoy different covenant blessings during the millennium. The first group will

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have heavenly bodies, enjoying heavenly things in the heavenly city, while the second group will have earthly bodies, enjoying earthly things on this present earth. In this way the dispensationalists divide God's covenant promises, making many of them carnal, and thus divide Christ Himself and His covenant people—all in an effort to maintain their erroneous assumption about what is meant by the promised land.

### How Dispensationalists explain references to a heavenly land

For many years Reformed believers have been refuting dispensationalism by making references to passages of Scripture that refer to the heavenly inheritance of God's covenant people. Hebrews 11:10–16, for example, is frequently cited to prove that Abraham looked for a heavenly land, and that the city God promised His people is not earthly, but heavenly.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:15–16).

The dispensationalists respond to this by arguing that all references in Scripture to a heavenly land or to a heavenly city are referring to that which the *resurrected* saints are going to enjoy during this upcoming millennium. But, they go on to say, it is the *unresurrected* saints, the ones who survive during the great tribulation, that are going to be the ones who will enter the earthly kingdom when Christ returns. So in the mind of a dispensationalist, the millennium is going to be a time in which one group of believers is experiencing

the fulfillment of one group of covenant promises, and another group of believers is going to be experiencing the fulfillment of another group of covenant promises. Whether or not a person is in Group A or Group B depends on whether or not he dies before Christ returns.

So two groups of people, they say, will both be enjoying this golden millennial age. One group will have heavenly immortal bodies, and the other group will have earthly mortal bodies. One group will be sinless, and the other group will be sinful. Yet there will be some commingling of these two groups as they together enjoy their respective millennial blessings.

When one objects to this teaching, they respond by saying that it has happened before and thus it can happen again. After all, they say, our resurrected and immortal Lord communed with His sinful and mortal disciples. And the heavenly, sinless angels have conversed with earthly and corruptible human beings. So, they say, if it has happened before, it can happen again.

As to how these two groups would interact with one another, J. Dwight Pentecost speculates as follows:

This heavenly city will be brought into a relation to the earth at the beginning of the millennium, and perhaps will be made visible above the earth. It is from this heavenly city that David's greater Son exerts His Messianic rule, in which the Bride reigns, and from which the rewarded Old Testament saints exercise their authority in government.

If such an interpretation be correct, there would be a solution to the perplexing problem that arises from placing resurrected saints on the earth to mingle freely with the unresurrected saints during the millennium.... Such a view is in harmony with the Scriptures and solves some

of the problems inherent in the premillennial system.<sup>1</sup>

So dispensationalists believe that the resurrected believers are somehow going to rule from a heavenly city over the unresurrected people who are still on this earth.

### Some Serious Problems with this View

There are undoubtedly many problems with this view, but at this point I mention just a few:

#### 1. There will be one bodily resurrection.

Scripture speaks of one day in which all that are in the graves are going to be raised together.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28–29).

Although it makes a distinction between those who are going to be raised unto life and those who are going to be raised unto damnation, it clearly speaks of an hour when all that are in the graves are together going to be raised.

This means that all believers will receive immortal, heavenly bodies at the same time, as the writer to the Hebrews explains:

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (Heb. 11:39–40).

God has told us that all believers will be made perfect, in body and

<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Dunham Publishing Co., 1966), 546.



soul, at the same time. Although we die and go on to glory in our souls at different times, our bodies will be changed and perfected at the same time.

## **2. Believers who are alive when Christ comes will become immortal.**

When our Lord returns on the clouds of glory, all the believers who are still living will be perfectly conformed to Christ's image.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (I John 3:2).

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (I Cor. 15:51-52).

Thus it is very clear that when Christ returns it will be all believers—both the dead and the living—who will be changed in a twinkling of an eye, and will become immortal.

Dispensationalists try to get around these passages by one of their many unbiblical distinctions. This time I refer specifically to their distinction between the *rapture* and the *revelation*. The passages quoted above, they say, are referring to the *rapture*, which comes before the great tribulation, and not the *revelation*, which comes after the great tribulation. They distinguish these two events as Christ coming secretly *for* His saints (the *rapture*) and Christ coming publicly *with* His saints (the *revelation*).

This distinction is very convenient for them. Having made this distinction, they can take all the verses that speak of believers receiving immortal bodies when

Christ returns and claim that they are all referring to Christ's secret coming (the *rapture*)—an event that they say will happen seven years before the millennium. Scripture, however, refers to this bodily resurrection as happening on the last day, at the last trump.

