

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

"... How often does not God make us weak through affliction so that we can not possibly rely on our own strength to do the work of the Lord! Being weak we learn to turn to Jesus our Savior, that His power may come to rest upon us. As a result of our weakness we are able to do great things in the name and strength of Jesus Christ."

See "Grace Through Affliction" — page 194

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

James D. Slopesma

## Grace Through Affliction

*"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

*"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

II Corinthians 12:9 &amp; 10



When I am weak, then am I strong.

Now that's a paradox!

A paradox is a statement which on the surface is self-contradictory but upon further contemplation makes perfectly good sense. The paradox was a favorite teaching device of the Jews to impress indelibly a point on the minds of others.

This most striking statement of the Apostle Paul is also a paradox. At first glance it seems to contradict itself. How can one be strong when he is weak? But properly understood it makes perfectly good sense and reveals in a most clever manner a very important truth. The truth the Apostle would impress upon us is that only when we are weak in ourselves are we strong in the grace of God.

This is a very important truth for us to remember. So often we rely on our own strength. And then we fail miserably. However, when we see our own weakness so that we rely on the power of God's grace, then we are strong.

Let us be weak, therefore, that we may be truly strong!

\* \* \* \* \*

In the preceding verses the apostle Paul speaks of the thorn in his flesh.

We all know what a thorn is. It is a small sliver that can easily embed itself in the flesh. Such a thorn can cause a great deal of pain and suffering. If located in the proper place, it can virtually cripple a person. A thorn, for example, lodged in the heel of the foot and allowed to fester can make it impossible for the healthiest of persons to do his work.

In like manner the apostle Paul had a thorn in his flesh — not literally but figuratively. There has been much speculation as to what this thorn really was. Some suggest that Paul was blind; others say he had a speech impediment. Almost every malady found in medical textbooks has been suggested. The fact is we don't know what this thorn was. However, it appears as though it involved some physical infirmity that quite severely hindered his work as an apostle.

Hence, Paul writes that three times he asked the Lord to remove this thorn that he might labor more effectively as an apostle. And the answer of the Lord was, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Many take these words of the Lord to mean that no matter in what situation we find ourselves, God's grace will always be there and will always be sufficient to uphold us. That is indeed one of the comforting truths of the Scriptures. God never, in

His grace, leaves us. Wherever we go, God is always at our side. And when we meet difficulties, as we invariably do, God always upholds us in His grace. We shall never flounder in the storms of life; we shall never be overcome. For God is always there with His grace; and His grace is always sufficient. How wonderful and comforting!

However, this is not the main thrust of the Lord's words to Paul.

The main thought will become clear if we bear in mind that this is the Lord's answer to Paul's request to remove the thorn from his flesh. The meaning then is that it is through this thorn that the Apostle receives the grace of God. Strange as that may at first seem, God's grace reaches Paul exactly through the affliction of this thorn! And with that Paul must be content. It ought to be sufficient for Paul that he has God's grace. He must not therefore continue to ask the Lord to remove this thorn.

And so it always is. God's grace reaches us exactly through our afflictions. The sick receive God's grace exactly through their sickness. The poor receive God's grace through their poverty. Those who suffer the loss of loved ones receive God's grace through their loss. We may ask God to remove the afflictions we suffer. For no suffering for the present is joyous. However, God will often answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

\* \* \* \* \*

God's grace reaches us through affliction exactly because, as the Lord continues to point out to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Let us bear in mind that each of us has a calling. Your calling is the work God has set before you to do in the service of His name. Your calling may in part be to serve God as a husband or wife or parent. Your calling may include serving God as an office bearer in the church or as a teacher or as a student or as an employer or as an employee.

Let us also bear in mind that to do the work God has set before us requires the strength of Jesus Christ. We can't do this work in our own strength. The husband who will rule his wife in his own strength will fail miserably — as will the wife who will be a help to her husband, the parent who will train up his children, the office bearer who will build up the church. Working in our own strength we will surely fail. To do the work of the Lord we need to be strengthened. We need the strength of Jesus Christ. The power of Christ must come to rest upon us and dwell in us.

This strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness.

To be made perfect means to reach the goal that has been set. When God set Christ at His own right



hand and clothed Him with all power and might God had a purpose, a goal. His goal was that this great power come to rest upon His people so that in that power they may faithfully perform the calling He has for them. And when that goal is reached the strength of Jesus Christ is perfected. When you and I in the strength of Jesus Christ faithfully fulfill our calling in the home, in the church, in our place of work, in the community, then is the strength of Christ perfected. And then also God's grace has reached us. For the perfecting of Christ's strength in us is the work of God's grace.

However, this strength is made perfect only in weakness — in our weakness.

From our vantage point our weaknesses hinder us in fulfilling our calling before God.

This certainly was Paul's feeling. He had a terrible weakness that was like a thorn in his flesh. And Paul was convinced that this weakness was seriously hampering his work as an Apostle. Oh, if only God would remove this weakness and make him strong! How much more effectively couldn't he then serve the Lord!

And we too often feel the same way. We have many weaknesses. Perhaps we too suffer from physical infirmities or lack physical endurance. Perhaps we suffer from financial difficulties or nervous problems or family problems or some other kinds of problems. And for all the world these seem to hinder us in our ability to serve the Lord. Oh, if only the Lord would remove these burdens and weaknesses and make us strong! Then we could serve Him much more effectively!

That's not always true, however. For if we are always strong and never weak we tend to rely on our own strength rather than on the strength of Jesus Christ. Those who are strong often see no need to rely on Christ. They can do quite nicely in their own strength. However, they will ultimately fail. Because of their great strength they may for a time bask in the limelight. According to the standards of men they may for a time appear to be very successful even in doing the work of the Lord. But ultimately they will fail. For the work of the Lord requires much, much more than the puny strength of man.

And so God often sends us afflictions to make us weak.

For when we are weak we rely not on ourselves but on the strength of Jesus Christ.

That is what happened to the apostle Paul. Paul relates in the preceding verses that due to the abundant revelations God gave him he was inclined to be puffed up in pride. He tended to glory in himself. In such a spiritual frame of mind he never

could have served effectively as the Lord's servant. Hence, God made him weak through this miserable thorn in his flesh, so weak that in his own strength he could do nothing. It was exactly through this weakness, however, that Paul learned to turn to Christ and to rely upon Christ's strength alone. As a result Paul was a much better servant of God. Since the strength of Christ had come to rest upon him, he was able to do much more in the service of God than he ever could have done were he still strong in himself. In his weakness he became strong.

And the same is also true with us. How often does not God make us weak through affliction so that we can not possibly rely on our own strength to do the work of the Lord! Being weak we learn to turn to Jesus our Savior, that His power may come to rest upon us. As a result of our weakness we are able to do great things in the name and strength of Jesus Christ.

When I am weak, then am I strong!

Christ's strength is made perfect in my weakness!

It is through affliction that I receive God's grace!

\* \* \* \* \*

Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Our first reaction to the infirmities, necessities, and distresses God places upon us is to resent them. How easily we become discontent. Perhaps we murmur and complain. We may even outwardly rebel against the hand of the Lord.

However, if this is our reaction, we will indeed be weak in our weaknesses. For the strength of Christ does not come to rest upon us in the midst of discontent and rebellion.

Seeing the great design of the Lord in affliction, let us rather take pleasure in our afflictions. And let us glory, that is, boast in them. And in wisdom let us then turn to Jesus Christ our Savior to receive His great strength.

Then in our weakness we will be indeed very strong!

*Read and Study  
The Standard Bearer!*



## Editor's Notes

Due to a couple of extra items in this issue, there is no space for editorials.

\* \* \* \* \*

New Zealand Letter. Elsewhere in this issue you will find a letter from the Prot. Ref. Church of New Zealand. Be sure to read it. Along with this letter, brother Bob van Herk sent me their bulletin of December 22, according to which they had two recorded sermons (received from Hope Church of Grand Rapids) — one by the Rev. C. Hanko on Ephesians 1:9, 10 and one by the Rev. R. Flikkema on Matthew 1:21b. When you read their letter, try

to put yourself in the position of this distant and small congregation which gathers and listens to recorded sermons week after week.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our Business Manager informs me that as of February 1, the zip code for the *Standard Bearer's* business address will be 49516 rather than 49506. Please bear this in mind. Please keep in mind, too, that all business matters (subscriptions, announcements, etc.) should be sent to the business office, not to the editor. Sending them to me will only result in delay.

## Correspondence and Reply

Dear Brother:

I recently returned from a trip to find the Dec. 1 and 15 issues of your magazine in my mail. As always at my first opportunity I read both issues from cover to cover.

I have a few comments/questions to which I would appreciate your response.

Your issue of Dec. 1 on the Antithesis was as in the words on your cover "instructive and helpful."

The Dec. 15 issue has some thoughts I would like to address. On page 127 you make the comment that you will not judge Arminius's prayer. It would seem to me, however, that you do so in your final paragraph. Could there be a comparison in Arminius's prayer and the confession of the thief on the cross?

