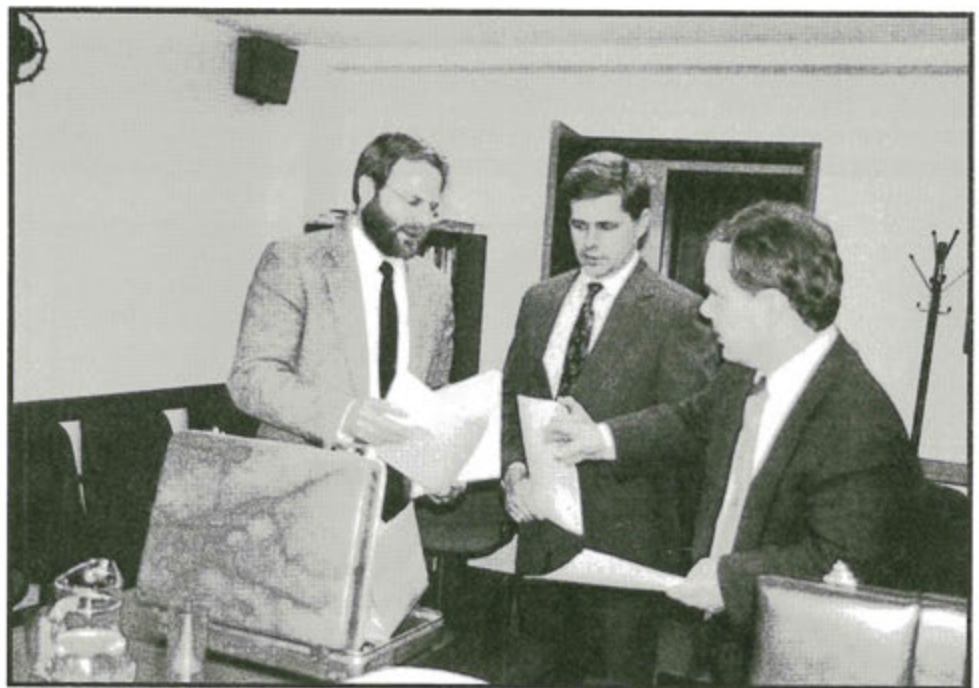


# THE STANDARD BEARER

*A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine*

---



Sharing papers at  
Officebearers' Conference:  
March 5, 1991, Randolph, WI

---

Vol. 67, No. 14  
April 15, 1991

Meditation — Rev. James D. Slopsema	
<b>CONSTRAINING LOVE</b> .....	315
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
<b>AN "ELECTION THEOLOGY" OF COVENANT (3)</b> .....	317
Letters .....	319
Special Article — Mr. Joel Sugg	
<b>OFFICEBEARERS' CONFERENCE</b> .....	320
Special Article — Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga	
<b>JESUS CAME PREACHING</b> .....	321
Special Article — Rev. Ronald J. VanOverloop	
<b>EVALUATING SERMON CRITICISM</b> .....	325
A Word Fitly Spoken — Rev. Dale H. Kuiper	
<b>RESPECT OF PERSONS</b> .....	328
Search the Scriptures — Rev. Carl J. Haak	
<b>The Book of Ruth (III)</b>	
<b>"SEEKING REST"</b> .....	328
Taking Heed to the Doctrine — Rev. Bernard Woudenberg	
<b>THE SOWER OF SEED</b> .....	330
The Strength of Youth — Rev. Barrett L. Gritters	
<b>The End Times (11)</b>	
<b>THE LAST BATTLE (II)</b> .....	332
Book Review .....	334
Report of Classis West .....	334
News from our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger .....	335



## In This Issue...

A good part of this issue is devoted to the Officebearers' Conference held in Randolph a few weeks ago. The theme chosen ("Preaching") was surely a timely one, given the decline of preaching in the church today. And the topics chosen for the various presentations were most attractive. To mention just a few: "Applicatory Preaching," "Preaching Christ and the Cross," "Delivery," "The Elders Oversight of the Preaching." To give our readers a bit of the flavor of the event, we decided to include two in this issue: Rev. Cammenga's keynote address, and Rev. VanOverloop's sectional on "Evaluating Sermon Criticism."

We thank also Mr. Joel Sugg for providing an overview of the day. You will note in it his appreciation not only for the various presentations, but also for the opportunity for "individual conversations." Above, Rev. Arie den Hartog, pastor of Redlands PRC, and Mr. Dewey VanderNoord, elder in South Holland PRC, share insights over coffee.

D.D.

# THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.  
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer,  
P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, MI 49516.

#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma  
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker  
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezema

#### DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Carl Haak, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Marvin Kamps, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Dale Kuiper, Mr. James Lanting, Rev. George Lubbers, Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr. Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer  
4949 Ivanrest  
Grandville, MI 49418  
BUSINESS OFFICE  
The Standard Bearer  
Don Doezema  
P.O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, MI  
49516

PH: (616) 243-3712  
(616) 531-1490  
FAX: (616) 531-3303

#### CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave.  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE  
The Standard Bearer  
c/o Protestant Reformed  
Church  
B. VanHerk  
66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

#### EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

#### REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

#### SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00 elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

#### ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 10th and the 25th of the month, previous to publication on the 1st or the 15th respectively.

#### BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume year.  
16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.



## Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema

# Constraining Love

*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*

*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

II Corinthians 5:14, 15

There were those in the church of Corinth who bitterly opposed Paul. Very wickedly they accused Paul of dealing with the Corinthians out of evil and ulterior motives. They also said that Paul was beside himself — out of his mind, insane.

Paul responds to these dreadful charges by assuring the Corinthians that, whether he was in his right mind or not, all he did in Corinth was to the glory of God and for the advantage of the church.

In the verses we consider for this meditation, Paul adds that he and his co-laborers were constrained to work in this manner by the love of Christ. The love of Christ is Christ's love to His church. Paul and his co-workers labored in the awareness of this great love. That love constrained them to labor only out of the pure

motive of God's glory and the welfare of the church.

Paul goes on to explain. In His love Christ died for the church, including Paul and his co-workers. Christ's purpose in all this is that they no longer live unto themselves but unto Him who gave His life for them. This great love constrained Paul and his fellow-workers to put aside all self-seeking motives and labor zealously for the cause of God.

Pray that the love of Christ may so constrain us.

\* \* \* \* \*

We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.

The one who died is Jesus Christ. The death He suffered was the death of the cross. This death was beyond description in its horror. For at the cross Jesus endured the punishment of God's wrath for sin that the ungodly will only begin to taste in an eternity of hell.

Jesus endured this agony for others. Personally Jesus had no sin. There was nothing in His life that made Him liable to this horrible punishment. But others had sinned. Jesus died for them, suffering the terrors of hell in their place.

In fact, Jesus died for all. This does not mean that Jesus died in the place of every individual of the human race. We know from the rest of Scripture that this is not the case. The context is the church. Paul is seeking to convince the church of Corinth that his motives have been pure as he dealt with them. The contrast, therefore, between "the one" and "the all" is between Jesus and the members of the church. The one (Jesus) died in the place of all the members of the church. And let us bear in mind that the membership of the church is determined by God's eternal election.

If one died for all, then were all dead.

A proper understanding of this requires an understanding of legal representation. We have a legal representative before God. Originally our representative was Adam. He represented the whole human race in the garden in such a way that all bear personal responsibility for his actions. Hence, when Adam sinned, all sinned in and through him so that all are liable to the punishment of eternal death.

God has graciously given the church a new representative in the place of Adam. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, Jesus has become responsible before God for our sins and the punishment of these sins. That punishment Jesus bore on the cross. Because He is our representative, we died in and through Him.

If one died for all, then were all dead.

This death we died through Christ is our salvation. For it renders us righteous before God, worthy of all His favors and blessing!

All this is connected to the love of Christ.

Christ loves us! Christ loves exactly because the Father has chosen us and given us to Him. Christ knows each of us individually and loves every one of us.

It was that love that sent Christ to the cross to die for us and secure our salvation.

Stop and consider!

What else, but love, could have moved Christ to die for us?

What a horrible thing was the death of the cross. We really can not fully comprehend it. Jesus had to endure the agonies of hell, not just for someone else but for a countless throng. How He dreaded that hour.

Rev. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.



No sense of obligation alone  
could have brought Jesus all the way to the cross.  
It had to be love . . .

It was the one great event that cast a shadow over His whole earthly life. He spent much time in prayer to receive strength to face it. Just the anticipation of it caused the agony of Gethsemane.

Certainly it was love and love alone that moved Jesus to surrender to the cruelty of the cross. No sense of obligation alone could have brought Jesus all the way to the cross. It had to be love, and eternal and infinite love, for His people!

\* \* \* \* \*

Jesus died for us that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Him.

One either lives unto himself or he lives unto Christ. A third alternative there is not.

To live unto yourself means that your chief concern is yourself. You live for yourself. You are self-seeking, self-serving. Your pleasure, your comfort, your honor is the only thing that really matters to you. Hence, all you do is calculated somehow to advance and realize your self-centered goals.

The opposite of this is to live unto Christ.

To live unto Christ means that your chief concern is not yourself but Jesus Christ. His cause and kingdom are the all-important things to you. Everything else in life (whether it be riches, pleasure, comfort, honor) you are ready to sacrifice for the cause of Jesus Christ. Your whole life is calculated to advance the cause of Jesus' kingdom.

The sorry fact is that the natural tendency of every human being is to live to himself. This is the result of the fall of the first man, Adam, in paradise. His fall left the whole human race spiritually dead. The chief characteristic of this spiritual death is that it makes mankind hopelessly self-centered and self-serving. There is

no longer any room for God or the Lord Jesus Christ in man's life. All is for self.

Jesus died for us exactly that we should no longer live unto ourselves but unto Him.

This purpose of Jesus in His death was the purpose of love.