Furthermore, the passage in I John 3:2 says that when we see Christ on that last day, the effect that this will have upon us will be that we ourselves will become like Him. Right now we see Christ spiritually with the eye of faith, and as we behold His glory we spiritually become more like Him. We see Him spiritually, and we become like Him spiritually. But when Christ returns and we see Him also physically, we shall become like Him also physically. Such is the wondrous and powerful effect that this gracious revelation will have upon us. Yet dispensationalism teaches that believers on that day will see the glorious, immortal body of Christ and yet will remain sinful and mortal. Such a teaching clearly contradicts the wonderful promise found in I John 3:2.

## **3. This yet further divides God's one covenant people.**


Dispensationalism is a movement characterized by seemingly endless distinctions and divisions. They start by making a distinction between Israel and the church, and claim that God has promised Israel earthly land and prosperity that they will enjoy *before* the final judgment. But then when you show them that Old Testament saints like Abraham understood God's promise to be referring to a heavenly land, they respond by dividing the people of God yet again. This time they take Israel and further divide it into two different groups—two groups that will enjoy different covenant blessings during the coming mil-

lennium. All the *resurrected* Israelites will be in Group A, dwelling somewhere above the earth in the heavenly city, while all the *unresurrected* Israelites will be in Group B, enjoying earthly prosperity in their sinful, corrupt bodies.

One erroneous distinction leads to yet more erroneous distinctions. And all because they insist on their assumption that the land promised to Israel has to refer to land that unresurrected blood descendants of Israel will receive before the final judgment.

Endless distinctions make things more and more confusing. Dividing the Scriptures into different covenant promises for different groups of people leads to further and further divisions, and more and more confusion. If they would just abandon their false assumption, and embrace Scripture's explanation concerning the heavenly land, then all would become clear.

God certainly did promise believing Israelites the land. But this promise will be fully realized *after* the final judgment. Then God's one people, united by one Spirit in our one Lord Jesus Christ, will reign forever in the new heaven and new earth.

Indeed we will one day reign on the very earth we walk on today. But it will not be until after we have received sinless, immortal bodies and this earth has gone through the fire that God will send to cleanse it. Then all of us in Christ will possess the heavenly and glorious land that God has promised us. This is what we long for, and what our fathers longed for as well. It is the land we will one day receive together, when we as one people inherit the kingdom that was prepared for us before the foundation of the world. 

## Hasty in Words

### Mutual Quarreling

**E**very gift of God brings its temptation. For it can either be *used* for God's glory, or *misused* in the service of sin.

This applies, surely not least, to the wondrous gift of *language*, that high privilege whereby, among all creatures, man distinguishes himself.

For though in our times reports are abroad of a language of animals, and a man of learning has devoted three years of his life to the study of the supposed language of apes, already now the folly of the undertaking has been exposed by the result.

True, animals make sounds, and these sounds vary, and from this difference of sounds something can be understood. When a dog growls, it means something altogether different from when he barks, whines, or howls, and we understand well what these different sounds of a dog mean. But all this has nothing in common with *language*.

We ourselves have such sounds, to express sensation, as when we laugh or cry, sigh or groan, scream or jubilate. But our speech, our language, the gift to express ourselves in *words* is something wholly by itself.

That you have a language you can speak, means that you belong to a people that for ages have exercised *thought*, for those thoughts and the connection of those thoughts have found a *sound*, have cast that sound into *words*, and that, carrying this language in you and speaking it, by those words and by those sounds you are able to have communion of thoughts with your people.

Human language therefore stands so high and is so glorious a gift of God that the Son of God Himself assumes the name of the *Word* of the Father. "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God."

It is by the *Word* that our God has made the heavens.

He bears all things *by the Word of His power*. And when even

now some mighty event takes place in the world, it is because a "Word of God" has gone out, which never returns to Him void, but doeth that whereunto He hath sent it.

So the difference is evident.

He who drifted and wandered off seeks for our human language to find a point-of-connection in the sound of an orangutan; while he who lives by the Holy Scriptures finds this connecting-point in the Son of God, who is Himself the eternal *Word* of God.

This must be so.

For the mighty antithesis is and remains, whether you take man as having come up from the ape, or...*as created after the Image of God*.



For this reason human language stands so high, and human song, which melts word and melody into one, excels so far the song of nightingale and lark.

Only language, the *word*, is a power which is ever yet able to maintain the competition with the *money-power*.

That wondrous word in our human language, which draws out the soul, and is able to enter deeply into the heart of the neighbor.

In poetry it works as by magic a world of thoughts around you,

and is able to estimate and govern the world in which you dwell.

Our language is the vehicle of our seriousness and of our mirth. It breaks the tension of our sorrow and gives expression to our joy. It creates fellowship of soul with soul. It gives birth to the sociability of life. It weaves a tie around man and man. And, above all, it is language in which we express God's thoughts, make confession of His holy name, pray to the eternal, and lose ourselves in adoration and praise before His majesty.