[Editor's note: Here follow two items concerning articles by Prof. Decker and Rev. T. Miersma. Rather than print these now, I have referred them to Prof. Decker and Rev. Miersma for reply in a future issue.]

Item 4. I notice that letters from your readers are somewhat of a rarity. In the few times I have written, your response has been rather forceful. I do

not mind; in fact, I look forward to your reply. Is it possible that more people do not respond critically to your articles because they do not care for aggressive replies?

One final comment. I do appreciate the volume of books and other material your denomination produces. I have and continue to read it with much profit.

In Christ, Harv Nyhof  
Holland, Mich.

### Reply

Thank-you for your letter. As noted above, Items 3 and 4 will be published later, along with replies from Prof. Decker and Rev. Miersma. Placement of and reply to your letter is somewhat delayed, due to the fact that I also just returned from a trip — a preaching tour to our Lynden, Washington, congregation during the holiday weeks.

As to the prayer of Arminius, the following: 1) I do indeed judge Arminius in my final paragraph. However, I do *not* judge him on the basis of his prayer, but on the basis of his *heresy*. It seems to me this is the proper basis on which to judge the question whether a man is (was) a heretic. 2) It appears to me that you want me to judge his prayer. As I



stated in my editorial, I will not do this. The reason is that I am unable to do so. The Lord Jesus, of course, was able to judge the petition of the penitent thief. 3) Meanwhile, bear in mind that there is no record that Arminius ever recanted either his heresy or his equivocal conduct in the churches.

As to item 4: 1) More letters and remarks are received than are published; not all letters are for

publication. 2) I try to be forceful in a good sense. Answers must usually be brief — for the sake of space; and I try to go right to the point. Aggressive? I am not consciously aggressive in the sense in which my dictionary defines aggression and aggressiveness. 3) Pertinent letters are always welcome.

Thanks for your encouraging words concerning our publications.  
HCH

## Letter from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand

To our brothers and sisters of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America:

Feeling constrained by Christian love, we would like to address ourselves to you and share some of our thoughts and experiences with you. Writing in behalf of our newly instituted church, we feel in need of continuous spiritual contact and encouragement from likeminded Christian friends from across the seas.

The ministries of Rev. Heys and Rev. Miersma among us have left a lasting mark on us; and although distance and lack of resources has brought about an abeyance in the supply of ministers to our shores, we nevertheless feel confident that God's good work begun among us will neither be extinguished nor frustrated during times of deprivation of the lively preaching of God's Word among us.

From our sister Mrs. Watson, who travelled through the States on her way to England recently, we received good reports of being one in the faith; and also we learned of a lively interest in our spiritual well-being. However, she did make us aware of the fact that our existence and our contending for the faith in this part of the world was not always fully understood and appreciated in every quarter she visited. She also felt that the reason for our existence was not always seen in its true light. One can only hope and pray that this letter will go some way to dispel any misunderstandings. In relation to this, we are thankful that we

have access to the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. In this way at least we cannot see ourselves disadvantaged of being outside the fellowship of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America. As an instituted church of our Lord Jesus Christ, our hearts long for fellowship in the truth as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures. We fully appreciate the longing of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, Northern Ireland, and also the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore in seeking sister church relationships. The granting of this request was also a joy to us.

We feel our own isolation more acutely now. Our stand for the truth has met with many disappointments in the past. Even close brethren who had shown a genuine jealousy for the truth fell away, all because of a desire to be accommodating to others. They no longer wanted the all-out emphasis of the sovereignty of God toward the sinner, but rather pursued a course of being less distinctive in order to gain in numbers. We, however, feel that we cannot take part in this choice. Scripture itself abounds with warnings not to follow in this path. Our calling in the world is to be faithful to our Master, Who is in heaven. This calling comes to us in this part of the world. Our geographic position is in the South Pacific, and our home base is New Zealand. It is from here that we lift up our hearts to the God of the whole earth, Who is able to preserve us even to the end of days. We are aware of the fact that this part of the world never experienced the mighty works of the Spirit of God to lost sinners on



the same scale as it was revealed in those regions of Europe and North America when times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord left an imprint on human society for whole generations to come. The spiritual leanness of our regions still speaks to us today. It is reflected from the Theological halls (schools, HCH) and pulpits of our land. Rarely do we find any writings coming from the indigenous

people of our lands producing any substance for the upbuilding in the Reformed faith.

It is for these reasons that we humbly and prayerfully keep on clinging to what we know is of the truth.

With Christian greetings from the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand. (w.s.) B. van Herk

## **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

*Herman H. Hanko*

# **Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (2)**

In our last article we introduced the general subject of medical technology, and gave some idea of the broad range of problems which arise because of the advances which science and medicine have made in the areas of biology and bio-medicine. While it is our purpose to discuss the moral dimensions of these problems in future articles and deal with each problem individually, we want, in this article, to lay down a few more basic and fundamental principles which underlie, in our judgment, the whole field. This article too will then serve as something of an introductory article. There are especially three points which ought to be made.

The first point that needs to be made is that much of the work done in the fields of biology, medicine, and bio-medicine is done by wicked men who do their work in the framework of their commitment to evolutionism. While this does not necessarily mean that all that these men do is wrong (they, e.g., invent treatments which can, within certain limitations, cure cancer), it does mean that we must understand their motivation and the context in which they are making their claims for the future of medicine. As we noticed in the last article, the claims which are made by modern medical technicians are mind-boggling: they claim, e.g., that they will soon be able to eradicate all disease from the human race. It is to be

feared sometime that people stand so in awe at the marvels of modern medicine and medical technology that they tend not to think too much about what scientists claim to be able to do and simply take their claims at face value.

However this may be, evolutionism simply teaches that higher forms of life developed gradually over long periods of time from lower forms of life and that all organic matter (living organisms) developed from inorganic matter (non-living things).

Now this theory has a number of implications, most of which we cannot enter into now. For example, it is well to remember that evolutionism is not merely a scientific theory which is intended to explain the origin of things; it is an entire world-and-life view, which professes to explain everything; it is a philosophy of life; it is a psychology; it is a system of ethics; it is an entire unified body of thought within the context of which everything in life must be explained and interpreted. But it is an atheistic theory of life; it has no place in it for God and for His Word of divine revelation.

But there are two implications in this theory of evolutionism which have direct bearing on what we are discussing. The first is that man is nothing but a material substance. That is, evolutionism denies the fact that man has a soul. If man has come from animals, and animals from lower forms of life, and lower forms of life from dirt and chemicals of various sorts, then it stands to reason



that man can have no soul which is spiritual in substance and is not composed of chemicals of various kinds. Thus all man's ills are susceptible to medical and biological treatment of one sort or another. Mental problems are treatable by medicine and chemical analysis; wrong thinking and wrong doing are explainable in terms of chemical imbalances and misdirected electrical phenomena, etc. But what is denied is that man has a soul, and one cannot treat the soul with medicine nor operate on it with scalpel and laser beams.

The second implication of evolutionism is more serious. Scientists who are convinced of this ungodly position are also convinced that the process of evolutionism has reached a stage in which it has produced a creature who has the ability, with his hands, to take hold of the very processes of evolutionism themselves and can now control and direct these processes. To this point in evolutionary development, changes have been random, uncontrolled, and subject to the erratic whims of mere chance. It is a remarkable fact that whim and chance have produced a creature as complex as man — and this has taken literally billions of years; but now all has changed. We are no longer dependent on chance; we can now, especially through genetic engineering, get our hands on the basic processes themselves and manipulate them according to our own wishes. The result is that now evolutionism will be directed by the scientists and medical technicians who will direct these processes to produce the super-man, fashioned according to the ideas of those who are in a position to understand the intricacies of genetic manipulation.

This is a horrifying business. We will not ponder here the important question of who will do the deciding of the question concerning what really is a super-man; this is terrifying enough. Nor can we predict with any certainty what those "in charge" of evolutionary development will do with their "mistakes." What is important and significant for our purposes is the fact that this is the stated goal of those who engage in much of the experimentation going on in the fields of medicine and biology. We ought to be aware of this; and before we praise the advances of science to the skies, we ought to consider what scientists are trying to do. This will sober us and teach us to evaluate all these astounding "successes" in a somewhat different light.

The second broad principle which needs saying is closely related to the first one. We must somehow get it out of our heads that just because something is capable of being done, it is therefore good and right. We have been conditioned by the media and the propaganda of our times to accept unquestioningly as good and proper anything which science is able to do. Whatever is accomplished is,

just because it can be done, perfectly legitimate. We need never question the techniques and accomplishments of almighty science, for the very fact that science is able to do something is itself justification for doing it and automatically gives it a halo of righteousness which anyone is a fool to question.

This sort of thinking, so common today, is exactly what the scientists want us to think. They want to build about themselves a wall which no questioning or criticism can penetrate. They want to be able to do whatever they please without anyone ever asking why. They want us to think of them as above and beyond criticism, not subject, in their scientific investigations at least, to the normal rules of right and wrong, not open to questioning, not answerable to rules of moral and ethical conduct. And it seems sometimes as if they are succeeding in a remarkable way to accomplish their end.