This will become clear when we understand what a horrible thing it is to live unto ourselves. Those whose minds are darkened by unbelief do not understand that. They imagine that living to themselves is the key to a happy life. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. The life lived unto self is a meaningless, empty life. Those who live it find true joy to be elusive. The reason is that happiness is not to be found in earthly things, earthly honor, or earthly pleasures. If you doubt the truth of this, read what Solomon relates in the book of Ecclesiastes. He found the self-centered life He lived for years to be nothing but vanity (emptiness). If, having read Solomon's woeful tale, you still have doubts, then consider all the broken marriages, broken homes, and broken lives the world over. They all find their source in lives lived unto self. If that is not enough, consider that the life lived unto self also has its eternal reward — hell.

True and lasting joy is to be found only in a life lived unto Jesus Christ.

This is true for two reasons.

First, the life lived unto Christ is a life of fellowship and companionship with the ever-blessed God. Those who live unto Christ are able to walk

and talk with God as friend with friend. This is the true joy of man.

Secondly, the life lived unto Christ has its eternal reward — the perfect enjoyment of God's friendship and fellowship in heavenly glory.

What a great blessing to be delivered from a life lived unto self to a life lived unto Christ!

To this end Christ both died and was raised.

What moved Him was love. He loved us with the love of the Father. In love He surrendered Himself to the horrors of the cross that we might no longer live unto ourselves but unto Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

This love of Christ constrained Paul to live, not unto himself, but unto Christ, who died for him.

Let us understand Paul's situation.

Because he was born again in Jesus Christ, Paul's life had been changed. The basic direction of His life was towards Christ. However, the work of grace was not complete in his life. There was much that was still inclined to live unto self.

What held these sinful tendencies in Paul in check and also compelled him to live daily unto Christ was the love of Christ. Paul lived in the consciousness that Christ loved Him. In love Christ gave Himself to the horrors of the cross exactly that we might live unto Him. How could Paul, then, live unto Himself? To do so would be to despise the great love and sacrifice of His Savior!

The love of Christ constrained him to live unto Christ.

May that same love also constrain us to live unto Him who died for us and rose again. □

Jesus died for us  
exactly that we should no longer live unto ourselves  
but unto Him.



# An "Election Theology" of Covenant

## (3)

### Editorial

#### Faith a Condition?

In his letter in the March 15, 1991 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, "Liberated" theologian Dr. J. DeJong responded to my charge that the "Liberated" doctrine of the covenant makes the covenant dependent upon the will and work of the baptized child. This, I contended, is the clear and necessary implication of the teaching that the faith of the child is the condition for the fulfillment of the promise that God is supposed to make to every baptized child. I appealed to the Reformed confession, the Canons of Dordt, which repeatedly deny, in so many words, that faith is a "condition" unto salvation (cf. I/9,10; I, Rejection of Errors/3; III, IV/14; and III, IV, Rejection of Errors/6). Appeal to the confession is a weighty, indeed conclusive, argument among Reformed Christians.

The response of Dr. DeJong to this appeal to the confession was that he directed the attention of our readers to other passages in the Canons: I/3,4,12; II/5; and V/14. He asked why I quoted the passages I did, and passed over other passages. The answer is simple and obvious. I directed attention to those passages that treat the issue under discussion: "Is faith a condition according to the Reformed creeds?" Nowhere do the Canons teach that faith is a condition. Again and again, the creed denies, more than once *explicitly*, that faith is a condition. The Canons instruct Reformed Christians to see the teaching that faith is a condition as an aspect of the grave error that compromises the gospel of salvation by sovereign grace.

The Canons are a sworn foe of "conditions." This is undeniable. Everyone may read it for himself.

The reason why I did not refer to the passages brought up by Dr. DeJong (and the reason why he should not have referred to them either) is that none of these passages teaches that faith is a condition. One would not expect that the logical Canons would contradict themselves by denying that faith is a condition in one place, while affirming that faith is a condition in another place. Nor do they. In I/3,4, the Canons teach that God gives faith to some men (the elect, according to I/6) by the preaching of the gospel and that through this faith they are delivered from the wrath of God and have eternal life conferred upon them. There is nothing here about faith as a condition.

Canons II/5 speaks of a "command" to believe on Jesus Christ that comes to all who hear the preaching. It is the duty of every man who hears the preaching to believe on Christ presented in that preaching. Also, the command sets before every hearer the only way of salvation, so that those who refuse to believe have only themselves to blame, as II/6 goes on to assert. But the command that comes to all is intended and used by God to give faith to some only, in sovereign, particular grace. This is the clear teaching about the "command" in II/7,8:

But as many as truly believe . . . are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own. For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will

and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith.

The "command" of Canons II/5 is not a "condition." So far is it from being true that the command is a condition that 1) God eternally decreed to give faith to the elect only; 2) Christ earned faith for the elect only; and 3) the Holy Spirit irresistibly bestows faith upon the elect as a gift, thus bringing them infallibly to salvation. Applied to the children of believers, this means that God graciously purposes and promises to give faith to the elect children only; that Jesus purchased faith by His death for the elect children only; and that the Spirit gives faith to the elect children only, through the Word and sacrament, in particular, sovereign grace.

Canons V/14 does not even refer to faith, but rather reminds us that God uses the means of the Word and sacraments to preserve and perfect the work of grace in us. Not even remotely does this article so much as hint at the teaching that our faith is a condition for receiving the contents of a promise made to everybody.

There is not a shred of support in the Canons of Dordt for the teaching that faith is a condition unto salvation, whether in covenant lines or on the mission field.

#### Condition or Instrument?

The reason for this is that the Canons are thoroughly biblical. And



the Bible does not teach faith as a condition unto salvation. It does indeed use what Dr. DeJong calls "conditional language": "If you will not believe, you will not be established" (Is. 7:9). But this language makes faith known as the *way* to salvation and as the *instrumental means* of salvation, not as the condition unto salvation.

Nor is this distinction negligible—a distinction without a difference. It is fundamental to the gospel of grace, and, therefore, to Reformed orthodoxy, that faith is not an act of man upon which righteousness and salvation depend, but the means by which God justifies and saves a man and the way in which the sinner embraces the righteousness and salvation of God presented in the gospel. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that the sinner is justified or saved "on account of" faith. Righteousness and salvation are rather "by" faith (as means) or "out of" faith (as source).

The Reformed confessions insist on the distinction between faith as the means, or instrument, by which the sinner receives righteousness and salvation and faith as the ground, basis, or cause of righteousness and salvation. This distinction spells the difference between the truth of gracious salvation and the lie of salvation's dependency upon the will and work of man (cf. the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 61; Belgic Confession, Art. 22).

---

If the promise at baptism  
is for every child,  
conditioned by the child's faith,  
the promise surely  
is not sure to anyone.

---

Dr. DeJong is very seriously in error, therefore, in his translation and explanation of Romans 4:16. I had appealed to this text in support of the Protestant Reformed teaching that the covenant promise of God is to elect children only. For the apostle writes that the promise is "sure to all the seed." If the promise at baptism is for every child, conditioned by the child's

faith, the promise surely is not sure to anyone. DeJong, however, thinks that I "have strange glasses on" to read the text as proof of an unconditional promise to the elect. DeJong gives the text this way:

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his (Abraham's) descendants—not only to the adherents of the law but also those who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all.

DeJong then explains, "Paul stresses the *condition* (his emphasis—DJE) of the covenant: the call to faith!"

There is nothing strange about my glasses. What is strange is his translation, specifically the words, "That is why it depends on faith." The apostle did not write, "It *depends* on faith." He wrote, as the King James Bible correctly translates, "It is *of* (Greek: *ek*) faith." The inheritance that God promised to Abraham and his seed comes to us out of faith as the source, and not out of the law. Faith is not the condition, but the source of the inheritance. And the difference is that "faith-as-condition" means that reception of the inheritance depends upon an act that we perform, whereas "faith-as-source" means that the inheritance comes to us from Christ (to whom faith unites us), without any working to fulfill conditions on our part. If the inheritance *depends* upon faith, it is not "by grace," as the apostle states in Romans 4:16.

It must be sharply proclaimed (and everyone who hopes to be saved must believe it): Never does the gospel of the Scriptures teach that the promise, righteousness, or salvation *depends* upon faith. Faith is not a basis, ground, or condition of salvation. So to present and view faith is fatally to compromise the gospel of grace.

This is not an insight peculiar to the PRC. J. I. Packer expresses it clearly in his recent book, *A Quest for Godliness* (Crossway Books, 1990). He is explaining how it happened that Puritanism in England fell away from the truth. Their first error was that they began to deny that faith is the gift of God. Their second was that they came to deny limited atonement.

In stating the third cause of Puritanism's apostasy, Packer speaks to the issue, whether faith is a condition unto salvation:

The third relevant denial (by an apostatizing Puritanism—DJE) was that the covenant of grace is a relationship which God imposes unilaterally and unconditionally, by effectual calling, saying to his elect, "I will . . . and you shall . . ." The Arminian alternative was that the covenant of grace is a new law, offering present pardon on condition of present faith and final salvation on condition of sustained faith (p. 156).

### Christ's Death for the Children of Believers

Two other charges against the "Liberated" doctrine of the covenant, Dr. DeJong brushes aside as having little or no weight in the debate. But they are not as flimsy as Dr. DeJong supposes. One is the charge that the "Liberated" teaching necessarily implies that the death of Christ fails to secure the redemption of some persons for whom He died. At the heart of the "Liberated" covenant view is the teaching that God makes the covenant promise to every child at baptism. But our Reformed confession teaches that the baptism of the children of the faithful is based upon Christ's death for them and that our children are to receive baptism as a sign and seal of that which Christ has done for them on the cross (Belgic Confession, Art. 34).

The Reformed baptism form similarly teaches that the promise of baptism that the Holy Spirit will dwell in us and sanctify us is the promise to apply to us "that which we have in Christ." The prayer after baptism expresses that the baptism of the children seals and confirms, not a *future* forgiveness of sins on the condition that the children will someday believe, but a *past* forgiveness of the sins of the children "through the blood of . . . Jesus," regardless of the fact that the children cannot as yet believe.