*Human language therefore stands so high and is so glorious a gift of God that the Son of God Himself assumes the name of the Word of the Father.*

Reprinted from *When Thou Sittest In Thine House*, by Abraham Kuyper, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1929. Used by permission of Eerdmans Publishing Co.

To the faithful in Israel this latter stood even so mightily in the foreground that they shrank from the idea of losing in death their mouth and their language and their word and their song of praise, and therefore so frequently moaned: In the grave who shall give Thee thanks? (Ps. 6:5).



Yet language cannot spend itself exclusively in praise and thanksgiving.

Our human language is also given us for the practice of fellowship and love toward our neighbor and of goodwill and seriousness among our fellowmen.

But thereby originates temptation.

There is indeed another temptation for our human word, the carnal temptation to swear and take the name of our God in vain. A temptation so strong that many people cannot utter a sentence without an oath forming a part of it. But *this* temptation we here pass by. We now speak only of the temptation that in our language is abroad among men.

This temptation also is of many sorts. The temptation to flatter, the temptation to lie, the temptation to taunt, and so much more. But also the temptation to be *hasty in one's words*, and this especially God's Word condemns, as we read in Proverbs 29:20: "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

Against this temptation one should be warned, especially in everyday home-life.

In public, or in more or less strange places, among those with whom we are less familiar, one naturally more or less restrains himself. Here speech is bound to a more polite form. One thinks before one speaks. Sometimes one even complains that at such times words are

slow, rather than that they come too fast.

But in the common trend of family-life among those with whom one feels at home and at ease, when no forms bind us, and words are freely spoken, the temptation is but all too great that the word discards the bridle, goes beyond the limit, is too hasty, in passion, in petulant folly, or in familiarity exceeding all bounds, to say bluntly what should have remained unsaid, and thoughtlessly to let one's tongue run away with oneself.



This subverts the ordinance that God gave with respect to language, your human word. His ordinance is that first there should be the thought, and that this thought, as the *soul*, should *embody* itself in the word.

In your speech according to God's ordinance, your heart, your head, must govern, and your word, your organ of speech, must be servant and serve.

But as a matter of fact this order is frequently reversed. So you meet people who are sometimes called *moulins à paroles*, i.e., word-mills. With whom the tongue speaks of itself, and always keeps on talking, and rattles—like a clock that always ticks. An endless stream of sounds and dripping of words, which makes you seasick and wears you out.

Then rules not the rider the horse, but the horse, here the rattling tongue, runs away with the rider, and what you hear is no longer the utterance of a warm heart or of a clear head, but a leaking gutter that cannot be stopped.

Now this seems, when it does not go too far, sometimes a great convenience. Then one is never confused, can say everything, and has what the world calls an easy

*flux de bouche*, i.e., a rare outpouring of a flood of words.

The trouble in the domestic circle, that such continuous speech disturbs the peace and finally creates such weariness, is by no means yet the worst.

No, it is far worse when such hasty speech inadvertently makes one lose all self-control and moderation in his words, till nothing more is spared, and one literally says everything that comes to mind.

In the domestic circle, in familiar intercourse, this is the cause of so much bitterness and disturbance of spirits, of so much disputation and estrangement.

Then one word brings out another, the tongue of one sets that of the other free, the eloquence of the Evil One masters husband and wife and child and servant. The one tries to excel the other in rapidity of speech. Lack of patience cuts the other short. The one constantly interrupts the other. It becomes a raising of voice against each other. Abusive language sends blood from the heart to the head. And the end of it is that the divine gift, which was given us for the utterance of praise and love, serves time and again at the table, in social intercourse, and familiar fellowship, to disturb the

domestic peace.

But this must not be so.

Our language, the glorious gift of speech, we have received of our God, and ours is the responsibility how we use also this gift of our God.



And therefore, with the use of our *human word*, God's Word warns us so solemnly, before all things else, to be on our guard against *hastiness* of speech.

Not of course, as though

*To keep silent betrays so much higher grace than speech.*




taunting, lying, flattering, and cutting with the word were not far worse, but because all these other evils hang together with this one ordinance of our God, that with respect to language, the word must be *servant*, the word must *serve*, and *not* rule.

To keep silent betrays so much higher grace than speech. Speech is silver, says the Scripture, but silence is *gold*.

To hold one's tongue in leash, and when it is on the point of saying the evil word, to *tame* it, is evidence of noble strength of soul. "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue," says the Proverb-poet, "keepeth his soul from troubles" (21:23).

And therefore see to it, also with your children, when the young twig is readily bent. Especially a child speaks quickly and

thoughtlessly. And upon you rests the responsibility, when instead of having accustomed your child by your own more quiet seriousness to a more easy flow of words, you *overhasty* have added your part to his already so great hastiness of speech, by the unrest in words that in your home-circle you have made to be a second nature to yourself. 