We must be clear on this point. It is sometimes argued that all scientists are doing is uncovering the powers of creation which God has placed there and putting these powers to man's use. They are, to use a Biblical expression, subduing the earth and fulfilling the original cultural mandate. This gives them the right to do what they do in every instance, for they are only doing what man was originally created to do. And what they succeed in doing can surely be used without question. This is very wicked reasoning and must be condemned in the sharpest possible way.

There are two things wrong about this line of reasoning. The first is that, while it is certainly true that man still uncovers the powers which God has placed in the creation and will continue to do this until the world ends, how he uses those powers is quite another question. He may discover and refine surgical techniques and these may be skills which are given him as a gift by God: but does this give him the right to use these techniques to abort babies at will? Anyone who knows the teaching of Scripture will readily see that the mere technique and skill involved does not give him the right to use this skill in murder. The fact is that man is sinful and desperately wicked. He will always use all the powers in creation and the skills given him of God in the service of sin. We do not, after all, believe in common grace. We must be careful, therefore, to ask the question not only: What is man able to do? but also: How does man use what he is able to do?

The second error of all this is that we may not conclude from man's ability to do something the moral rightness of it. It does not follow that just because man is able to do something, this ability invests what he does with an aura of holiness and places a halo of righteousness on his accomplishment. A couple of examples will demonstrate this.



Today it lies not only within man's capability to bring about conception in a test tube, but it is being repeatedly done. Does the mere accomplishment of the technique of in vitro conception make it permissible? While some may argue that it does, this is not necessarily so. The rightness or wrongness of it has to be decided on other grounds. The same thing is true of genetic engineering. Just because it can be done and is being done, does this mean that it is right to do it? This question takes on added importance when we remember that man is not simply a collection of well-arranged genes, but is a complex creature formed by God's hand so that he is, in all his life and development, a man with body and soul.

We must do away with thinking which ultimately leaves the scientist and medical technician above all law.

The third moral principle which must underlie our thinking about these matters has to do with the definition of what is "good" and what is "bad." Because today's thinking in the area of science and medicine is done within the framework of evolutionism, "good" and "bad" have been redefined in a way which is altogether out of harmony with Scripture. "Bad" according to today's thinking includes such things as a low IQ, the birth of a child with physical and mental defects, sickness, and ultimately death itself. "Good" is a high IQ — preferably within the genius range, perfect health, no physical or mental defects, everlasting life on this earth.

Now, I for one do not for a minute believe that science will ever succeed in conquering all these "evils." They are the results of God's curse upon a sinful world and, because of this, they will never be eradicated. Man can never undo what God does. Only through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is all sickness and sorrow, all pain and suffering, all trouble and imperfection done away. And the full realization of this waits for the new heavens and the new earth when God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

But this is not the point which we are arguing here. The most basic and fundamental question which the child of God faces is not the question of improving the outward circumstances of his life, what today's scientists call improving the "quality of life." The basic question (and it is the word "basic" which needs underlining and that sort of emphasis) is: What is God's attitude towards us? Towards the wicked God is angry every day. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. It makes no difference what the "quality" of his life is, if one refers only to life's outward circumstances; that "quality" of life is dreadful if God looks with anger and disapproval upon the sinner.

But the opposite is also true. God blesses the habitation of the just. The "quality" of life for the just man is not determined by the outward circumstances of his life, but by the favor of God. No matter what may be his way in life, he is taught by Scripture to be content; to confess that he is guided by God's counsel and afterwards taken to glory; to believe that all things are for his good because he loves God and is called according to God's purpose.

Concretely this means exactly that the wicked will, if they are honest, admit that riches and health, long life and superior intellect, do not bring them happiness — the quality of their life is bad regardless. The righteous man confesses that God blesses him, not only in spite of the difficult circumstances of life, but through what men called "bad" things. Every child of God who has known the fiery trial of affliction will surely agree with the Psalmist, "Affliction has been for my profit." The father and mother who have received from the Lord a child with either physical or mental handicaps will speak eagerly of the great blessing such a child has been in their home; and if God is pleased to take such a child away, they will tell you they miss that child more than parents who lose a normal child.

The same is true of long life. Is long life a blessing (necessarily) to those who fill the nursing homes of the land? Is 90 years of age better than 70 if the last 20 have to be spent in a bed? Blessing is not upon the 90 year old just because he lives 20 years beyond his contemporaries. And the same is true of death. Death is indeed the ultimate expression (in this world, at least) of God's wrath against sin. But for the believer death is not an enemy when the sting of death has been destroyed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed, "For to me to live is Christ." But it is equally true that, "to die is gain." Is it so terrible to go to heaven? And death is still the only door that leads from this valley of tears to the joys of heaven.

I am not saying with all this that we must simply let the ravages of disease work their course without seeking the help of medicine. That is another question. I am saying that these things (health, long life, escape from death) are not in themselves good. The believer, while making use, insofar as he can, of medicine's amazing discoveries, does not look for his happiness in this world in any case. He has a home above, while here he is a pilgrim and a stranger.

It may not always be so easy to keep these things in their proper perspective, but we ought to be warned by the Word of God which tells us that God was angry with Asa because he sought not the Lord, but put his trust in physicians (II Chron. 16:12).



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

### One Lesson Learned

The prophet Jonah loved God's church as she existed in the day of shadows. His sin in trying to flee to Tarshish was not that he was carnally attached to the fleshly seed of Abraham, the nation of Israel, and was moved by a patriotism and nationalism like that which any unbelieving citizen can have for his country. His sin was not that he had no use for God's church, or for the growth of that church. He wanted God's love, mercy, and grace to fall richly on that church; and he wanted nothing to happen that would threaten the well-being of the church he knew in that day. He sincerely wanted the glorious kingdom to come, on whose throne a son of David would sit, ruling the whole world from out of Zion. That glorious kingdom he wanted to be realized.

Because of this, Jonah could not understand how God could want to save the capital city of the nation that was the fiercest enemy of the nation wherein God's church was to be found in that day. He wanted destroyed the chief city of the nation that to him was the greatest threat to the church of his day. And his sin was that he disobeyed God's command to go and preach there, and that he sought to frustrate God and to prevent Him from saving anyone in that city. He had therefore to learn to know God's sovereign love for all His church, a love that reached far beyond Abraham's seed, and would gather in an host of Gentiles, while the number of Abraham's seed in that church would greatly diminish. He had to see that Nineveh's salvation was a shadow of Christ's coming kingdom wherein Gentiles would have a very large place, and have a new Jerusalem as its capital city.

The lesson Jonah must learn therefore was that to love God, he must see God's love as a sovereign

love. It is a love that man may not limit. Man may not tell God whom He may love and save. God has the perfect and absolute right to love whom He will, and to hate whom He will. No creature, whether he be man or angel, may deny Him that right. And we simply duplicate Jonah's sin when we deny Him the right to elect unto everlasting life whom He will, and to reprobate to everlasting damnation whom it pleases Him to predestinate to that woe. He may hate Esau and all the seed of the serpent. And we may not distort Scripture in Romans 9:13 to make it read thus, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I loved not quite that much." Or, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I loved less." The word hate which Paul uses is the same word that Jesus used when in John 15:25 He said that they hated Him without a cause. Their hatred brought Him to His cross; and it was not a love that was a bit less than what they had for Barabbas. Hatred is the opposite of love, and it is not a shade or weaker form of love. No, God hated Esau, and that sovereignly, before he was born or did good or evil. Do not try to be a Jonah and pick out for God whom He may love and save.

We err grievously also when we maintain that God hates sin but not the sinner. This is impossible, for sin always is an act of a person. If the person is not there, there is no sin. A tree falls upon a man and kills him. No sin has been committed. A man in anger hits another and kills him. Then you have sin. Besides, in effect we call God a liar when we say that He hates sin but not the sinner. Through the psalmist in Psalm 5:5 God Himself declares, "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." Note that He does not merely hate iniquity, but the workers of iniquity. And this is not merely Old Testament language and notions. In Ephesians 5:6 we read, "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children



of disobedience." Note: upon children, not mere disobedience. There is no "common grace" that rests upon the wicked; but wrath rests on them. The foolish do not stand in God's sight in a certain favor, and with a smile on His face. They shall not stand before Him; and that means He will drive them to the lake of fire. Let us not argue with God. For we perform an act of hatred against God when we contradict Him, and deny Him His sovereign right to hate the sinner whose sins have been blotted out by His Son's blood; and He may decree that His Son will not die for them.