If, now, as the "Liberated" teach, the promise of baptism is for every child; if the sanctification of which baptism is a sign and seal is promised



to every child; if, in short, the covenant is made with every baptized child, Christ must have died for every child of believing parents. But since some baptized children perish in unbelief, the death of Christ for some persons failed to secure their redemption.

Dr. DeJong must not respond to this charge by stating that at baptism God promises the children that He will wash them in Jesus' blood if they believe. No one disputes that the promise at baptism is a promise that God will fulfill and that the children will enjoy in the way of repentance and faith. But the "Liberated" theologian must explain the relationship between the promise to wash every child from his sins *and the death of Christ*, the ground of the covenant and the basis of the promise.

Question 66 of the Heidelberg Catechism is pointed and conclusive regarding the truth that the promise is based upon the death of Christ. "The sacraments ... declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel." This promise, declared by baptism, is that God "grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, *for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross.*" The ground of the promise to "us" is the death of Christ for us. If, now, the promise of God at baptism is to every child, God promises every child that He grants him forgiveness and eternal life on the ground that Christ died for him.

Does Dr. DeJong believe that Christ shed His blood for the washing of all the children of the faithful?

Is baptism a sign and sacrament of a sanctification that Christ has accomplished for every child of believers? Does every child have in Christ the washing away of his sins? Has the Almighty God and merciful Father forgiven the sins of all the children of godly parents without exception? Were the blood and death of Christ, Mediator of the new covenant, the redemption of the transgressions of all the children of believers (Heb. 9:14,15)?

If so, the death of Christ failed to save many for whom Christ died. If not, the promise at baptism, according to the Reformed confessions, cannot be for every child. For the promise, based as it is on the death of Christ, is exactly as extensive as was that death.

#### Does the Word of God Fail?

The other charge that Dr. DeJong dismisses, as a "caricature of our standpoint," is that the "Liberated" doctrine teaches that the "word and promise of God have failed" in many cases. The point here is simply that, on the "Liberated" understanding of the covenant, God promises the establishment of the covenant and the covenant blessings to many children who nevertheless perish in hell. Either God never fulfilled His promise, or the children fell away from the grace of the promise. In either case, the word of God has failed.

It is nothing less than astonishing that Dr. DeJong quotes Romans 9:6 in his response to this charge: "Not as though the word of God hath

taken none effect." This is indeed the apostle's emphatic declaration that the word of God did not fail. It is the apostle's declaration that the word of God's promise did not fail. It is the apostle's declaration that the word of God's promise to establish the covenant with believers and their children did not fail. But God's word of promise did not fail, the apostle explains in the following verses, *because that promise never was made to every child of Abraham (and of believing parents).* The children of Abraham (and of believing parents), to whom the promise is made, are not all the physical children, but only some of them—the "children of the promise" in distinction from "the children of the flesh" (v. 8). The word of promise exclusively refers and is addressed to certain of Abraham's (and our) children, those namely whom God has eternally elected (vss. 9ff.). Believers and their elect children are God's Israel. The other children are merely "of Israel." But the word of promise is alone to "Israel" (v. 6).

It is the argument of the apostle Paul in Romans 9:6ff. that, if the promise is for all the children without exception, no other conclusion is possible than that the word of God has failed.

It is, therefore, the judgment of the apostle upon the "Liberated" doctrine of the covenant that it teaches that the word of God's promise fails.

I beseech Dr. DeJong to take this judgment seriously. □ — DJE

## Letters

#### ■ Bouquets

I am renewing my subscription to the *Standard Bearer* by international postal money order. It is always with great interest that I receive the *SB*. In France, we have nothing

on the same way of Truth. God bless you.

Andre Coste  
Paris, France

#### ■ ... and Brickbats

We do not wish to renew our subscription to the *Standard Bearer*. Your eschatology seems to be increas-

ingly more like the dispensational premillennialist, and this definitely affects your biblical world view and, we believe, hampers the growth of the Kingdom. □

(Mr. and Mrs.) Charles Parry  
Matthews, NC



## Special Article

Mr. Joel Sugg

# Officebearers' Conference

An officebearers' conference was held in Randolph, Wisconsin on March 5, 1991. For a number of years now, such a conference has, with only occasional exceptions, been an annual event associated with the meeting of Classis West. It came about first through the organizing initiative of a few ministers from the west. Their efforts were aided by various ministers from both east and west and from the seminary, many of whom have presented papers for discussion. Of great encouragement also is the good attendance on the part of delegates to Classis West, members of the host church and other nearby congregations, visitors from Classis East, and local ministers from other denominations.

While not an official part of the meeting of Classis West, the conference takes advantage of this assembly by scheduling its work on the day before and at the place where classis meets. Set as an officebearers' conference because of its principal value



Sectional on "Missionary Preaching"

to these men, it is yet open to anyone who is interested. Its limited expenses (including a mid-day meal prepared by the ladies of the host congregation) are defrayed by passing the hat among those present.

Such conferences have particular value to the elders in attendance, especially to those who come as classical delegates only at extended intervals. Not only is the subject matter pertinent to their calling, but discussion of the subject, both during the conference proper and afterward during individual conversations, gives them additional depth and breadth.

Delegates to Classis West have an unusual fellowship because that

assembly takes most of them many miles from home and their daily routine. In addition, many of the congregations in the west are geographically isolated in terms of convenient fellowship with other congregations. This brief detachment in time and distance, along with personal contact with others in like situation, provides a fertile soil both for quiet mutual reflection and for animated discussion. The additional opportunity for fellowship which the conference provides is coveted by many elders because they attend classis much less frequently than some others and far less frequently than their pastors. This opportunity not only expands the elders' knowledge of the truth and its application, but also encourages the development of friendships with other elders and the ministers.

The conference in Randolph was unusual in two respects. First, its subject, "Preaching," was divided into nine separate presentations. Those sectionals were offered three at the same time in each of three individual schedule-periods. Those attending were therefore able to select a total of three presentations out of the nine offered. The conference was also

Mr. Sugg is an elder in Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.



Elder Joel Sugg, Rev. Carl Haak



unusual in that it was a continuation of last year's program at South Holland. A number of the sectionals were in fact repeats of those given last year. Of the topics which were repeated, about half were introduced by men different from those who served a year ago. So there was a fresh approach even in the "old" topics. But repetition of sectionals is a practical expediency, too, from this point of view, that it enables one to select

topics the second time around which he could not get in during the first.

Both the quality of the presentations and the active participation of ministers and elders alike during the lively discussions which followed were a clear indication of the appreciation that there is in Classis West for the importance of these events. Further indication of enthusiasm for it all came in the offering of suggestions for subjects to be treated in later confer-

ences. A topic which was especially encouraged, incidentally, was "The Conduct of Censura Morum."

All present were thankful for the efforts of those who contributed to the success of brethren studying together the doctrines of truth. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship ..." (Acts 2:42). □

## Special Article

Rev. Ron Cammenga

# Jesus Came Preaching

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

Luke 4:16-19

This sermon preached by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth is a significant sermon. It is significant because it is the *first* recorded sermon preached by Jesus. But for our purposes it is especially significant because it is a sermon about preaching. Jesus' first sermon was a sermon about

sermons. When Jesus came, He came preaching.

In this passage Jesus teaches several important truths about preaching.

### Preaching — Jesus' Central Task

Jesus makes plain here that He has been sent to *preach*. This is His first, this is His main, this is really His only, work.

He has not been sent to counsel, although He does give personal, pastoral counsel. He does meet with a troubled Nicodemus. He does comfort a weeping Mary Magdalene at the tomb. But personal counseling is not His primary work and calling. He has not been sent to perform miracles, although He does perform many mighty miracles. Nowhere is it ever recorded that Jesus baptized. There is not one reference to His having officiated at a funeral or a marriage.

Jesus' main work was to preach. He makes that clear in this passage. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to *preach* the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to *preach* deliverance to the captives .... To *preach* the acceptable year of the Lord." The record in the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry demonstrates that He

was faithful to His calling. He was focused — He knew what His calling was. And He was faithful to carry that calling out.

It is striking that the first official act of Jesus' public ministry recorded in the gospels is preaching. That is what He did in Nazareth. And what He did there in Nazareth set the tone for His whole ministry.

What was true of Jesus must be true of His servants today. If His calling was essentially and primarily a calling to preach, so is ours.

### Jesus The Preacher of the Gospel

Not only has Jesus been sent to preach, but He makes plain here that He is *THE* Preacher of the gospel. That is what He says about Himself. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon *ME*." "He hath anointed *ME* to preach the gospel to the poor." "He hath sent *ME* to heal the brokenhearted and to preach deliverance to the captives."

Fundamentally there is one and only one Preacher of the gospel, and that one is Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Preachers, the preacher's Preacher.

That Jesus is *THE* Preacher of the gospel carries with it several implications.

First, since Jesus Christ is *THE*

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.





Rev. Ron Cammenga

Preacher, it is Christ who is speaking to His people through the preaching office and through the man who occupies that office. The preacher does not merely bring a message *about* Christ. But in his preaching, Christ Himself is addressing the people of God. Jesus says that to His disciples in Luke 10:16, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me."

In the second place, since Christ is *THE* Preacher, we human preachers stand in dependence upon Him. Apart from Him, we cannot preach. Without His sustaining strength and grace, all our efforts come short. Our sermons are ineffective. There is no peace, no joy in the work. Because Christ is *THE* Preacher of the gospel, we must stand in constant, daily dependence upon Him in our work of making and preaching sermons.

And, thirdly, since Christ is *THE* Preacher of the gospel, we human preachers are going to be called one day to give an account of our preaching to Him. As preachers we are answerable to Him who is *THE* Preacher. We had better remember His warning, especially sobering to preachers, that every idle word is going to be brought into judgment.

### Jesus "Sent" to Preach

A third important truth that comes out in this passage is Jesus' certainty that He has been *SENT* to preach, sent by God.