*Sounding Our the Word*

*Rev. Carl Haak*

# The Atonement

**Reformed Witness Hour**

A distinctively Reformed radio ministry,  
proclaiming the truth of the  
sovereignty of God.

**I**t is at this time of year that the church remembers in a special way the awful sufferings and bitter death of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. I consider with you a subject of the Scriptures that is both vast and deep, broad and expansive; a truth of the Scriptures that reaches from one end of the Bible even to the other end; a truth that is absolutely vital for your soul. It is the truth of the atonement.

The word "atonement" refers to a payment, a payment made to God for our sins, rendered by Jesus Christ in the sufferings that He endured upon the cross. This doctrine of the atonement is the central doctrine of the Bible. And it must be central to you. No matter how old you are, no matter how much you have advanced in learning and insight in the Christian faith, no matter the

deeds that you perform—there is nothing so crucial as Christ and Him crucified. There is nothing so central as the doctrine of the atonement.

The atonement of Jesus Christ is the bull's-eye of God's book, the Bible. So every truth of the Bible, all of the history, all of the precepts, doctrines, and exhortations are arranged around this bull's-eye, namely, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Or again, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The message of God's Word to you is not that you are OK. The message of God's Word is not that you need only a spiritual overhaul, a face-lift, so to speak.

The message is not that God has a wonderful plan for your life if only you.... No. The message of God's Word is this: Unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, you have no life in you. That is, unless Christ is crucified and unless He makes

an atonement for your sins, you have nothing—only eternal ruin.

You see, the Word of God is not, first of all, a manual on interpersonal relationships. And it is not given to teach you a supposed victorious living. Oh yes, we glean from the Word of God how we ought to live in this world. And the Word of God will teach us in every sphere of our life how we are to live as those who hope in the Lord. But, you see, the Bible is not like the Torah of Judaism. It is not like the Koran of the Muslims. It is not a

book of virtue or moralistic teachings. But the central issue of the revelation of the Scriptures is: How will you stand before the living and the holy God of heaven

and earth?

You see, the issues of your life are sin and God, judgment and grace, our guilt and God's holiness. The issue is: an atonement for sin in the blood of God's Son, given of God's love for all of His own. All who, by grace, look to this Jesus Christ and trust

*The message  
of God's Word  
to you is not  
that you are OK.*

*Rev. Haak is pastor of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and radio pastor for the Reformed Witness Hour, on which this message was aired.*

in His atonement shall live. And all who, in folly, reject it and embrace their own ways and sin shall perish. That is the message of God's Word.

So today we, too, preach Christ and Him crucified. We do not, as the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 1, dabble in speculation. Rather, we speak of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The atonement that He made on the cross purged, pardoned, covered all the sins of God's people, of those whom the Father had given to His Son out of an eternal, gracious will of election.

Now the truth of the atonement is certainly a truth, as I said, that covers all of the teachings of the Scriptures. It is found throughout the Scriptures. The Old Testament people of God were well acquainted with the truth of the atonement. You will recall that there are books of the Bible—Exodus and Leviticus—that are devoted to the whole subject of the need of sacrifice and of the fact that the people of God repeatedly were to bring a sacrifice for their sin in order that an atonement might be made. If you lived in the Old Testament, it would have been unmistakable to you. You would know that the way to God was only in the way of sins being placed upon a sacrifice, and that this sacrifice was to be consumed in the fire of God. The only approach to God would be in a way of covering for sin—the way of an atonement.

If we could reconstruct the fabric of the system of the Old Testament, we would see how God impressed this upon the minds of His people. Whether that was in the wilderness, when the tabernacle was erected by Moses, or whether that was later on in the temple of Solomon in the city of Jerusalem, day after day, repeatedly, bloody sacrifices

were brought to the temple or tabernacle. Animals were burned upon the altar. Atonement had to be made. What was God saying? He was saying this (Heb. 9:22): "Without shedding of blood is no remission."

When we come before the truth of the atonement we are making a confession, a confession that the Holy Spirit writes upon our souls. We are making a confession of the realities of sin and the holy God. When we come to the atonement, then we understand that our great problem is our sin, our inability to remove our sin, and our deserving of punishment before God.

Do you know that reality? Are the words, "God, be merciful to me the sinner," upon your heart? Are the words of David in Psalm 51 yours: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness"? Unless this reality, this burden of sin, is brought personally to your soul, there is no point in going any further in the explanation of the doctrine of the atonement. Salvation is not that you just say, "Jesus." But the atonement stands in the concrete reality of your sin.