With Jonah it was a case of denying God His right to love the elect in Nineveh for whom Christ would die. It was not God's wrath against sinners that Jonah questioned. He objected to God's love that He had and intended to show to Gentiles in a city far removed from the land that in the day of shadows was where the church was established. Therefore he tried to flee from the presence of God and to try to prevent Him from working salvation there and upon these people. He thought that he was seeking the good of the church that he loved. In actuality he was performing a deed that, if carried out and successful, would hurt the church. He was actually objecting to the kind of kingdom of Christ that God had eternally decreed and that was eternally in His heart and mind. Indeed, Jonah has something he must learn.

But there is another element we must keep before us. Not only did Jonah not recognize God's sovereignty in His love; but he showed no love for these Ninevites whom God intended to save, and who belonged to the same church to which Jonah belonged. Jonah should have seen that God had people there that He loved. It was love that sent them a warning. That in itself revealed that He wanted to save them and not destroy them with the city. Jonah therefore should also have had pity on these people, and in love rushed over there to warn them. Whom God loves, we certainly must also love. Upon whom God shows mercy, we by all means should show mercy. But Jonah had none for these Ninevites, whom God sought to bring to repentance and salvation. He must learn to have pity and compassion for others, and to help them when he can in the midst of their woes.

God in His wisdom, but also in His love for Jonah, so orders his life that he learns his lesson, be it in a way hard for his flesh. According to God's counsel and eternal plan for him, Jonah boards a ship to go to what at that time was considered the western end of the world, namely, Spain. And here too is an amazing thing in Jonah's life. Jonah wanted nothing to do with the Gentiles in Nineveh whom God was pleased to warn. But he was eager to make use of the Gentiles who ran this ship. He

coveted their help in his walk in sin. He was not interested in seeing Gentiles saved; but he was eager to have Gentiles serve his own flesh.

And God, Who works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; Who plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm, taught Jonah by a violent storm at sea. Jonah had gone down into the hold among the cargo and had fallen into an unnaturally deep sleep. This not only pictures his utter unconcern for the peril of the Ninevities, but must be seen as God's way of love for both Jonah and the Ninevites. This was no ordinary sleep. Jonah was a landlubber, and this could very well have been his first long voyage by sea, if not his first storm at sea. The God from Whose presence Jonah was fleeing was right there in the storm, in the ship, and in the deep sleep that fell upon Jonah.

What an unusual and wholly unnatural event we have here! The tossing ship, lifted up and cast down by the waves, the creaking and groaning of the wood that made up the ship, the noise of the sailors all around him dragging and throwing the cargo overboard, the cries of the sailors to their gods, and their screams of fear do not effect Jonah one bit. He sleeps on and on, wholly unaware of the fact that those with him on the ship, and he himself, are in mortal danger. Truly God gave him this deep sleep. It was not natural.

The shipmaster had to come and awaken Jonah and urge him to pray to his God. Wide awake now, Jonah does not do as requested. He does not pray to God so that these sailors "perish not," as the shipmaster had requested. He who wanted to see the Ninevites perish is now asked to pray that other Gentiles be kept from perishing. And now it was not a matter of perishing in forty days. It could be that in less than forty minutes the ship would break apart; and they would all die at sea! Crying to their gods did not help; but the mariners saw one ray of hope. Perhaps the God of this Hebrew could save them. He was therefore awakened, but did not pray to his God.

Jonah did not pray to God because, in His love to Jonah, God made him see that the storm was because of his sin. He had learned one part of his lesson, namely, that he could not flee from God's presence; and that he committed a great sin in trying to frustrate God and to flee from His calling. He who sinned in order to try to keep God from saving other sinners, is given to see that Gentile sinners on the ship — for their idolatry was very plain — would perish because of his sin. He saw that he must die, if these seamen were to escape destruction. He could not pray to God to bring the storm to an end, for he now realized that he deserved to die for his sins. He does not see it yet, but the founda-



tion is laid for him to learn later that the Ninevites would perish because of his sin of fleeing, and of not warning them as he was called to do. Now he does see that the mariners would die because of his sin, and that he should be thrown overboard.

The finger of God pointed directly to him when the sailors cast lots to find out who was to blame, and God guided the lots to point to Jonah. Yes, that too was God's work, and it was a work of love that brought Jonah to confess his sin before these Gentiles. He does not however volunteer. He does not tell them that he will jump overboard and so save their lives. And the sailors hesitate casting him into that raging sea. Jonah had told them Who his God is, and that God is the God of heaven Who hath made the sea and dry land; and that he was trying to flee from Him rather than do His bidding.

Upon hearing this the sailors strove harder in an attempt to reach the shore and safety. When the storm increased and the ship seemed ready to be broken in pieces they pray that they may not be held guilty of Jonah's blood, if they throw him overboard. They fear this God of heaven Whom Jonah had introduced to them. And it is hard to understand how calm Jonah remains through it all. He faced death for a gross sin which he had committed. He was in a position wherein he would drag others to death with him because of his sin. But he

does not jump overboard to save them, even after confessing that it is all his fault.

How different this is from our Savior Who "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" where He knew He would be crucified! How different from His surrender in the garden, after He showed them that He could cast them backward to the ground and walk away unharmed! How different from His refusal to come down from His cross, when taunted, even though it would have been a simple matter for Him with His almighty, divine power to do so!

It is true that Jonah did not know that his life was going to be spared by a fish which God prepared for this work. But put yourself in Jonah's place and face death in a few minutes because you have rebelled against God, tried to frustrate Him, and tried to flee from His presence, only to find Him right there before your face with all His terrible power and hatred of sin of all kinds!

Do not excuse Jonah's sin; but do have compassion for him, even as he should have had compassion upon the Ninevites, whom he was to tell that God was right there before them with His sword, and whom he was therefore to warn and call to repentance. Jonah had learned part of his lesson, but there is so much more for him to learn.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

*George C. Lubbers*

# Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

## Chapter XXV

### The Mystery of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9

#### THE COVENANT MADE STRONG (continued - Daniel 9:27)

And this "end" shall be "as with a flood."

The suggestion is that God will perform a very final and cataclysmic judgment upon the earthly city and theocracy of Israel, just as in the days of Noah. It will be a sudden and final destruction. Even as in the days of Noah, when God destroyed

the wicked with the waters of the flood, so shall it be when God sends the Roman legions to surround the city; then shall the earthly temple of Herod be destroyed, and there shall be no place to which to flee in order to escape (Luke 21:20-24). Yes, then there shall be the fulfillment of the word of the Lord concerning the judgment of God upon the "abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." It will be truly Ichabod, the glory is de-



parted, for earthly Jerusalem. Not one stone remained upon another!

And it is exactly at this time that the covenant is made strong in the blood of Christ, Who was delivered for our offenses and Who was raised for our justification. It is the covenant for Abraham and for all his spiritual seed, whether Jew or Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male or female. Then it will be shown beyond all contradiction that as many as are of Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Rom. 4:9-24; Gal. 3:23-29). Truly, in this making strong of the covenant, we see that the word of God has not fallen out, but that every jot and tittle of the law is fulfilled.

### THE COVENANT MADE STRONG "FOR MANY" (Daniel 9:27b)

Although we have pointed out that the Covenant, spoken of in the text, is not merely some human contract, agreement, or pact between Israel and some earthly potentate, but that it refers to the new Covenant in Christ's blood, yet there is more to say at this point.

Dispensational teaching really does not teach the covenant of the promise of God at all. Scofield speaks of "seven dispensations" as we have noticed earlier in depth, and, therefore, must also teach various "covenants." Without question the deepest reason for dispensational teaching is that it explicitly denies the unity of the Holy Catholic Church. Dispensationalism is really humanistic-Arminianism which denies the Scriptural teaching of the *eternal election* of grace. It is for this reason that the one covenant of God, which God calls "my covenant," is replaced in their exposition of Daniel 9:27 with a mere "covenant" made by some worldly ruler. The grand unity of the covenant in its promissory form, and as fulfilled in the blood of the New Testament, *cannot* come to the rightful interpretation. Here one seeks in vain for the "pattern of sound doctrine" to which we have been delivered (Rom. 6:17). The gospel of grace in every page of Moses, the Psalms, and all the Prophets cannot be seen by dispensationalists! There is no grace in the dispensation of law! The clarion note of the Gospel in Genesis 12:1-3 is muffled!

The one point which must still be noticed in the text is that the covenant is made strong "*for many*!"

Furthermore, it ought to be obvious to every serious Bible believer, that only if the covenant blessings have been promised to "the many" can it be made strong for many. It is made strong for the many for whom it was purposed and planned. No

Arminian has a strong covenant, nor does he have a strong covenant for many. He has not a strong covenant for anyone! He has no Gospel of glad-tidings at all. However, Gabriel speaks of the covenant as being made strong in "one week." And that one "seven" is the fulfillment at Calvary. Here we breathe the pure air of the Gospel which speaks loud and clear: "... but now once at the end (consummation) of the ages hath he (Messiah) been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26).