That is indicated in several ways. That is indicated when Jesus says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

That is indicated when He says, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." That is indicated when He says, "He hath *sent* me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives." He has been "sent" to do this. The word "send" is the Greek word *apostello*, the word from which we get our English word "apostle." An apostle is one who has been sent out, one who has been sent out with a mission to accomplish, a mandate to carry out. Jesus has been sent out by God.

That Jesus has been sent out to preach is indicated by one of the two words that He uses here for preach. It is the word that He uses in verse 18 when He says that He has been sent "to preach deliverance to the captives," and again in verse 19 when He says that He has been sent "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." That word "preach" is the Greek word *karusso*. The meaning of this word is "to herald, to function as a herald." Now in Bible times a herald was a special sort of person. He was the official messenger of the king. He brought the king's word to the people in the name of the king. The authority of the king stood behind the message that he brought. To reject him and his message was tantamount to rejecting the king. He did not come in his own authority, but with the authority of the one who had sent him. Just so, Christ has been sent.

It is of fundamental importance that the preacher of the gospel be conscious of the fact that he has been sent. So important is this that Paul says in Romans 10:15, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" There can be no genuine preaching unless the one who is doing the preaching has been sent.

The importance of the preacher's being sent is that he comes with authority, the authority of the God who sends him. This was the thing that impressed the people with the preaching of Jesus. A little later in the chapter, Luke 4:32, we read, "And they were astonished at His doctrine: for his word was with authority."

In a similar way our people must

be impressed with our preaching. They must not be impressed with our authority. But they must be impressed with the authority of the Lord God who sends us, on behalf of whom we speak, and whose Word we bind upon their hearts.

### Jesus' Preaching was Exegetical

Jesus' preaching was exegetical, expository preaching. Jesus preached out of the Scriptures. He read the Scriptures and then proceeded to explain the Scripture that He had chosen as His text. The portion of Scripture that He read was Isaiah 61. The text of His sermon was the first two verses of this chapter.

Jesus' preaching was NOT a forum for discussion of current social and political issues. He did not, in His preaching, simply use the Scriptures as a springboard to launch into consideration of some other topic of personal or popular interest. His preaching was not a sharing of His own personal religious experience.

But His preaching was exposition of the Scriptures. Exposition means "to set forth." In expository preaching the sermon "sets forth" or "exhibits" the truth of a certain biblical text. The sermon is designed to say what the text says. Though using different forms and different words, it really only repeats (with illustration and application added) what the text says. Expository preaching sets forth neither more nor less than the truth of the text.

---

The importance of  
expository preaching  
is that only when the preacher  
expounds the text of Scripture  
is the Word that he speaks  
the very Word of God.

---

Traditionally the science or art of sermon construction has been called "homiletics." The word "homiletics" is derived from two Greek words: *homo*, which means "the same," and *lego*, which means "to say or speak." Thus homiletics is the technique of making the kind of sermon that "says the same thing" as the text says. The



very word used to designate the science of sermon construction indicates that all genuine preaching is expository preaching.

The importance of expository preaching is that only when the preacher expounds the text of Scripture is the Word that he speaks the very Word of God. This is the biblical view of preaching. Preaching is not merely the word of man; it is the powerful, saving Word of God. But preaching is the Word of God only if the preaching expounds the Word of God in the Bible.

One of the strangest paradoxes in evangelical and Reformed churches today is a very high view of the Bible, on the one hand, and on the other hand a very low view of preaching. On the one hand a vigorous defense of the Bible as the very Word of God, but on the other hand a low estimation of preaching as the Word of God for the salvation and building up of the church. Many preachers these days do not even like to think of themselves as preachers, much less have others view them this way.

Any view of preaching that comes short of holding that the preaching is the very Word of God to His people, the prophetic "Thus saith the Lord," is less than the biblical view of what true preaching is.

But if the preaching is to be the very Word of God to His people, it must be God's Word that is preached. The sermon can only be the Word of God if the sermon expounds the Word of God. The sermon as the proclamation of the Word of God is inextricably bound to the written Word of God in the Bible. Apart from the written Word of God and its exposition, there can be no sermon. If what the minister proclaims is human insights, however valid and perceptive they may be, what is happening is not what the Bible regards as preaching. To the degree to which this happens, God's Word is silenced in the church and the pew is impoverished.

We ministers must be convinced of it that when we preach we bring God's Word to God's people. That is the seriousness of the calling we have.

There are two sorts of doubts that ministers wrestle with. There is the minister's doubt concerning his own personal call to the ministry. Anyone who has been a minister for more than a year has wrestled with this doubt. But there is also the doubt that in his preaching the very Word of God is heard, especially when there appears to be little or no results to his preaching.

We have to be renewed in our conviction concerning the deep, mysterious, powerful nature of preaching. We have to be renewed in our conviction that in our preaching God's people do hear God's own Word; through us God does speak to them. We have to be reminded, as Elijah needed to be reminded, that God is not in the strong wind, that God is not in the earthquake, that God is not in the fire, but that God is present in and God works through the still, small voice, the voice of the preaching of the gospel.

But then we must work at it that our preaching is expository preaching. In the preparation of our sermons we must labor with the text, so that we ourselves understand its meaning. We must pay attention to the words and the meaning of the words, the phrases, their position in the text and their relationship to each other. We must identify the main thought of the text and understand how everything else in the text is connected to this main thought. We must interpret the text in relation to its context — its immediate context, its context in the chapter and book of the Bible in which it appears, and ultimately in the context of the central message of the Bible as the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Then we must put this all down in a well-organized outline, logically developed, and present it clearly and forcefully to the congregation. This is expository preaching!

#### **Jesus' Urgency in Preaching**

The fifth important principle about preaching taught by Jesus here is the urgency of preaching.

He teaches the urgency of preach-

ing in His description of those to whom He has been sent to preach. They are the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised.

Those to whom Jesus has been sent to preach are those who are poor, poor in spirit, spiritually poor, absolutely destitute of any spiritual good. They are the brokenhearted, that is, those who are broken in heart over their sins and the guilt of their sins. They are captives. "Captives" here does not refer to prisoners in a jail, but it refers to prisoners of war, dragged into exile by the conqueror. These are captives to the Devil, enslaved to his power, with absolutely no hope of escape in themselves. They are blind, blind to the Word of God, blind to the will of God, blind to the truth, blind to every spiritual reality, so blind that they cannot even see the kingdom of God. And they are bruised. Not only are they captives to the power of sin and Satan, but they are wounded and bruised from the awful consequences of their sins. They are broken, miserable, troubled, without peace, lacking all joy.

To these the preaching of the gospel addresses itself and to these has the preacher of the gospel been sent.

He has been sent to preach to them because they are in need, desperate need of His preaching. And the point is that by means of His preaching their need is met. Jesus does not simply preach *to* the poor, but His preaching is the means for the deliverance of the poor from their poverty, the means to their spiritual enrichment. He does not simply preach *to* the brokenhearted, but His preaching is the means to the comfort of the brokenhearted. He does not simply preach *to* the captives, but His preaching is the means by which these captives are delivered. He does not simply preach *to* the blind, but His preaching is the means by which the blind receive their sight. He does not simply preach *to* the bruised, but His preaching is the means to the binding up and the healing of those that are bruised. Thus, Jesus preaches the acceptable year of the Lord, verse 19,



**The preaching  
is the *only* means  
to the comfort  
of the brokenhearted;  
there is no other comfort  
to be found anywhere  
for the brokenhearted.**

---

the year or time when sinners are accepted by the Lord. His *preaching* is the means by which sinners are made acceptable to the Lord.

The urgency of the preaching is that it *alone* is able to accomplish these things. The preaching is not one means alongside of other possible means, but it is the *only* means. The preaching is the *only* means to the relief of the poor. If the poor are not relieved by the preaching, there is no place else to which they can go for relief. The preaching is the *only* means to the comfort of the brokenhearted; there is no other comfort to be found anywhere for the brokenhearted. The preaching is the *only* means by which enslaved sinners are freed from sin's awful power; there is no other possible means of deliverance. The preaching is the *only* means by which the blind are given eyes to see; apart from the preaching there is only darkness and death. The preaching is the *only* means to the healing of the bruised; if the bruised are not healed by the power of the preaching of the gospel, they will not be healed. The preaching is the *only* means by which guilty sinners are accepted of the Lord; there is no possibility of acceptance with God outside of and apart from the preaching of the gospel.

This must bring home to us preachers the urgency of our preaching. The souls of our people are at stake; their eternal blessedness depends on the Word that we bring. We have to be convinced of that. No one is going to do the hard work of making and preaching good sermons, if he is not convinced of the urgency of preaching. Conversely, if we are convinced of the urgency of preaching, we are going to put forth the effort to make and to preach good

sermons. God demands it of us and our people are in need of it.

#### **Jesus Preached Himself**

It also comes out in this passage that Christ preached Himself. He did that in the synagogue at Nazareth. That was the very thing that so offended and angered the people.

It is plain that the passage that made up Jesus' text that day refers to the coming Messiah, the Christ. The passage cannot be speaking merely of the prophet. Neither can it be speaking of God, since God is said to anoint and send the one who is spoken of. Isaiah 61:1, 2 is an outstanding Old Testament prophecy of Christ.

Jesus applies that prophecy to Himself in verse 21, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Faithful preaching of the gospel is preaching that centers in Jesus Christ, His person and work, His death and resurrection. Preaching that is gospel preaching, preaching that announces the "good news," is the preaching of Christ. He is the One who sets free the captives, gives sight to the blind, and heals the bruised.

Charles Spurgeon once said, "I take my text and make a bee-line to the cross." Every faithful preacher of the gospel ought to take his text and make a bee-line to the cross.

The late Prof. George Ophoff is reported to have counseled his seminary students that when they make their sermon outlines, they should put a cross in the upper right-hand corner of every page in order to remind them to preach Christ and His cross.

We must imitate Paul here and determine to know nothing among our people in our preaching except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

#### **The Effectiveness of Jesus' Preaching**

Jesus' preaching was effective. The preaching is always effective.