Sin is a horrible thing. Sin deserves everlasting punishment because of who God is. The God of the Bible is essentially holy and good, pure from all iniquity. We read in Hebrews 12 that our God is a consuming fire, and in the vision given to Isaiah in chapter 6, that the seraphim, the angels, hide their faces before Him as they stand before the throne and cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty." He is also a God of inflexible justice. He always does the right. God passed before Moses and proclaimed His name, "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity," but who will "by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7). Under

*Under  
no circumstances  
will God ever wink  
at sin.*

no circumstances will God ever wink at sin. But He is also a God of mercy and lovingkindness. According to Exodus 20 He has mercy upon thousands of them that fear Him. He is the God who says through the prophets, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and in lovingkindness have drawn you."

If you are to understand the truth of the atonement, these truths must be written upon your heart by the Spirit of God. What truths? Two truths: your sin, and the living, true God.

Do you know those realities? I am not asking you if you are a theologian. I am asking you if the Holy Spirit, through the Word, has given you to understand reality—your sin and the holy God? If your God is not the God of the holy Scriptures, then you serve an idol. If the God that is being taught you or preached to you is less than the holy God of holy Scriptures, then the truth of the atonement will make no sense to you. If God, to you, is the stuff of your own imaginations, then all of the truth of the atonement is unexplainable to you.

Why? Why does the Son of God hang upon a cross forsaken even of God? The Scriptures give the answer. See Psalm 22: "But thou art holy, thou that inhabit the praises of Israel." Jesus Christ was upon the cross because the just and the holy God, in mercy, would give His Son to bear the penalty that the sins of His people deserved.

The glorious truth of the atonement is that our sins were transferred to Jesus Christ.

What a glorious truth! This glorious truth was represented in the Old Testament when the priest would press down his hand upon the sacrificial animal as a sign of the transference of guilt.

That is the wonderful truth of the atonement. All of our guilt and sin was transferred upon Christ. This was God's act. As the judge of all the earth, God pressed the sins of His elect children down upon the head and bosom of Jesus Christ.

You recall that a crown of thorns was pressed upon Jesus' head. Far above that was that the Lord Jesus Christ was made to be accursed of God for us. The curse due to us was laid upon Him. God poured this upon Him. The whole tremendous load of the guilt of God's church was laid upon Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ represented that, bore that, as He died upon the cross.

Oh, the joy of this! Do you know your sin? I am not asking if you admit to messing up now and then. But do you know the blackness of your own heart? Do you grieve under that sin? Or, in pride and conceit, do you downplay your sin? Do you stand offended, perhaps, before the gospel of Jesus Christ today, which declares that you are a sinner deserving only of eternal destruction?

Do you know your sin? If, by the Holy Spirit, you do, what a glorious truth! God, in grace, not compromising His holiness, not winking at sin, took our sins and placed them upon Jesus Christ. It is by faith that we receive this blessing. It is by faith, in the cross, that we appropriate and know the glorious truth that an atonement has been made for our sins.

This atonement God has accepted. The sacrifice of His Son upon the cross was accepted because Jesus Christ paid it all, endured it all. We read in Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." God has made us accepted in the beloved Son. In the work of His beloved Son, God was appeased, satisfied. A full

payment was rendered. Jesus Christ, upon the cross, did all that was necessary to remove the burden of our sins. He suffered all that the justice of God required. He made a perfect atonement.

The gospel declares to us today that Christ is our covering, that we need look and must not look to anything else for the forgiveness of our sins, but to Christ and His one work upon the cross. There is no other remission for sin. There is no possibility that so much as one sin can be remitted, sent away, apart from the work of God's own Son once performed upon Calvary's cross. The cross is our hiding place. It is the only hiding place. It is the sure hiding place for our souls.

Do not place trust in yourself. Do not look to who you are. Do not pride yourself in the thought that at least you are better than someone else. Do not look to someone else to make an atonement for you, or to a priest, or to some ceremony or some sacrifice that the church is performing to take away your sins. Do not look to your works, to your pedigree, to your strength, your beauty, your gifts. All of this, when it comes to taking away sin, is rubbish, absolute rubbish. It cannot remove your sin.

One thing alone takes away sin: Christ crucified, the cross. Hear Him cry from that cross: "It is finished." He did not say, "I am finished, I'm done in." Oh, no. He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" And that means that all the work of atonement, of making a payment for sin was accomplished. All the eternal wrath that our sin deserved was paid in full.

What holds the center in your life? We must live out of the truth of the atonement. We must live under the shadow of the cross. If this truth of the

atonement that we have briefly explained to you today from the holy Scriptures is not the heart and the soul of your life, then all is lost for you. This must be central in all of our thoughts and in all of living. You can call yourself a Christian, you can say, "Well, I'm a Christian. I went to this new church and there was this wave of emotion. I don't know what it was all about, but we had this good feeling about ourselves. I must be saved." If that is the extent of your religion, then your religion is as a stinking corpse in the sight of God.