The great and dreadful God is the covenant God, Who keepeth covenant faithfulness and loving-kindness with those who fear Him (Dan. 9:4). God is faithful to His covenant. This covenant is strong exactly because it is God's unilaterally made covenant. Its fulfillment depends solely upon God's faithfulness. It is all of grace! And it is promised to the multitude of the elect Seed, the children of Abraham, forever. This covenant in the hearts of the many, many children of Abraham spells eternal life. Now God did not need to make His own covenant promise strong; however, He did need to make it strong *for many*. Grace and truth became through Jesus Christ. And from His fulness have we all received, grace for grace. The "many" children of Abraham all drank from the wells of salvation which were opened in Zion.

God made it strong to us and fulfilled His oath to Abraham (Heb. 6:16, 17; Acts 2:38-40)!

This covenant made strong for man is repeatedly designated by Daniel as the *holy* covenant. (See Daniel 11:28, 30, 32.) The covenant is called holy because it is the relationship of most intimate fellowship and communion between God and His justified and sanctified people.

Here we hear the clarion sound: "Be ye holy for I am holy" (Lev. 19:2; 11:44; 20:7). When God's covenant is made strong it means that God conforms His people to His image, yea, makes them partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Paul wrote in Romans 5:20, 21, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound exceedingly, so that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign in righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Truly, this was good news for Daniel; it was water for a thirsty soul who would not forget Jerusalem above his chief joy in far off Babylon. It was necessary that the truth of God's covenant be set forth clearly, and in a comforting way, as an answer, the perfect answer, to Daniel's mighty pleadings before the face of the great and dreadful God!

Furthermore, the mouth of the enemy and the avenger must be stopped. The wicked inside and



outside of the Old Testament Theocracy and Commonwealth of Israel must no longer tauntingly say to the lowly of heart in Israel, "Where is thy God? Where is that Jehovah in Whom ye trusted? Where is He Who is the hope of Israel, the true Israel of God?" Yes, as with a sword in Israel's bones the enemies reproached Israel, while they were continually saying, "Where is thy temple with its holy altars? Where is the place of your rest?" And was there not a cause: the sin of God's people?

What depths of pathos and lamentation there is recorded for us in Jeremiah 50:7, where we read, "All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said: We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of Israel"! What hellish words these are! The Hebrew term for adversary is "tsar," which means straitener. This adversary drives God's people in deepest straits and distress and then mocks them in their plight. Their sin in afflicting Israel cries to heaven as did the blood of Abel, and still they presume to have immunity to God's just judgment because Israel has sinned. And they mock the God of heaven, the great and dreadful God, forgetting that Babylon and the nations are but as an ax in the hand of Him that hews therewith! (Is. 36:7, 10; 10:15).

That God is the hope of Israel must be made manifest in a strong covenant unto many!

That great and dreadful God is the everlastingly faithful God to His promise to Abraham and to His spiritual elect people.

God never forsakes His people! Such is ever the strong and comforting thought in the Bible. That is the *Cor Ecclesia*! (I Sam. 12:22). It might have seemed thus that God had cast them off, in the days of Samuel, when the ark of God was taken by the Philistines, when the very priests in the tabernacle were polluting the holy altar and sacrifices, and when the sons of the high priest Eli lay dead on the battlefield, and when Israel is under the heel of the mighty Philistines many, many years. But, even so, the word is, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us"! And Israel is assured that their prayer for forgiveness is heard, "for the LORD (JEHOVAH) will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the LORD to make you a people unto himself"!

Yes, it is the Father's good pleasure that the Israel of God inherit the kingdom. Fear not, little flock! (Luke 12:32).

This is the keynote of Scripture!

It is the pattern of sound doctrine!

In the darkest hour of Israel's history, when none other but Elijah pleads against Israel and not

for Israel, and laments at the holy mount, "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have digged down thine altars; and I am left alone and they seek my soul," then comes the "answer of God"! It is the divine oracle, the "*chrematismos*"! It is the *Answer* to the seeming dilemma. It is God's elective love in which He makes His covenant to stand in thousands of generations to those who love Him and keep His commandments. God never *forsakes* those whom He loves eternally in Christ Jesus, and who are engraved in the palms of His hand, and who are ever before Him!

Has God cast off His people?

God forbid!

Ever there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Grace is rooted in election. Wherefore we read in the Divine Oracle, "I have left to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal"! Even so in the time of Daniel in Babylon there was the remnant according to election (Rom. 11:1-5).

Grace is grace and works is works! (Rom. 11:6).

Here is the principle which makes the covenant strong in the blood of Messiah. He is the appointed One, the One sent to make the covenant strong in the seventieth seven. In this strong covenant in Christ's blood John jubilantly confesses, "Behold what *manner of love* the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God, and (such) we are" (I John 3:1).

Yes, Jesus came to His own (things = temple, etc.) but His own did not receive Him. Israel, as Old Testament Theocracy, rejected Him. But as men are received, to them gave He the right (authority) to become children of God, even them who believe on His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:11-13).

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## ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

# The End of the World

It is customary near the end of the year for the news media to publish or broadcast (telecast) articles and programs reviewing the main events of the past year. Viewing one such program I could not help but think of Matthew 24 where the disciples ask Jesus, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In response to this question Jesus spoke of the signs of His coming. Those signs are being fulfilled in our time, "all around us."

There are false prophets who claim to speak in the name of Christ. Much of the church is shot through with apostasy. Many cardinal truths of Holy Scripture are denied. The inspiration and infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible is widely denied. The same is true of the Genesis account of creation, the fall of mankind into sin, and the flood. Many are being deceived. (Cf. verses 4, 5, 11.)

We continue to hear of wars and rumors of wars. Iran and Iraq continued to fight their "holy war" in 1985. Lebanon and the Middle East continue to occupy world attention. The fighting there never seems to cease. Other areas of tension and unrest are Afghanistan, South Africa, and Central America. The United Nations celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 1985, but remains powerless to bring peace among the nations. (Cf. verses 6-8.)

1985 is being called "the year of disaster." Thousands died in Ethiopia's terrible famine. Mexico City was struck by a series of severe earthquakes leaving many dead and many more homeless. Some twenty thousand people died when a tidal wave caused by a powerful cyclone struck the coastline of Bangladesh. It is estimated that another twenty thousand were buried under the avalanche

of mud when the volcano erupted in Columbia. Killer hurricanes battered the southeastern and gulf coasts of the United States. Jesus spoke of these things too. (Cf. verse 7.)

Though we hear little and think even less about it, many of God's people are persecuted for Christ's sake. In China much of the church is underground. *Christian Renewal* (Dec. 16, 1985) reports that in Romania, "The average pastor is serving as many as 6-8 congregations because of the government's attempt to strangle the church through lack of leadership and Christian materials. . . . Just recently a believer named Constantin Statcu was sentenced to 7½ years in prison for carrying Bibles and Christian literature in the car he was driving and was falsely accused of trying to kill a policeman. . . . An eleven-year-old Christian boy named Daniel was ordered by his teacher to 'teach his classmates a little prayer.' After he had prayed for his teacher and his classmates he was again ordered to stand with his hands above his head while his classmates filed past him one after another and spit in his face." The Sandinistas are applying pressure on the church in Nicaragua. (Cf. *Missionary Monthly*, Nov. 1985.) Pastors and other church leaders are hauled in for long periods of questioning. Sometimes they are detained for hours with no explanation. In the northern part of the country an evangelical church was seized by the army. The pastor of the church and eleven of its members were killed. This happened in mid-October of 1985. Jesus told His disciples and us, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another" (Matthew 24:9, 10).

There is abounding lawlessness in our world. (Cf. verse 12.) The Rev. Norman Jones informs us, "It is estimated that an average of one and a half



million babies have been murdered in abortion chambers each year since 1973. Multiply that figure by 12 years and we see the holocaust that has been taking place. . . . There is no excuse for any Christian to be uninformed about this most heinous of crimes being perpetuated in our midst at the rate of 4,000 per day! In 1981, according to the A. Guttmacher Institute, there was one unborn baby murdered for every three being permitted to live!" (*The Reformed Herald*, pp. 3, 4; Dec. 1985). Whatever the world may say, abortion in the light of the Word of God is simply cold-blooded murder. It's "legal" in the United States. Jones is right when he calls abortion "this most heinous of crimes." This too is a sign of the end of the world and the coming of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven. Homosexuality is the greatest manifestation of the reprobate mind according to Romans 1:18-32. This too is condoned by the world and, what is worse, condoned by many churches! This sin brought upon Sodom and Gomorrah the fire and brimstone of God's holy wrath. (Cf. Genesis 19.) The consequences of this sin are becoming painfully evident in the rise and quick spread of the deadly disease AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). This disease, for which there is no cure, is caused in most instances and spread through homosexual contacts. Yet, homosexuality continues as an acceptable lifestyle in this country, while medical science almost frantically searches for a cure for AIDS! Sheer lawlessness! A sign of the end of the world!