It is not the duty of the preacher to make his preaching effective. If it were, he would be faced with an impossible task. He can do many things in his preaching to place stumbling blocks before his hearers: by

reducing the gospel to trite moralisms, by preaching obscurely, by poor sermon preparation, by turning the pulpit into a personal stage, by poor speaking and delivery, by disregard for organization and logic. But he *cannot* make the Word effective. God must and God does see to that.

That the preaching is effective does not mean that the effect of the preaching is always positive. The reaction to Jesus' preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth was not positive but negative. They rejected His preaching and they rejected Him for His preaching. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they asked in disdain. Then they tried to kill Him by pushing Him off the cliff. If Jesus' preaching was met with a negative reaction, we should not be surprised that our preaching does also.

Even in that negative reaction, however, Jesus' preaching was effective. Sinners were confronted with the gospel. The will of God was made known to them. And by that preaching they were hardened in their unbelief and made inexcusable before God.

---

**If Jesus' preaching  
was met  
with a negative reaction,  
we should not be surprised  
that our preaching  
does also.**

---

But the preaching is also effective positively. That too is indicated by Jesus' word here. The poor *are* enriched. The brokenhearted *are* comforted. The captives *are* set free. The blind *do* receive their sight. The bruised *are* healed.

That has to be the incentive to the preacher of the gospel. That makes all the hard work, the blood, sweat, and tears worthwhile. Then it is possible to face the setbacks and endure the negative reactions. God *does* use the preaching of His Word, and He will *continue* to use the preaching of His Word to gather His people, to build up His church, and to accomplish His saving purpose. □



---

*Special Article*  
*Rev. Ronald VanOverloop*

---

# Evaluating Sermon Criticism

## The Fact of Criticism

Sermons are criticized. A seminary student becomes painfully aware of that in the course called "Practice Preaching." And if he should think that with graduation from the seminary and ordination into the ministry he has seen the last of sermon critics, he will soon enough learn otherwise.

That there is criticism of sermons arises, first of all, from the fact that God uses mere men. They are the weak and base things He is pleased to use to accomplish the "foolishness of preaching" (cf. I Cor. 1:18-31). They are also the "earthen vessels" in which God is pleased to place the "treasure" of the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:4-7). Whereas the treasure of the gospel is beyond reproach, the earthen vessels are but weak means and in themselves are very worthy of criticism. If such a vessel is the instrument to convey the gospel, then it is understandable that no preacher escapes his fair share of criticism.

Secondly, that there is criticism of sermons arises from the fact that the hearers are just as imperfect as the preachers. Being not yet perfect, they do not always view those that labor faithfully in the Word as worthy of double honor (I Tim. 5:17). Their sinfulness sometimes interferes with their esteeming the ministers of

the Word highly in love for their work's sake (I Thess. 5:13). In addition, the judgment of every sinner (even that of the most sanctified) is inclined toward negative and destructive criticism. And there are some Christian lay-people (like some ministers) who seem to be of a very critical bent. These seem to believe that they are God's specially appointed agents to keep the minister humble.

The fact of criticism was also reality for the perfect Preacher, Jesus Christ. He was the object of some of the severest criticism. He was accused of being a blasphemer, a law-breaker, an imposter, and someone who should be institutionalized. Also the apostle Paul received his share of criticism, of which he speaks in I Corinthians 4:9-13. "We are made a spectacle ... we are fools for Christ's sake ... we are despised ... are buffeted ... being reviled, being persecuted ... being defamed ... the offscouring of all things."

As far as the fact of criticism is concerned, we can conclude that until

the Lord returns there is going to be sermon criticism. And in the nature of the case, some of it will be just and some unjust.

It is not my purpose in this article to detail the responsibility of the critics. Rather we will deal only with the way in which criticism is to be received and evaluated by the minister.

## From Whence Criticism Arises

Some criticism never reaches the minister's ears. It stays whispered behind cupped hands, is gossiped over telephone lines, or serves like gastric juices at Sunday dinner for the easier digestion of "roast preacher."

Some sermon criticism does reach the minister's ears. This comes from primarily three different sources. It comes from consistory members, who are responsible to God for supervising the preaching, and must evaluate the preaching in light of the needs of the congregation. Secondly, the other members of the congregation bring criticism, either personally or via

*Rev. Ron VanOverloop*



---

*Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Elk Grove Village, Illinois.*



family visitation. And, finally, some criticism comes to the minister from his wife and children.

### Kinds of Criticism or Examples of Criticism

Two of the most popular criticisms of sermons are that they are too long or too doctrinal. But there are many others. Sermons may be declared to be too superficial, or not pertinent, missing the needs of the congregation. The preacher may be said to be guilty of not sticking closely to the text, with the result that the main thrust of the text is not clearly brought home. Some sermons are said to be just "blah," lacking in conviction or lacking the power of the Spirit. And, finally, there may be criticism of a preacher because he does not preach like another preacher.

Someone summarized sermon criticism thus: "If he preaches sound, doctrinal sermons, he ought to be more interested in the everyday problems of the people. If he focuses on practical life situations, it is because he does not know theology. If he makes a point of conveying basic spiritual truths that he may be all things to all people, he tends to be vague and too general. If he addresses specific sins within the congregation, he has quit preaching and begun meddling."

### Wrong Evaluation

If sermon criticism can be likened unto the throwing of lemons, then it must be said that the minister must not chew on the rind. To do so only makes him rankled, then bitter and miserable. It does no good to the church of Christ as a whole, nor to the believers in the pew or in the pulpit, if the minister responds to criticism by becoming defensive or if he conveys in various ways the impression that he considers himself to be above criticism.

It is wrong, too, for ministers to hide behind the office they hold. Some clergy take the position that it is a sin to criticize the office and those in the office. It is better to maintain that the office is above criticism, but certainly

not the person who occupies the office. The forty and two young people of Bethel who were mauled by two, angry she-bears were guilty of mocking the office of Elisha.

It is sad if the preacher takes all or most criticism as a personal affront, and makes the matter a confrontation. He must rise far above personal pride, and consider the needs of the precious Body of Christ to be far more important than himself.

Any defensive reaction to criticism is sinful on at least two counts. First, even the harshest critic must be given respect. And secondly, defensiveness closes the mind and soul of the minister to the realization that God has His purposes even in invalid criticism.

### Some Suggestions Toward the Proper Evaluation of Sermon Criticisms

A. There is an umbrella under which the preacher must stand when he receives criticism. This umbrella is the proper view of his office and of himself in that office.

1. He must have the assurance that God has called him to the office and to this congregation. Criticism must not be allowed to cast doubt upon the call to the ministry. Such doubts often sap the minister's ability to do his work. In such a case what is wrong is not the fact of criticism, but the manner in which the criticism is received.

2. The preacher must be somewhat conscious of his God-given gifts: his personal strengths and weaknesses. Each preacher and each congregation must realize that

not all ministers are alike. Each man is different, with his own God-given abilities. The fact that I am not like or as good as another minister must not be allowed to shake my assurance of my call to the office. At the same time, confess the weakness and do not cease striving to overcome them. And never forget that also the strengths are characterized as being "filthy rags" (Is. 64:6).

3. The preacher must know that he has applied himself to the task of sermon preparation and sermon delivery to the best of his ability (within the context of his weaknesses). He knows the constant tendency toward complacency.

---

**The minister  
must always be  
his own critic.**

---

4. The minister must always be his own critic. He must ask himself whether the sermon was orthodox, clear, lively, etc. This he must do prayerfully, because we are the most honest when we stand before the Lord, our Master.

5. The preacher must realize that ultimately it is God who will be his final critic, and there is no escaping His judgment and criticism. But God is also merciful and ready to forgive. Then criticism will be viewed as a God-sent goad to prod the preacher of God's Word unto faithful and diligent labor.

B. In all of his relationships with the elders and with the members of the congregation the man of God must

*Group discussion of topic*





show himself open. This openness to receive criticism must be done with care because the authority of Christ's preaching must not be compromised, and because the minister must be careful not to have "itching ears" according to which he allows the opinions of members to sway him from God's Word. Nevertheless, the minister must have a certain openness. This begins by stating to the elders of the church that he is open to all constructive criticism. Let the elders know that they are competent to criticize because they know God's Word and because they know the congregation. And then his demeanor must reflect that openness. When bringing to the elders the criticism of others, the minister must show that he wants to learn and grow in his preaching. This willingness to be criticized must be reflected in his demeanor. A good and proper attitude must be evident towards those who disagree with him in Bible studies. As someone said, the minister must remember that God gave him *two* ears and only *one* mouth.

---

*It is the minister who  
is first responsible  
to keep the criticism  
from developing into  
an adversarial relationship.*

---

C. With regard to those criticisms which are obviously invalid or are of the nature of personal charges, rather than criticism of the preaching.

1. It is the minister who is first responsible to keep the criticism from developing into an adversarial relationship. II Timothy 2:23, 24 is most appropriate in such a situation. "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." He must not become party to unlearned questions and to unprofitable wranglings. Rather, he must be gentle, patiently working to solve the problem.

2. At such a time the minister must remember that he is a great sinner, and that the one who has criticized him does not really know the worst about him.

3. Also it is most helpful to remember that Christ, our Master, endured the contradiction of sinners, and that He did so for the sake of us, His servants. No servant is greater than his Lord.

---

*... it must be realized  
that God is the only One  
whom we ultimately  
have to please.*

---

4. Always forgive the improper critics. Some criticism has to be forgotten. Commit the matter quickly to God, asking Him to remove all resentment or counter-criticism. In such a situation it must be realized that God is the only One whom we ultimately have to please. Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we must again press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

D. With regard to obscure or hesitantly given criticism. Some members of the congregation find it difficult to articulate their criticism. Many are nervous about approaching the minister and they find it hard to express themselves.

It is helpful gently to press the critic for specifics. Try to help the critic in formulating his own criticism, always trying to make the criticism constructive.

In some cases the criticism remains very vague. Try to understand the problem or question. Try to read between the lines. There are times that there is something else that lies behind that of which the critic is speaking.

Ask yourself whether the criticism has validity to any extent.