True religion is Christ and Him crucified. True religion is the bondage and burden of sin broken at the foot of the cross. All who confess this cross and this Savior and who, by the grace of God, embrace this truth of the atonement shall never be put to shame.

Do you glory in this? Is it the heart and the center of your whole life? Does it capture everything? Does it bind fast your heart so that now, by His Spirit, you declare that you will live unto Him and not to yourself? Or does the glitter of sin and the glitter of the world capture you? If Christ crucified is not the center of your life, whatever else is at the center is an idol. He alone is worthy.

It is of this gospel that we testify today. It is this truth that we proclaim. It is the truth. It is found alone in Christ crucified. Nothing really changes in a man or woman's life until the cross touches that life, exposing sin, proclaiming the holy God, and bringing the wonder of God's grace.

Many will call this foolishness. But to those who are saved by the mighty grace of


*If Christ crucified  
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whatever else  
is at the center  
is an idol.*



God, this gospel is Christ, the power of God; Christ, the wisdom of God.

Hear the word of God: a wonder has taken place. The sins of God's people were placed upon

Jesus Christ. And on the cross He bore them all away. They are gone forever. An atonement was made for us. And it was made because God loved us. Now we go away from this truth with one

burning question: Lord, how shall all my thoughts and words and affections, my heart and my soul, ever be able to show forth the love and the praise which is Thy due? 

## Report of Classis West

March 4, 2009

Classis West convened March 4, 2009, in the sanctuary of the First PRC of Edgerton, MN. Rev. M. VanderWal presided over this meeting.

The day prior, the delegates attended an officebearers' conference on the theme *Catechizing Our Youth*. In his keynote address, Rev. S. Key pointed out that the Christian church, both in her early years and in the time of the Reformation and since, has placed great emphasis on the need to provide catechetical instruction. Rev. N. Langerak emphasized that this instruction must be both antithetical and relevant to the errors and problems the church faces in the twenty-first century. Mr. James Regnerus gave a PowerPoint presentation that set forth the need for elders to be involved in the instruction of the church's youth, and gave practical tips for elders to use when they must teach. Rev. D. Overway concluded by reminding us that the goal of catechetical instruction is not head knowledge, but the holiness of our covenant youth.

The highlight of this meeting of Classis was the request of Loveland PRC, with the approval of the Domestic Mission Committee, that Classis approve organizing the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Spokane, WA, into a congregation. Classis gave this approval, and the synodical deputies concurred with Classis' decision. Loveland PRC was appointed as

the committee of classis to implement this decision, and Rev. R. Miersma was appointed moderator of the new congregation. In giving this approval, Classis did not overlook the small size of the group. It did note that the group has enough men who are qualified and sufficiently trained to serve in office—enough even to allow for rotation of officebearers; that there is potential for growth both internally and from the large community around; that there is little or no other Reformed witness in the Spokane area; and that the group has become mature in the Reformed faith and unified in its life as a body of believers.

For a new sister, the family of churches that make up the Protestant Reformed Churches in America can be thankful to God.

Classis also approved the request of Peace PRC to grant emeritation status to Rev. S. Houck. With this decision of

classis the synodical deputies also concurred.

Classis declared a protest against decisions of Synod 2008 to be not legally before it, because a protest against the decision of a body must be directed immediately to that same body—in other words, the protestant must bring his protest to Synod 2009, not to classis.

A brother overtures Synod 2009 to change the wording of Article 21 of the Church Order so that it would read: "The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools, be they parental communal schools or parental home schools, in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant." While protests of the decision of synod are *not* to come to a meeting of classis, *overtures* to Synod *must* come through one's own consistory and through Classis.



Aaron Edwards, Ryan Lathrop, Rev. Thomas Miersma

Accordingly, the brother had brought the overture to his consistory, which rejected it. The brother then exercised his option of bringing the overture to Classis, which declared the overture legally before it. After careful deliberation, Classis rejected the overture on the ground that the overture lacked clear scriptural and confessional grounds to make a change—something that is necessary when changing a document that has stood the test of time.

In addition to other routine labors, Classis approved subsidy requests for Bethel PRC for 2010 in the amount of \$56,000, and for First Edmonton PRC in the amount of \$20,376 CN (\$16,318 US), and forwarded them to synod. Classis also provided classical appointments for its two vacant churches—Calvary (Hull) and Immanuel (Lacombe). The

expenses of this meeting of Classis totaled \$11,550.90.