There is the problem of terrorism. In June of last year, an American TWA airplane was hijacked in Beirut, Lebanon. Shiite Moslems demanded the release of 700 of their soldiers imprisoned in Israel. After two weeks of captivity, during which time one American was killed, the hostages were released. In November, an Egyptian airplane was hijacked. When the hijackers began killing the passengers one by one, Egyptian soldiers stormed the plane. Over fifty people died in this incident. In spite of beefed up airport security these hijackings continue. This too heralds the return of our Lord Jesus. The daily newspapers are full of reports of murder, rape, robbery, bombings, kidnap, and other crimes. Iniquity, lawlessness abounds the world over.

This is what is going on all around us. The question is, what must be our attitude toward all this? First, we must not be afraid! Oh, to be sure, great and fearful things are in the future for God's people and church. Jesus warned us of a great tribulation "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (verse 21). The Lord went on to say, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (verse 22). When contemplating these things we often wonder if we and our children shall be able to stand and remain faithful to God's Word should those days come in our lifetime. But, we must not be afraid. These things must come to pass in order that God's Kingdom of Glory may come through our exalted Lord Jesus Christ. God assures us repeatedly in His Word that He will preserve His church in those days. Second, our calling is to watch and pray. No man knows the day or the hour of the Lord's coming. (Cf. verse 36.) When we see these signs occurring we must know that "it is near, even at the doors" (verse 33). For this reason, we must watch! What this means is that we must be spiritually alert. We must discern the Word of God in all these events. God says through these things, "Jesus is coming soon"! We ought to live every moment of every day as if that were the very moment of our Lord's return! We must not be found of the Lord in that great day unprepared. Finally, when we see these things we ought to rejoice. All around us there is increasing evidence that our redemption draws nigh! That's cause for joy. Soon, very soon now, our Lord Jesus will appear. When He comes that will be the end of all our sinning. That's cause for rejoicing! The coming of Christ marks the end of all the bitter fruits and effects of sin. There will be no more sorrow or crying, no more pain and trouble, no more disease and death. When Jesus returns we and all God's children will be raised up and transformed. In resurrection bodies we shall never die. We shall join a multitude which no man can number out of every nation and we shall sing God's praise forever and ever. That is cause for rejoicing!

All around us we see the signs of the end of the world and the coming of our Lord. Fear not! Watch! Pray! Rejoice!

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# Good Morning, Alice (6)

Gise J. Van Baren

Several times Alice was taken to the ALS clinic at the University of Chicago. There, much helpful advice was given, medications were prescribed to relieve some of the distressing symptoms of ALS, and also experimental medications were given — but there was no indication that any of these slowed the progress of the disease. At first Alice was taken to Chicago by car when it was still possible to help her in and out of it. A folding wheelchair could fit into the trunk of the car — and Alice made good use of this. Later on, the trips would be made in John's van which could accommodate Alice while in her wheelchair. On these excursions, Alice enjoyed eating out in a restaurant — and always insisted on paying the bill. Nor did she seem overly embarrassed about going into a restaurant as an invalid in a wheelchair. Just the change and pleasure of going out with some of the relatives and doing different things seemed to take her mind off the daily discouragements she faced.

## Good Morning Alice:

Again it's still morning, but not very early; you know, the day after a holiday . . . .

The kids had nothing to do, so I made a new batch of playdough for them. You know, as I was making it, I was thinking what I would say to you this morning, and I began thinking about God as the Potter. I've made playdough many times before, but never with spiritual thoughts in my head . . . . You are helping me, Alice!

The verse about God being the potter actually is a lot like the verse I asked you to read yesterday . . . "Thy hands have made and fashioned me." I hope you gave that some time in your thoughts, Alice; I have too. God made me what I am. That includes everything: my looks, my personality, my role in life; but the Psalmist knows himself well enough to continue . . . "give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments."

Again, I may be reading this wrong, but to me this says: "Lord, make me understand how Thou hast made me and why, so that I may use all of myself; my looks, my personality, and my role in life in obedience to Thy law. That's a very difficult thing to do for me — so

often I cop out and say, "Well, that's the way I am," when actually, it is sin!

Do you find that in your life too, Alice?

"See" you tomorrow, Your friend

Please read Psalm 119:74

It was in January of 1981 that it became apparent that if Alice were to travel anywhere any more, it would have to be by other means than a car. Before, one could pull her up from her wheelchair, help her turn slowly, then guide her down into the car seat. But now she could not stand long enough for all of this to be done. Her legs would not support her that long. But John had a van which he loaned to be used to take Alice from place to place. The MD clinic of Grand Rapids kindly provided a ramp for the van on loan. From now on, Alice would be moved up and down the ramp — and could travel while seated in her wheelchair.

## Good Morning Alice:

It's Monday morning and all the kids are home for the week. I'm going to have to get up early in order to write because it's hard to write with all of them around. Early morning is the best time of the day for quiet thought anyway.

Sometimes I wonder how the Psalmist can talk so highly of himself. Ps. 119:74 says, "They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Thy Word."

Do other Christians see in me that joyous hope that I have, or do they see a mother that is grouchy, or a complaining wife, or a friend that is more interested in talking about others or playing cards or watching T.V. than having a spiritual discussion or sharing my joy?

Again, it is good to examine myself in this.

I know I have that hope and I know that with the Spirit in my heart, I can live expressing that hope.

It's just when I'm lazy or selfish and give in to my sinful nature that I do not make others glad.

May it be a "good" day for both of us for showing and living our hope in the Lord and thus make others glad.

With love, Your friend

Please read Phil. 4:31-32



Brother John, at one point, had mentioned the possibility of a trip to Florida. Alice's eyes immediately brightened and she spoke of going too. Work was slack. Alice was eager. And only John and Judy would have dared try this with Alice virtually helpless. But they went — the last two weeks of March and the first of April. With young daughter Janis, in the van, they headed South. Alice had been in Florida several times before — but this was a special trip with her favorite niece; and she could rely on a brother, who found all the solutions to the inevitable difficulties, as he always had done in the past. Now she could enjoy Florida for one more time — a pleasant diversion from the regular routines.

*Good Morning Alice:*

Well, if I wrote on your note what I jotted down on my card, you probably had a taste of my unorganization. I have Phil. 4:31-32, and it is supposed to be Ephesians 4:31-32. Maybe you want to take time to read that a minute.

There's a tremendous comparison here — bitterness, wrath, anger, evil speaking (which my Bible explains as "railing") and malice. NOT very nice actions! We are told to put away all these and be kind and tenderhearted and forgiving.

Even as a teenager at home, I didn't find it very hard to be kind, tenderhearted, and even forgiving to others, but in the family I guess my real self came out. When I think of what a "bear" I was, I know all these things were true of me. Then I try to excuse myself and say, "Well, that was when I was young"; but a lot of that can still be found in me! When I think of all the times I am guilty of these actions to my own loved ones, it makes me shudder. I know deep down that it comes from selfishness. I want things to go easy and smooth for me. Am I bitter? Yes, at times because I don't get my way. Wrath and anger? They come all too easy. Railing and malice? I'm afraid so; and I'm afraid a lot of it has been done with my eyes. Did you ever stop to really think how cruel eyes can be? I've recognized that in my eyes all too often.

But then our text goes on: "Kind, tenderhearted, forgiving"; beautiful actions that make a beautiful person. The end of the verse tells us the only possible way to have these — through Christ.

God has forgiven us because of Christ's sacrifice. Now, am I ready to "sacrifice" my self-centeredness in order to be kind, tender and forgiving? I'm going to try to look at myself carefully today and strive (because it won't be easy) to think of others' needs of kindness and tenderness; and not simply of ease for myself. . . . Look what Christ did for me!

Love, Your friend

Please read Jude 20-21

The frustrations of traveling with the handicapped are known best by those who try it. Little things, ordinary activities, can become major obstacles. Visiting the rest room can be a real problem. Not all are equipped to handle the handicapped. Alice needed help from the wheelchair to the stool and back. Trouble was, in the "ladies room" only Judy could help. All would go well — provided there was enough room to manipulate a wheelchair and there was a bar to which Alice could hold and help herself somewhat. But sometimes, in a very narrow stall, one could become stuck in the most awkward position. One such time, in desperation, Judy had to call John for help — while not a few eyes looked askance at this man striding into a ladies' rest room.

*Good Morning Alice:*

Wednesday already! How time flies. Yesterday it was permanents for the girls; and today an eye doctor appointment and shopping. Isn't it easy to busy ourselves and neglect God?

Jude is a little book that I really don't know a lot about. It's kind of funny how I chose the verses for us to think about. A lot of them are favorites; some I've heard in sermons; and some I just go looking for.

When I wanted to write a text for you to read yesterday, I thought I'd find one in Revelation. Well, in my Bible, the last part of Jude is on the same page as the beginning of Revelation, and there were these verses!

So this morning I read the book (all 25 verses of it). In many ways it wasn't a "nice" book to read. It is not nice to think of all those who have turned away from God. We know this has always happened from Cain on, and we must hear about it to be warned! While we know our election stands, we also know that we must make our calling and election sure.

In other words, God has saved us — given us faith, and now we must build up ourselves in that faith. The chief way of doing that is prayer; and oh, how I fall short there. It is prayer that keeps us humble, close to God, desirous to please Him; and yet, how we neglect it!