E. We would suggest that, when faced with severe criticism from members of the congregation or from one elder, the preacher should not

hesitate to consult with an elder or with the whole consistory. Do so especially when you fear that the criticism is invalid. Not only do the elders have a more objective perspective, but also it must be remembered that their oversight is part of the responsibility Christ has given them. They are committed to caring for the flock of Christ, of which the pastor is a part. Often they can better formulate criticism or can encourage their pastor in light of the criticism.

F. The minister of the Word of God must realize that God has His reasons for decreeing in His all-comprehensive, wise, and good counsel that specific criticism arises at a particular time. In part, it is so that His servants never lose the perspective that they are only servants and that all the glory must and will be His. It is folly and shame for a man of God to ignore the purpose of his sovereign Lord.

\* \* \* \* \*

## In Conclusion

The preaching man of God must take sermon criticism seriously. Prayerfully consider the criticism to the sermon to ascertain whether it is valid. If the criticism is valid and constructive, then be grateful for it and try to learn from it.

The true preacher/pastor puts the good of the church before his own comfort. He knows that he exists for the church's sake, and not the church for his sake. Faithfulness to the Lord is what matters in the end. He must cry out to the Lord to encourage him with enduring consecration for the great work he has been so graciously given.

May the servants of the Lord magnify their office by their diligent labors, by their holy lives, by their powerful preaching, and by their consecration to the greatest work of all. And may the churches "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thess. 5:13). □



A Word Fitly Spoken  
Rev. Dale Kuiper

### Respect of Persons

Although our title is composed of three words, the New Testament Greek has one word for respect of persons. This one word is really a compound: one part has the meaning "to receive," and the other part means "person." Since the person is perceived most clearly in the face, this word is often translated as "face." Hence, "to receive the face." The word "face" stands for the appearance one presents by his wealth or poverty, by his rank or low condition. To be a respecter of persons is to pay attention to outward circumstances and external conditions, to regard appearance, and to allow the outward appearance to influence us in our judgment and treatment of a man or a woman. We sense immediately that something is amiss when we do this; indeed, the Word of God throughout forbids us from being respecters of persons.

The great reason why we are forbidden this is that God Himself is no respecter of persons. God did not respect persons when He chose the church unto salvation (I Cor. 1:27-29). He taught Peter that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, "but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34). Those that seem to be somewhat (false teachers, for example) ought not to be held in admiration, for God accepts no man's person (Gal. 2:6 and Jude 16). God is no respecter of persons in judgment, but in perfect justice and impartiality He judges according to each man's work in the light of His holy law (Col. 3:25). Masters are enjoined to treat their workers justly and without threatening, knowing that their Master in heaven is no respecter of persons (Eph. 6:9). Rather than admire someone's wealth, looks, social position, or influence, we ought to admire God, who is not influenced in the slightest by such things. And why should He be? Has He not given wealth, positions, and abilities in the first place?

As God has no regard for persons, so there ought not to be found among us this tendency. One cannot believe in Christ and at the same time show this partiality. In James 2:1 the apostle warns us away from trying to hold faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons. The two are incompatible; it is not merely difficult to do so, it is impossible. James goes on to show that having respect of persons is sin (2:9), for it leads to partiality in judgment and to a despising of them who are in need. Besides, those who would impress us with power and wealth are often those who oppress the church and blaspheme the name of Jesus.

There is something in us that regards the outward appearance. We fawn over the rich and powerful, while distancing ourselves from the poor and weak. This is true of society in general, but this is also true in the church. Children, young people, and adults are guilty of this for various reasons. Perhaps we think that by cozying up to the wealthy a little bit will rub off! And by keeping away from the poor and "unsuccessful" we will avoid failure! If God were a respecter of persons, where would you be? Where would I?

## The Book of Ruth

Lesson III

# "Seeking Rest"

Ruth 2:18-3:5

## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Carl Haak

When Ruth returned home that night after her first day of gleaning and recounted all that had transpired, Naomi began to see the merciful providence of God breaking through

the dark clouds of her bitterness and poverty. As she listened to Ruth tell of the kindness of Boaz, and when she saw the material blessings Ruth brought back, Naomi blessed the Lord "who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." Especially when Ruth told her of Boaz, whom Naomi knew to be one of her closest relatives (kinsman), did she see that it was the Lord who had led

Ruth to Boaz's field. The fact that Boaz was a kinsman is especially the reason for Naomi to rejoice in the kindness of God's providence.

Why? Because she sees in Boaz a potential redeemer, one to marry Ruth and redeem Elimelech's inheritance. According to the decree of the covenant (Deut. 25:5-10), the redeemer's duty was not only to buy back the field she had been forced to

*Rev. Haak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.*



sell, but also to take Ruth as his wife. Ruth's firstborn son would then be counted as a son of Elimelech's line. In that way Elimelech's name and inheritance would be preserved among his people. The family of Elimelech, including Naomi, would be brought back to its rightful place among Israel.

Would the Lord be willing to do that? This had been more than Naomi could have dared hope for. Although the law of the kinsman clearly stipulated the duty of the nearest of kin to marry the widow and raise up children to his brother, thus preserving the brother's name and inheritance in Israel, Naomi could have little confidence this would happen. First, she knew it was a sinful day in which few took the law seriously anymore. (Already in the days of Jacob, Judah had ignored it — Gen. 38.) Second, Ruth was a Moabitess, which would provide more than ample excuse for anyone who wished to avoid his responsibilities under the law (Deut. 23:3-6).

But now there suddenly burst forth a small glimmering of promise and light. Naomi has no objection when Ruth proposed to continue gleaning in Boaz's field. Looking to the Lord in this matter did not mean Naomi remained inactive. She gives the instruction of chapter 3:1-5, with the prayer that it would be Boaz who would exercise the right of redemption.

There are two things we should note about this instruction of Naomi to Ruth. First, by seeking rest for Ruth, Naomi meant more than seeking a husband for her. What Naomi

had in mind was that Ruth have a place within the nation of Israel as a full-fledged member of the covenant. Second, it must not be thought that Naomi was encouraging Ruth to be improperly aggressive in her relationship with Boaz. The law specified that a widow of a deceased and childless man was free to press her claim for marriage to his kinsman publicly before the elders of the people (Deut. 25:7). This Naomi hesitated to have Ruth do. To press such a public demand would be tantamount to accusing him publicly of neglecting his obligations under the law of God. Although she would not understand why Boaz had as yet not done what they hoped from him, she felt sure that if he were reminded of his obligation, he would willingly do it. The course of action which she outlined to Ruth was designed to remind him privately and meekly how they felt dependent on him to preserve for them a place in Israel.

#### Memorize Ruth 2:20

"And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen."

#### Points to Ponder

1. Explain Naomi's confession: "Blessed be the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead."
  - a. What specifically occasioned this confession?
  - b. What does it mean to "bless the

Lord" (Ps. 103)? (God blesses us. What do we mean when we say, "Blessed be God"?)

c. How had God shown his kindness to the dead?

2. Naomi and Ruth decide that Ruth should continue to glean in Boaz's fields.

a. Could the poor gather enough to last through the winter? If not, what other ways could their income be supplemented?

b. Who are the "maidens" of verse 22? (Boaz's servants, or other poor?)

3. Note that Naomi speaks a prayer of blessing upon Boaz before she even knew who their benefactor was, and again when he is named. What should be our attitude toward those who help us? Do we need to know their identity? Should we? Job 29:13; 31:20.

4. What "rest" did Naomi seek for Ruth? (Is there a lesson here that encourages parents or fellow believers to aid others in finding godly spouses? Any Scriptures that speak about this?)

5. Was Naomi aware that Boaz was not the nearest kinsman?

6. Was Naomi right in having Ruth take the initiative in approaching Boaz? Isn't this more properly the man's place?

a. Is there a lack of patience shown on Naomi's part? Or are Naomi and Ruth showing faith by willingly placing themselves at Boaz's mercy?

b. Was Boaz lax in not coming forth as a kinsman?

7. Is there significance to the washing, anointing, and dressing of verse 3?

8. How is your memory work coming?!!! ☐

## I SHALL KNOW MY SAVIOR

I shall know my Savior  
When I reach that city  
With its jasper walls  
And shining streets of gold;  
When my eyes are opened  
In that world of beauty,  
His dear face will be  
The first I shall behold.

I shall know my Savior  
When He bids me enter  
To His presence, where  
My heav'nly mansion stands;  
By His voice — far sweeter  
Than the angels' music,  
By His face, and by  
His blessed wounded hands.

I shall know my Savior  
When I cross the river —  
I shall look for Him  
In heav'n first of all;  
How my heart will quiver  
With the joy of meeting Him,  
And at His feet  
In ecstasy fall.

Standard Bearer  
March 1, 1933



## Taking Heed to the Doctrine

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

# The Sower of Seed

*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

Matthew 13:3-8

*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this*

*world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

Matthew 13:18-23

Jesus in His lifetime was deeply involved in evangelism, and few passages are more crucial to an understanding of what He was about than the parable of the sower.

At that point where Jesus began to speak in parables His life had come to what appeared to be a crisis. His ministry, rather than uniting the people, as many had hoped and expected, was causing discord and division on every side. Dissension was everywhere. Some wanted nothing of what He said from the start. Others followed Him for a while only to turn away, often to become His most bitter enemies. And then there were those who never seemed to be able to decide. But nowhere does the extent of disillusionment become more apparent than in the account recorded by Matthew at the end of chapter 12: "While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever

shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (vss. 46-50). His own family, which once had urged Him to seek greater exposure (Jn. 7:2-4), now wanted Him to quit.

In reality it was inevitable, regardless of what others may have thought. When Jesus had first appeared with His mighty works and gracious rhetoric, everyone rallied around, and many thought that this was the man who would unite the nation against Rome; but such was not to be. From the beginning His ministry did not fit that pattern. Already Nicodemus, himself an experienced leader, had appeared to warn Him that He shouldn't discourage would-be followers as He had (Jn. 2:23-3:3). His Sermon on the Mount, beautifully crafted though it were, could not but offend important people in the land (Matt. 5-7); while taking up friendship with publicans and sinners hardly helped (Matt. 9:9-13). By the time He sent out His disciples it was necessary to warn them of the opposition they would meet wherever they went (Matt. 10:16-28). And then, when He began to disparage such favored gems of Jewry as Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matt. 11:20-24), it was too much. They began to plot His demise (Matt. 12:14).