Having accepted the call to serve as missionary to the Philip-pines, Rev. R. Smit tendered his resignation as stated clerk of the Classis. Rev. Douglas Kuiper was elected to finish Rev. Smit's term as stated clerk, and Rev. J. Marcus was elected to finish Rev. Kuiper's term as assistant stated clerk. Anyone desiring to address Classis West should note that this change is effective immediately, and all correspondence must now be sent to Rev. Kuiper.

In other annual elections, Rev. C. Spronk was elected to a three-year term as *primus* synodical deputy, and Rev. M. VanderWal to a three-year term as *secundus*. Rev. D. Lee was appointed to a three year-term on the classical committee. Revs. Hanko, Key, Kuiper, and Miersma were appointed church visitors, with

Revs. Houck and VanderWal serving as alternates.

Classis appointed the following as delegates to Synod 2009: Revs. S. Key, D. Kuiper, N. Langerak, R. Miersma, M. VanderWal, and elders Garry Eriks (Peace), Henry Ferguson (First Edmonton), Loren Gritters (Hull), Jack Regnerus (Randolph), Fred Tolsma (First Edmonton). As their alternates, Classis appointed Revs. D. Lee, J. Mahtani, J. Marcus, D. Overway, C. Spronk and elders Jim Andringa (Hull), Alden DeJong (Hull), Hilgard Goosen (Immanuel), Charles VanMeeteren (Hope Redlands), James VerHey (First Edgerton).

Our prayer is that God's name be glorified in the decisions made, and in the effect they have on our members and congregations.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,  
Stated Clerk 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Minister Activities

**R**ev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI, declined the call extended to him from the Byron Center, MI PRC to become their next pastor.

On Sunday, March 1, the congregation of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA extended a call to Rev. Carl Haak, pastor of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, to serve as their first pastor.

### Evangelism Activities

**I**n a recent news letter to their congregation, the Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC reported that all of Hudsonville's sermons are now made available on [Sermonaudio.com](http://Sermonaudio.com).

As of January 2009, Hudsonville had 123 sermons available for downloading. Hudsonville's sermons have averaged 500 downloads per month for the last 4-6 months, and there have been over 7,000 sermons downloaded since they started making sermons available in March 2007. In December 2008, and January 2009, there were downloads from 35 states, along with China, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Philippines, Mexico, France, Finland, the British Virgin Islands, Nigeria, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, and Italy.

The members of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, along with friends and supporters from other area churches, were cordially invited to Peace on Friday, February 27, to hear Prof. Barry Gritters speak on the theme, "The

Importance and Power of Music in the Worship of God."

### Congregation Activities

**F**or the second year in a row, the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored Dave Ramsey's 13-week Financial Peace University Class. The class began on March 3 and was open to anyone wishing to attend, not just Georgetown members.

The regular meeting of Classis West convened on March 4 at the Edgerton, MN PRC. There was an Officebearers Conference on the subject "Catechizing Our Youth" on March 3. Rev. Steven Key, pastor of the Hull, IA PRC, gave the keynote address, "A Historical Emphasis on Catechetical Instruction," followed by Rev. Nathan Langerak, from the South Holland, IL PRC, speaking on "Antithetical Catechetical Instruction in the 21st Century." In

*Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

the afternoon Mr. James Regnerus gave a speech on "The Involvement of the Elders in Catechism," followed by Rev. David Overway, from the Doon, IA PRC, speaking on "Practical Application of Catechism."

The young ladies of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, with the help of their parents, invited their congregation to a fund-raising soup supper on February 18, at their church. The purpose of this fund-raiser was to collect funds for their group, which meets throughout the summer months when school is out. The menu included lots of fellowship, plus soup, salad, and an ice cream sundae bar.

#### Sister-Church Activities

This year, Reformed churches celebrate the 500th-year anniversary of the birth of the great church reformer John Calvin. To mark and celebrate that event, our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, sponsored three lectures, intended to show how God fitted Calvin for and strengthened him in the battle for church reformation in Geneva and Europe in the sixteenth century, a gracious work of Jesus Christ still continuing today around the world. The first lecture, entitled "John Calvin's Battle for the Reformation," with Rev. Angus Stewart as speaker, was held at the Portadown Town Hall in Portadown, Northern Ireland on February 20, followed on March 6 by a lecture at the Limerick School Project, Limerick, Republic of Ireland, and concluding at the Rest Convalescent Home, Porthcawl, South Wales on March 20, D.V.

#### School Activities

The School Board of Trinity Christian High School invited all of their supporters to a promotional lecture at the Hull, IA PRC on March 2. Rev. Nathan Langerak spoke on the topic,

"Abounding in the Work of the Lord." Trinity's choir provided a special number, and refreshments were served after the lecture.