Verse 21 is one that I hope I remember. Keep or guard yourselves that you stay in the love of God, or continue to experience that love. And then that beautiful statement: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

As long as we look to and long after Christ's mercies, we cannot be swayed nor tempted by sin around us. His mercy is there — unto eternal life — all our lives through; and He has commanded us to build ourselves up and guard ourselves in that love. Dare we not obey?

With love, Your friend

Please read Jude 24-25



## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

# Covenant Breaking

The very worst sin of which a person can make himself guilty is the sin of covenant breaking. Adultery, murder, drunkenness, homosexuality — these are not the worst sins that a person can commit. Although we can become very horrified over these sins of the flesh, the sin that ought to cause us to be especially horrified is this sin, the sin of breaking the covenant of God.

The Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament, refer frequently to the sin of covenant breaking. In Genesis 17:14 the Lord says about those who refuse to be circumcised or to circumcise their sons that ". . . he hath broken my covenant." In Leviticus 26:15, 16 the Lord warns the children of Israel of severe judgment, if they despise God's statutes or abhor His judgments or break His covenant. We read in Deuteronomy 21:16, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a-whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them." Concerning the children of Israel in the Old Testament we read in Psalm 78:10, 37, "They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." In Isaiah 24:5 we read, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." The Lord says concerning Israel in Jeremiah 31:32, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord." In

Ezekiel 44:7 the Lord accuses the inhabitants of Judah, "In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations."

The opposite of breaking God's covenant is keeping God's covenant. In many passages the Word of God calls God's people to keep the covenant. In Genesis 17:9 God says to Abraham, "Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations." In Exodus 19:5 God says to the children of Israel who have just come out of the bondage of Egypt, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." When God's Word exhorts the people of God to keep God's covenant, the implied warning is, "Thou shalt not break the covenant of the Lord your God."

A question arises as to how we are to understand this sin of covenant breaking. How does this square with the teaching of Scripture concerning the faithfulness of God in the covenant? How does this square with the everlasting character of the covenant? How does this square with the sovereignty of God in the establishment and maintenance of the covenant?

The Scriptures do clearly teach the unbreakableness of God's covenant, the everlasting character of God's covenant. In Leviticus 26, the same chapter in which He warns against Israel's breaking of the covenant, the Lord promises, "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God." In Judges



2:1 the Lord recalls the promise which He had spoken to the children of Israel when He had taken them out of the land of Egypt, the promise, "I will never break my covenant with you." In I Kings 8:23 Solomon refers to God as the One "... Who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart." God Himself says in Psalm 89:34, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." The Lord assures His people in Isaiah 54:10, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." We sing of God's covenant faithfulness in *Psalter #425*, stanza 5: "Jehovah's truth will stand forever, His covenant-bonds He will not sever."

There are some who have sought to harmonize the teaching of Scripture concerning the unbreakableness of God's covenant with those passages of Scripture that speak of the sin of covenant breaking by teaching a conditional covenant. According to these people all of the children born to believing parents are in the covenant, possess the promise of the covenant, and receive covenant grace. But through their own sin, they fall out of the covenant, relinquish the promise of the covenant, and frustrate the operations of God's covenant grace.

This teaching of a conditional covenant, however, has serious difficulties, and raises more problems than it resolves. The teaching of a conditional covenant ought to go against the grain of every truly Reformed man or woman. It is a teaching that involves a denial of God's sovereignty, at least in the salvation of the children of the covenant. It is a denial of the preservation of the saints, of the irresistibility of grace, and of the total depravity of the children of believers. This is not a teaching that harmonizes the unbreakableness of God's covenant with covenant breaking, but throws out the window the unbreakableness of God's everlasting covenant.

Others, reacting to the Arminianism implicit in the idea of a conditional covenant, have denied altogether the possibility of covenant breaking. With an apparent zeal for the unbreakableness of God's covenant, they have stoutly maintained that there is no such thing as covenant breaking and covenant-breakers. To speak this way is dangerous, and if not Arminian itself at least tends toward Arminianism.

The trouble with this position is that it plainly contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture in the passages we cited earlier. The language of Scripture is clear, and using the language of Scripture is not a dangerous thing. Yes, there is such a thing, accord-

ing to Scripture, as covenant breaking. Yes, there are people who are covenant-breakers.

What is this sin of covenant breaking? What is a covenant-breaker? And how do we harmonize covenant breaking with the unbreakableness of God's covenant?

From a certain point of view, all sin is the sin of covenant breaking. Every sinner is at bottom a covenant-breaker. This is so because God originally made man as His friend, as capable of standing in a covenant relation to God. This is so because man remains still today obligated to be and to manifest himself as the friend of God. At bottom man's sin is always that he is God's enemy. Rather than be a friend of God, he is the friend of the Devil.

Nevertheless, the sin of covenant breaking is particularly the sin of those who stand historically connected to the line of God's covenant, and to the manifestation of God's covenant, which is the church. Covenant breaking is the sin of someone within the sphere of the covenant. It is the sin of one who has been born into the covenant, born to believing, covenant parents. It is the sin of one who has grown up under the administration of the covenant. It is the sin of one who has received the sign and seal of the covenant in holy baptism. It is the sin of one who has been instructed in the covenant by believing parents, Christian school teachers, and officebearers. It is the sin of one who has heard the preaching of the gospel of the covenant. It is the sin of one who has even likely professed faith in the God of the covenant and declared publicly that he is a member of the covenant. But although all of this is true, he turns his back on the covenant of God, renounces his baptism, contradicts his confession of faith, and leaves the church.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to these covenant-breakers in Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Does this at all contradict the teaching of the unbreakableness of God's covenant? Does this destroy the everlasting character of the covenant of grace? Does this in any way imply that these people were ever actually genuine members of God's covenant? Not at all. Scripture describes the sin of these people from their point of view. They were born and brought up within the covenant. They received the sacrament of the covenant. They *said* that they were members of the covenant. They *said* that they believed in the God of the covenant. They *said* that they walked in the way of the covenant, the way of



God's commandments. To others they appeared for a time to be members of God's covenant. But all of this was appearance only. They never were genuine members of the covenant, as their falling away and breaking of the covenant proves.

Passages like Joshua 23:16, I Kings 19:10, and II Kings 18:12 speak of the sin of covenant breaking and also describe what belongs to this sin. According to these passages those who are guilty of covenant breaking form marriages with the heathen, make friends with the heathen who are God's enemies, reject God's prophets and the Word of God through His prophets, throw down the altars of God, and introduce the worship of idols. They not only break the covenant, but manifest themselves as enemies of the covenant and of the covenant God.

This makes their sin serious! They are covenant-breakers!

Their sin is not the sin of the heathen. Their sin is not the sin of those who stand outside of the church and the administration of the means of grace. But their sin is a covenant sin. Theirs is a sin against

grace. Just so, their guilt is increased and their judgment aggravated.

Since this is the sin of those who stand within the sphere of the covenant, this is a sin against which we need to be warned. It is a sin against which our young people need to be warned. Immediately after the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to those who are guilty of being covenant-breakers, of despising the blood of the covenant, he warns in Hebrews 10:30, 31, "For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

May God give us the grace to keep His covenant. May we walk in obedience to Him, in His fellowship, over against the wicked world. Especially as young people, may it be impressed upon our consciences "... that the friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Exactly in the way of keeping His covenant, may God bring upon us all of the blessings of the covenant.

## GUEST ARTICLE

*Steven R. Houck*

# God's Sovereignty and the Psalms (2)

## THE SOVEREIGN SAVIOR

Since God is the sovereign King over all the world, we must also acknowledge that He is the sovereign Savior. How inconsistent we would be if we recognized God to be the great King, but refused to recognize Him as the Savior Who saves His people by sovereign grace alone. These two can not be separated. If God is not the sovereign Savior, then He can not be the sovereign King. The Psalms, however, make it very clear that God is indeed the sovereign Savior. For the Savior IS the sovereign King. The Savior is the great God Who has created all things and Who upholds and governs all things.

Thus the psalmist declares, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2). God's people find their help in the Savior Who created the world. The power of salvation is the power of the sovereign Creator.

Therefore, God is praised in the Psalms as the powerful, almighty Savior Who delivers from every foe. Does not every true Christian rejoice with the psalmist when he sings, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will



trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Ps. 18:1-2)? All these expressions picture God as a powerful and strong Savior. He is like a huge immovable rock. He is a strong fortress, a high defense tower. The Savior is the shield that protects His people from every enemy. Nothing can break through the defenses with which God has surrounded His people. The psalmists considered God to be so sovereign in salvation that they trusted Him completely. Thus the psalmist declares, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1).