It was no wonder that at that point His friends concluded He was beside Himself (Mark 3:21); and His family appeared to try to make Him cease.

Jesus, however, rather than speaking with them, went down to

Rev. Woudenberg is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, Michigan.



the sea, and, pushing off shore in a little ship, He prepared to speak to those who had followed Him. It was then, it has been suggested, that He lifted His eyes and beheld on a nearby hillside a farmer sowing seed. The sight was very ordinary. The man, as many in Israel, had a small plot of land surrounded by a beaten path. He used it for growing grain, and at the moment was carefully working back and forth, scattering seed into its every corner, while a flock of birds circled overhead ready to snatch up every kernel of grain they could. But the man labored on. He was determined that his field should be sown; and Jesus, quick of mind and sensitive as He always was to the cross-currents of life, saw it as a picture of His own.

He had come into this world, sent by the Father, with a calling. He was, during His lifetime, to preach the Gospel of the kingdom into every corner of that land; and now He was doing just that (Matt. 10:6-23). It was taking the strength of His days, just as it did the farmer's on the hill.

Persistently that man worked back and forth, intent on covering every part of his little paddock. Some seed, he knew, would never bear. The birds overhead were a testimony to that. So quickly they swooped in to snatch up every grain that hit the path. And, besides, there were portions of his field which, for reasons known only to him, he had thought better than to prepare. Hard rock underlay some, and the roots of thistles and thorns were to be found elsewhere. Seed falling on these places might sprout, but it would never produce fruit. Some would be withered by the sun, and the rest would be choked by the thorns. But the man worked on, determined to sow it all; and the fruit, when and where it came, would justify it all.

This is where Jesus saw Himself; and with His homely little story He laid it out, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow ...." Many might at first wonder; but few would forget. And countless numbers, in meditating on his picture of words through days

and years and even ages to come, would come to understand the passion of His life, His determination to have His field sown.

That field for Him was Israel; and He was committed to sow it while He yet lived. The Gospel of the kingdom must cover all of Israel before His work on earth was done. The time was short, the years few, and there was much to do. Like the sower on yonder hill, He must pass back and forth casting His seed everywhere. From this calling He could not turn back. And what He was doing was having its effect, even though this meant that an essential division within His audience was being exposed.

This latter, of course, was exactly what so many did not want. They wanted Him to moderate His rhetoric and say things which would be acceptable to all. But that He could not do. For truth and honesty's sake, and in submission to His Father's will, He must set forth the reality of the kingdom as it was, nothing else. It was this that was bringing out the real distinction among men. Some there were who wanted nothing of it and turned from it immediately. They were committed to earthly goals, and cared for nothing else. But there were the others as well. Some saw His mighty works, examined the crowd that followed Him, and decided He was the kind of man with whom they could profitably be identified, without listening to what He said. Shallow people they were, without depth; and under the rigors of godly responsibility soon they fell away. And then there were those who thought they could have it both ways. They wanted to follow Him, but they also wanted to retain the satisfactions of the world as well. For a time they appeared quite committed, but soon the attractions of this world drew them farther and farther away. It is what truth does to man; it brings out the reality of what he is.

But at the same time there were those who were different. This same word of truth which exposed those not prepared found place in those who were. Usually it was not as

dramatic; and few seemed to notice or care. But there were those in whom the Spirit had worked; and when the Word came to them it took root. Slowly and surely it always grew, and would in the end produce its fruit, thirty, sixty, and an hundredfold. This He knew; and, regardless of what others might think, in it He found His joy.

\* \* \* \* \*

And to this day it is the same.

Even as Jesus covered the land of Israel during His brief days, His last words to us were, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19, 20). As our calling it remains with us still. We are His people, His church, built on the foundation He laid (Eph. 2:19, 20); and it is for us to continue His work, spreading the Gospel everywhere. This is true of the church as an institute, sending its missionaries throughout the earth. And it is true for us as individuals, each of whom is given a place and a witness to fulfill.

But be sure, the results for us will be no different from what they were for our Lord. Many to whom we speak will not care. Others will for the moment show interest and even enthusiasm, only to turn away. And there will be those who, while professing conviction, will not let go of the world. It is what the truth does; it brings out the hardness of unregenerate hearts.

But there are always the others as well. God has prepared good soil; and no more wonderful experience is there than to be used by God to convert a "sinner from the error of his way," and to "save a soul from death" (James 5:20). It may come in unpretentious ways, ways few stop to notice; it usually does. But the words of the psalmist remain to the end, 126:6: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." □



## The Strength of Youth

Rev. Barrett Gritters

# The End Times (11) The Last Battle (II)

### Review

In the last article, I began to explain the Scriptural teaching of the battle of Armageddon, the last battle that will take place on this earth. We need to remember that this is different from the view of many, who teach that there are *two* great battles yet to come: the battle of Armageddon and the battle of Gog and Magog. Others believe that these battles are separated by a thousand years, the first taking place before Christ returns, the second after the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth, ushering in eternity. On the basis of Scripture, *we* believe that these are the same battle, which is to come shortly, and which will end in the destruction of this earth by Jesus, and the coming of eternity.

This last battle, Armageddon, is a battle of the world against itself. First, the Antichristian kingdom will oppose and exterminate the church (see Revelation 13 and Daniel 7). For the church, this will be the great tribulation. Then, at the very end, the Antichristian kingdom breaks up into two opposing powers and fights against itself. The pagan nations ("the kings of the east" of Revelation 16, and "Gog and Magog" of Revelation 20) do battle against the nations that call themselves Christian, but are actually antichristian. This is the battle of Armageddon. We may also call it the battle of Gog and Magog. It is the last battle.

Why would the united world government and church break up into two parts and fight against itself? This is an important question that will help us to understand what is happening in the world today as well as what will take place at the very end.

First, we may learn from other wars the reasons for this one. As in other wars, all kinds of natural differences come out. In this war, at first, the nations of the world will pull together because of their common hatred for God and His Christ. The world has seen many strange "bed-fellows" because of common hatred of a common foe. Think only of the "alliance" united against Iraq's Saddam Hussein only months ago—so fragile an alliance that all were sur-

prised that it stuck together ("thanks to Israel's restraint"). That is the way it will go before the last battle: a common hatred of a common foe allies odd parties. But the common hatred for Christ and their common desire to rebuild Babel's tower of humanism will soon peter out. Again, racial hatred will boil, and the hatred of God will show itself, as it always has, as hatred for each other.

Especially, though, religious differences will be outstanding. Gog and Magog are the pagan nations, idolatrous nations, non-Christian nations. But the nations of the west (the old Roman empire) are "Christian" nations. And no love is lost between them. Now the last jihad, the last "holy war," will begin in all its fury. As always, the pagan nations will gag at the smell of Christianity.

If we dig deeper, we find other causes for this last battle. Revelation 16:13 tells us that the dragon (the devil) sends forth the evil spirits to

gather all nations for the battle. This is not Satan's *intention*, of course. The last battle will be the spoiling of his great masterpiece. But the war is his fault. This is why: Satan deceived the nations to join together with the Antichrist to form one world power. Satan made the beast attractive, inviting (compelling!) everyone to bow down to the beast's image, pointing out its alluring power and riches. But the very act of the devil of waking up these nations *brings about* the last battle. For "a little while" he is successful. In the end, his house crashes down on his own head, by his own work. The pagan nations open their eyes and see the loathsome character of Antichrist.

We may be thankful when we see how this all works out.

God, finally, and not Satan, brings about the battle of Armageddon.

Especially we may be thankful when we see that God sovereignly controls all these things. God, fi-

Rev. Gritters is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michigan.



nally, and not Satan, brings about the battle of Armageddon.

When you read Ezekiel 38, the first passage to explain Gog and Magog, it is plain that Jehovah God sends them to destroy wicked Israel. Revelation 16 says that God gathers the nations to battle at Armageddon. Even though the earlier verses say that Satan and his false prophet work this work, God stands behind it all. Using them as tools in His hand, God brings about a beginning of His judgment on those that oppose Him and hate His Son.

Do not forget, this war, as all war, is God's judgment on mankind.

---

... wars are God's judgment on mankind for hating Him.

---

What is the running of the red horse in Revelation 6 if it is not the sending of war into the world by God? God brings about, ultimately, all the battles of mankind. Yes, the wars are the fault of sinful men, a result of *their* greed, *their* selfishness, *their* destructive hatred, *their* megalomania. But wars are God's judgment on mankind for hating Him. The last war will be the beginning of God's final judgment on sinful mankind.

Oh, the horror of war! But, oh, the awful horror of the last war will surpass the horror of all the others. I have heard soldiers on the news say that the battleground was hell, that the agonies were hellish. They are wrong! That is not hell! But these judgments in war certainly are a *pre-view* of the judgments in eternity. They are God's judgments.

Read through Revelation 15 and 16 and no doubt will remain that war, and this last one in particular, comes as God's judgment. Seven angels have the seven last plagues and seven vials filled with the wrath of God, ready to be poured out on the earth. The first vial is a grievous sore on those who received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The second and third turn the waters into blood. By the fourth the sun scorches men. The fifth darkens the kingdom, weakening the beast. The sixth dries

up the Euphrates, giving the kings of the east the ability to come against the camp of the saints in Jerusalem. (Not to be taken literally, this simply means that some obstacle is removed that kept the pagan nations from attacking the Christian nations. God now removes this obstacle by pouring out His vial.) God brings about this last battle!

God's judgment comes on the antichristian nations, on the beast and his prophet, on all those who blubbed praise to the beast and took his mark. God's judgment comes on all those who perpetrated the terrible crimes against God's "seven thousand" elect during the rule of the beast.