#### Young People's Activities

The Senior Young People's Society of the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI met together on Sunday evening, March 1, to consider the topic "Facing Facebook, Myspace, and Twittering Away Our Lives." The young people wanted to take a Christian look at social networking—the good and the bad. In addition to bringing their Bibles, the society was also challenged to be prepared to state their case.

The Young People's Society of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada, hosted a Black Tie Dinner on February 27 at their church. A special invitation to attend was extended to Immanuel's young adults singles and married couples.

The members of the Grandville, MI PRC were invited to a potluck dinner planned by their Young People's Society for Sat-

urday, February 21. Besides the promise of some good food, the congregation was also invited to stay and enjoy good fellowship and games afterward.

The young people from the Grace PRC in Standale, MI took part in Bowl-A-Thon on Saturday, February 21. Contributions from the congregation went to this summer's young people's convention.

In March, two of our Young People's Societies, the young people of the Hudsonville, MI PRC and the young people of Peace PRC in Lansing, IL, provided their congregations with an early taste of spring by giving them an opportunity to purchase Easter lilies and tulips.

#### Young Adult Activities

The Young Adult Society of the Lynden, WA PRC invited their congregation to come to a Singspiration on March 1, after the evening service. A collection was taken for the upcoming Young Adult Retreat planned in Lynden for later this summer.



## Announcements

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC of Hull, IA express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Hennie (Egbert) Gritters in the death of her daughter,

#### ROXANNE TERPSTRA.

Our condolences go out to the Brian Gritters family, the Loren Gritters family, and the David (Susan) King family upon the death of their sister and aunt. May they be comforted in the words of the psalmist: "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him" (Psalm 34:8, 9).

Pastor S. Key, President  
Gerald Brummel, Clerk of records

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to David and Ruth Gunnink and their children, Heather and Jordan, in the death of their grandmother and great-grandmother,

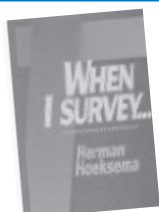
#### MRS. FLORENCE PONSTEIN.

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38, 39).

Sid Miedema, Vice-President  
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

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### EASTER SPECIAL

*When I Survey*

by Herman Hoeksema

Go to [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org) for details or  
call (616) 457-5970.

#### TEACHERS NEEDED

The Protestant Reformed School Society in Wingham, of Wingham, Ontario, Canada, is planning to start a Protestant Reformed school in September 2009, Lord willing. We are seeking an elementary teacher to teach a class of 16 students of grades K-6. Volunteer assistance will be available. We also will need a teacher for a class of 9 students of grades 7-12. Teaching will be assisted by online curriculum for the upper grades. For more information please contact board vice president Mr. Harvey Kikkert at (519)523-4823 or email [hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca](mailto:hkikkert@hurontel.on.ca).

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to Marvin and Marcia Gritters and their children, Matthew, Keith, Ryan, Daniel, Garrett, and Brett, in the death of a sister and aunt,

#### ROXANNE TERPSTRA.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 11:34).

Sid Miedema, Vice-President  
Dale Bartelds, Clerk

#### TEACHER NEEDED

The Genesis PR School in Lacombe, AB, Canada is looking for applicants to teach in a multi-grade classroom for the 2009-2010 school year. Those who are interested should contact board President Dr. Hilgard Goosen at (403) 782-7901 or e-mail [hilgoosen@shaw.ca](mailto:hilgoosen@shaw.ca)

#### NOTICE!!

The Federation of Protestant Reformed Schools is offering the class, The Principles and Practices of Reformed Education, led by Mr. Jon Huisken. This class will be an intense two-week course offered during the weeks of June 8 and 15, 2009 at the Protestant Reformed Christian School in Dyer, IN. While this class is geared toward teachers, it is beneficial to school board members and all who support Reformed Christian education. For more information on this class, please contact Deb Kuiper at (616)531-6785 or [sdkuiper@juno.com](mailto:sdkuiper@juno.com). Deadline to register is May 8, 2009.

#### NOTICE!!!

New Stated Clerk  
of Classis West:

Rev. Douglas Kuiper  
225 Pierce St.  
Randolph, WI 53956-1230  
(920) 326-5642  
E-mail: [doug.kuiper@prca.org](mailto:doug.kuiper@prca.org)

#### NOTICE!!

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2009, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezema  
4949 Ivanrest Ave.  
Grandville, MI 49418

#### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 13, 2009.

Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

### Reformed Witness Hour

April 2009

Date	Topic	Text
April 5	"Jesus Abandoned by God"	Mark 15:33, 34
April 12	"The Risen Lord and the Gathered Church"	Luke 24:36-46
April 19	"Marvel at the Power of the Risen Christ!"	Philippians 3:20, 21
April 26	"Let No One Despise Covenant Youth"	I Timothy 4:12