This confidence in the sovereign Savior is expressed not only through praise, but also through prayer. The Psalms are full of prayers in which God is petitioned for help and salvation. We read, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope" (Ps. 130:1-5). The psalmists were sinners just like all of God's people. They knew, too, that if God would mark their sins they would not be able to stand. But by faith they were confident that God could and would save them. They waited upon the sovereign Savior. They did not look to themselves for salvation. They did not wait upon their own wills or works. Nor did they turn to others for help. Their certain hope was fixed upon God alone. They knew of only one Savior and that Savior is Jehovah God. "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved" (Ps. 62:1-2).

### GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE

Salvation is the work of God's grace alone. It is the work of God's SOVEREIGN grace. The psalmists knew of no grace that must be earned by man or accepted by the will of man. Salvation is not conditioned by what man does, but is based totally upon the faithfulness of the Covenant God. God's people are saved only because God has established His covenant with them and promised to save them. Thus God's people rejoice and sing, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my

chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant" (Ps. 89:1-3). The covenant faithfulness of God will never fail. Even when God's people violate the covenant, God remains faithful. He saves them in spite of their unfaithfulness, through the promised Seed. He promises, "My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips" (Ps. 89:28-34).

It is the sovereign Savior, therefore, Who regenerates, converts, justifies, sanctifies, preserves, and glorifies His people. This was King David's conviction as demonstrated by Psalm 51. Unto Whom does David turn in the midst of his great sins? Does he find comfort in the fact that he did something for salvation? NO! He prays, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1). He pleads for God's mercy. He does not look to himself, for he acknowledges, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). He is a sinner. How can he save himself? Thus he seeks his salvation in sovereign grace. God must "create" in him "a clean heart" and "renew a right spirit" in him. Only God can "restore" to him "the joy of salvation" and "uphold" him with His Spirit. If he is to be clean, God must "purge" him with hyssop and "wash" him so that he is whiter than snow. He knows that His salvation is God's work alone and therefore he declares, "O God, thou God of my salvation" (Ps. 51:14). We find this throughout the Psalms. In the midst of sin, the psalmists rely on God's sovereign grace. For all of the life of the believer is directed and controlled by God and His grace until He finally gives to him complete salvation. Thus all believers can say, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24).

Moreover the Psalms teach us that salvation is not dependent upon man's choice, but upon the sovereign choice of God. The determining factor in salvation is God's will. The psalmists speak of God's election in many places. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Ps. 33:12). In God's eternal and unchangeable counsel, He has chosen certain ones to be His people whom He saves. "For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto him-



self, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" (Ps. 135:4). He does not save all. God never intended to save everyone. He saves only those whom He has chosen. God has but one people for His "peculiar treasure." All others know nothing of His salvation. It is upon His chosen people alone that He bestows His mercy, grace, and love. He has only wrath for the wicked. Thus the psalmist speaks of reprobation when he says of God, "Thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:5). "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Ps. 11:5). God's sovereign predestination was manifested throughout the old dispensation by the fact that God gave His Word to His people only. "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord" (Ps. 147:19-20).

#### GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE WICKED

Closely connected with God's sovereignty in salvation is God's sovereignty over the wicked. God always saves His people through the judgment of the wicked. God's people need to be saved from their enemies. In many places the psalmists even pray for the destruction of their enemies. In Psalm 68 we read, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps. 68:1-2). Sometimes very strong language is used. "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord" (Ps. 58:6).

The basis for such prayers can only be the sovereignty of God. The almighty power of God controls even the wicked for the sake of God's people and their salvation. "He [God] suffered no man to do them [God's people] wrong: yea, he reproveth

kings for their sakes; Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (Ps. 105:14-15). Though the wicked seek to destroy God's people and the cause of Truth, God holds them in His power and will not allow them to do anything which He has not appointed. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Ps. 33:10). Though the "heathen rage . . . and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, . . . He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. 2:1-4). God uses all the wicked deeds of the ungodly to advance the cause of His kingdom. Even their rebellion serves the Lord.

Yea, for the sake of His people, the Lord destroys the wicked. This is nowhere more evident than in the destruction of Egypt. The psalmist praises God for the destruction of the enemies of God's people when he declares, "Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants" (Ps. 135:8-9). Not only Egypt, but also other heathen nations were destroyed for the sake of God's people. "Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people" (Ps. 135:10-12). Thus God's people are saved through the destruction of the wicked by the sovereign power of God. With the psalmist therefore all of God's people must praise God and say, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Ps. 108:13). Because God is sovereign even over the wicked, the salvation of God's people is absolutely sure. Praise the Lord. He is the sovereign Savior.

(to be continued)

## Report of Classis East

January 8, 1986

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, January 8, at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. Haak opened the session with devotions; Rev. R. Hanko presided.

The business of the classes was other than routine. There was first an overture regarding changes in translation of the Canons of Dordt. There were four specific changes proposed in the

overture, all of which, if changed, would improve the meaning of the Canons. Classis decided to send the overture to synod with its approval. The suggestion in the overture that scripture references be changed to the King James Version was not adopted since this would involve changing the text itself of the Canons.

A protest against the actions of our emissaries to Ireland and England, and against the Contact Committee of our Synod for not following its constitu-



tion was also considered. Classis sent this protest to Synod with its disapproval on the grounds that Article 30 had not been satisfied — the essence of the protest is against men, and he ought to address these men and their consistories; and that Article 31 of the Church Order had not been met since there is not specific decision of Synod that is being protested.

The report of the church visitors was also received. This, too, was not routine. For the first time in many years, the visitors were asked to aid some of our consistories by giving advice for specific situations. The conclusion of the report was a request that we "pray for our consistories and also our people, that we may remain faithful to that great calling whereto God has called us to maintain and defend the truth of God's sovereign grace and of His covenant in such a time as this."

Southwest Church requested classical appointments and the following schedule was adopted: January 19: Miersma, February 2: Haak, February 9: Bekkering, February 16: Flikkema, March 2: Gritters, March 9: Woudenberg, March 16: Van Baren, March 23: Miersma, April 6: Haak, April 13: Bekkering, April 20: Flikkema, May 4: Gritters, May 11: Woudenberg, May 18: Van Baren.

Classis elected Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. B. Gritters to serve as delegates *ad examina*, *primus* and *secundus* respectively. Rev. R. Flikkema was elected to serve on the Classical Committee. J. Huiskens was appointed to another three-year term

as stated clerk. The following synodical delegates were elected: MINISTERS: *Primi*: W. Bekkering, C. Haak, J. Kortering, B. Woudenberg; *Secundi*: R. Flikkema, B. Gritters, R. Miersma, G. Van Baren. ELDERS: *Primi*: D. Engelsma, J. Huiskens, J. Kalsbeek, Sr., C. Prince; *Secundi*: G. Hoekstra, G. Holstege, P. Koole, C. Kuiper. Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. J.A. Heys were chosen as church visitors with Rev. R. Harbach and Rev. H. Veldman as alternates.

Subsidy requests were submitted by Kalamazoo and Covenant. Classis forwarded to synod, with its approval, subsidy requests for 1987 of \$7,000 for Kalamazoo and \$17,800 for Covenant. Byron Center informed the classis that they intend to be self-supporting by 1987. Classis received this information with thanks to God for prospering the way of this new congregation. In examining the financial statements of these two congregations, classis also took note that the former figure of \$1,000 for the maximum allowable balance in the general fund is no longer realistic and hence is recommending to synod that 10% of the total budget be established as a reasonable balance in the general fund for churches requesting subsidy.

The expenses of this classis amounted to \$769.25.

The next meeting of classis will be held on May 14, 1986 at Holland.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Huiskens, Stated Clerk

### ATTENTION TEACHERS!!!

Covenant Christian School of Lynden, Washington, has an opening for a teacher-administrator in the Liberal Arts subjects for the 1986-87 school year.

Please send enquiries to: Covenant Christian School, 9088 Northlawn Road, Lynden, Washington 98264, or phone: Peter Adams, (206) 398-2774, or Albert De Boer, (206) 354-5825.

### IN LOVING MEMORY

On December 26, 1985, it pleased our Heavenly Father to call unto Himself our dear wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother EDITH JULIET KORTERING. We thank God for her loving care and quiet testimony of trust, even in difficult times. We await our reunion in the day of the resurrection, "For the trumpet shall sound and the dead in Christ shall rise first," I Thess. 4:16.

Justin H. Kortering  
Lafren J. Kortering  
Jess K. Kortering  
Kenneth Schuitema

Rev. Jason and Jean Kortering  
Ervin and Esther Kortering  
13 grandchildren  
8 great grandchildren

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

January 19, 1986 marks the 25th Wedding Anniversary of our parents, WILLEM and THERESA HOFMAN. We are deeply grateful to our Heavenly Father for our Godly parents who brought us up in the light of His Word. We pray that God's blessings will attend them all their days.

Their children: William, Thomas, Melissa

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to our pastor, Rev. Jason Kortering, and his family in the recent death of his mother, MRS. JUSTIN KORTERING, of Holland, Michigan. May the bereaved family find peace and comfort in the blessed truth of the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Psalm 116:15

J. Huiskens, Vice-President  
J. Engelsma, Clerk