But this will also be God's judgment on the heathen Gog and Magog. In the Old Testament, because the pagan nations came up against the city of God, God judged them for their wicked intent. So now, even though the pagan nations are attacking the antichristian nations, their motive is hatred for Jehovah and Christ His Son. God judges them for this in the last battle.

\*\*\*\*\*

Terrifying? If you said that this does not bring fear to your heart, you would be no different from Lloyd Alexander's lovable (but dishonest) Fleudder Flam, Taran's yellow-haired friend whose little harp would break a string every time he "stretched the facts." When exposed in his lying boast that he was fearless in his battle with the Horned King, he finally admitted, "Green, absolutely green! Never so scared in my life!" Well, God's people naturally fear the last battle.

But God gives us reason to have hope, to be encouraged. He does that by the very *name* of the battle. Armageddon means "the hill of Megiddo." In the Old Testament, this was a hill where many battles were fought, where Deborah and Barak fought and defeated the Canaanites, led by Jabin and Sisera. The meaning of this is not that there will be another battle over there on the hill in the countryside of Israel, but that God again will arise to

fight for His people and destroy His enemies, just as He did time and again for Old Testament Israel.

In the middle of the last battle, when the wicked are destroying themselves, and the few remaining saints of God are hiding in fear, the Lord will descend with a shout, destroy the wicked, and save His church.

Young people, members of the church in the world, doesn't this show us our calling? Do not join with the world. Its power and work are deceitful and temporary. The world is not able to bring about the peace and prosperity that it promises. The "new world order" will be man's work and man's accomplishment. Based on man's wisdom, it will crumble.

Young people, be not part of the false church, or of any church that shows itself to be worldly in its life and worldly in its goals. This institution, too, will perish, destroyed by the judgment of God.

Be not deceived by the allure of the power and wisdom and greatness of the world and false church. The world calls out with its siren song, "Join with us where there is power! It is foolish to join yourself with the weak, insignificant church. There is no future for it, no hope in it. There is hope for you in the world."

In the end, all of us will see where there is hope, where there is power, what lasts.

In the kingdom of God, built on the foundation of the blood of Jesus, established in the righteousness of God—*there is hope; there is power; that lasts!*

#### Discussion suggestions

1. How can we identify the false church so as to keep ourselves from it?
2. What does President Bush mean when he speaks so often, lately, of the "new world order" that he envisions?
3. What must take place before this last battle can take place? Does this mean that we have reason to be lazy in our waiting for Jesus?

Why not? □



---

# Book Review

---

**The Doctrine of Scripture**, by Homer C. Hoeksema. Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1990. 93pp., \$6.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. R. Decker.]

The contents of this little volume were prepared by Prof. Hoeksema for an elective class in the Protestant Reformed Seminary. The class was intended to introduce the students to "Contemporary Views of Scripture." The material found in this book was really an introduction, a positive statement of the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Prof. Hoeksema was taken to glory before he had opportunity to complete the work.

Hoeksema answers this question: "What has been historically, and what is now, the Reformed and confessional view of Scripture?" It is Hoeksema's contention that this question must first be answered, before any critical analysis of contemporary views of Scripture can be properly done.

The reader will find in this book a treatment of the doctrine of Scripture as taught in the Reformed Creeds. He will also find detailed treatment of "Scripture's Self-Testimony." In two very important chapters (5 & 6) Hoeksema argues convincingly that there is no "human factor" or "element" in the production of Holy Scrip-

ture. The book concludes with a comprehensive statement on the concept "Organic Inspiration."

We are convinced that the key doctrine under attack in our day is the doctrine of Holy Scripture itself. For this reason the book is must reading for seminarians, officebearers, Christian school teachers, and all believers. It will provide the Reformed believer with the necessary, foundational understanding of this crucial truth. Thus the believer will be enabled to evaluate the false views of Scripture so prevalent in our day. ■

---

# Report of Classis West

---

Classis West met on Wednesday, March 6, 1991, in Randolph, Wisconsin. Classis met in two sessions and finished its business at about 4:00 Wednesday afternoon. Rev. S. Houck served as President of Classis and Rev. R. Hanks as Clerk.

Most of the business conducted by Classis was routine. Classical appointments were scheduled for Hope PRC of Isabel, SD and for the Randolph, WI PRC. Eight subsidy requests totaling \$146,152.00 were approved for 1991 and 1992 and will be forwarded to Synod, 1991 for its approval. The Lynden, Washington, congregation was given permission to request building fund collections from the churches in Classis West

and to seek through Synod permission for the same in Classis East.

Various elections were also conducted. Rev. R. Dykstra was re-appointed to the Classical Committee, Rev. C. Terpstra was elected as delegate *ad examina*, and Revs. D. Kuiper and R. Moore as Church Visitors. The ministers chosen as delegates to Synod, 1991, were Revs. R. Cammenga, R. Dykstra, R. Moore, and R. VanOverloop. Elder delegates chosen were Messrs. E. Gritters, L. Regnerus, E. Stouwie, and E. VanEgdom.

Classis also decided to set the dates and meeting places for the next two meetings of Classis at the spring session of Classis in order to assist

the church visitors in their work. Accordingly, the next two meetings of Classis West are scheduled for September 18, 1991, in Edgerton, Minnesota, and March 4, 1992 in Doon, Iowa. □

Rev. R. Hanks  
Stated Clerk

Introductory subscription to the  
*Standard Bearer*  
is still half price!

Do your friends a favor;  
let them know!



---

# News from Our Churches

---

*Mr. Benjamin Wigger*

## Evangelism Activities

The Council of the South Holland, IL PRC approved their Evangelism Committee's recommendation that the congregation continue their work in Ft. Wayne, IN, with a review of the work in a year. Also, at the request of Sovereign Redeemer Fellowship (SRF) in Boise, ID, the Council approved sending them pulpit supply for two Sundays a month for the next six months beginning in March. South Holland will be using six pastors from Classis West, including their own. To assist SRF in the payment of transportation costs, it was determined to use \$2,500.00 from South Holland's Mission Fund.

From an Evangelism Committee News Letter published by Hope PRC of Redlands, CA, we learn that Redlands continues to maintain contact by telephone with the brethren in the Santa Cruz area. Presently, Redlands cannot come up with a way to provide regular preaching services for them even though they would like this very much.

Redlands Evangelism Committee also made plans to sponsor a series of four messages on the sayings of the cross beginning on March 10 and concluding on Good Friday, March 29. This series of messages by Pastor den Hartog were advertised in the local papers, through letters of invitation to those on their permanent mailing list, by handbills, and by word of mouth.

Members of West-Michigan PRCs were invited to attend an infor-

mal Saturday morning meeting on March 2, sponsored by the Evangelism Society of the Byron Center, MI PRC. This meeting was held to discuss coordinating projects and exchanging ideas regarding evangelism work of our churches for the coming year.

## Congregational Highlights

The Jacoby Travel Agency of Loveland, CO has worked out a fundraiser with the Young People's Society of the Loveland, CO PRC. Jacoby will rebate 1% of all ticket sales (airplane tickets, cruise tickets, etc.) to the Young People's Society for all who mention the Loveland PRC when making travel arrangement through them.

The Choral Society of the Doon, IA PRC presented an early spring program on February 24.

The Reformed Fellowship of our South Holland, IL PRC moved their regular meeting up for a timely speech on a Reformed perspective of the Middle East by Rev. Bassam Madany, director of the Arabic radio ministry of the "Back to God Hour." He spoke on Sunday evening, February 17, at the PR Christian school in South Holland.

And, finally, before we mention the latest ministerial calls, we want to send a word of encouragement to Rev. John Heys, one of our emeritus ministers, who suffered a serious heart attack on March 2. Rev. Heys has returned home from the hospital after spending about two weeks there. Presently he continues to make a slow but steady recovery.

## Ministerial Calls

Rev. S. Key was considering two calls: one from our Hudsonville, MI PRC to serve as missionary to Larne, Northern Ireland, and one from our Randolph, WI PRC to serve as their

pastor. Rev. Key declined the former but accepted the latter.

Rev. C. Haak declined the call he was considering from First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, to serve as missionary to the island of Jamaica.

And, finally, our congregation in Isabel, SD formed a new trio consisting of the Revs. B. Gritters, R. Cammenga, and R. Hanko. They were to call from that trio on Easter Sunday. □

---

## ATTENTION STUDENTS!

The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee is taking applications for scholarships to be awarded to future Protestant Reformed ministers and teachers for the 1991-1992 school year. Each applicant must also submit an essay of at least three hundred words, answering this question: "In the light of Jeremiah 6:13-17, with all the false prophets around us saying 'peace, peace when there is no peace,' how should the old paths spoken of here be preached and taught?" For an application, contact:

Jim Holstege

1459 Spaulding S.E.

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

The application, accompanied by the essay, must be returned by June 1, 1991.

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Hudsonville PRC expresses sympathy to former and present officebearers Joel Zandstra and Vern Haveman and their families in the recent death of

**MR. GEORGE OPHOFF.**

Rev. G. VanBaren, President  
P. Hoekstra, clerk

---

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



# WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 29, 1991, the Lord will-  
ing, our parents and grandparents

**MR. and MRS. CASE VELDMAN**,  
will celebrate their 50th wedding anni-  
versary. We thank our covenant God  
for the many years they have shared  
together in His grace and for the love,  
guidance, and instruction they have  
given us. It is our prayer that the  
blessing of the Lord may rest upon  
them as they continue their life jour-  
ney.

"From everlasting to everlasting  
the Lord's love is with those who fear  
Him, and His righteousness with their  
children's children" (Psalm 103:17).  
Henry and Barbara Veldman

Rick, Dave and Sue, Kristen  
Peter and Fran Feenstra

Tom and Cherie, Michael, Mark  
James and Rita Admiraal

Julie, Eric, Beth, Melanie, Philip,  
Nathan, Daniel

Jan and Marianne VanderLeest  
Steve and Pam, Robert, Rebecca,  
Melissa

Jack and Elma Veldman

Tony, Jonathan, Christopher

Roger and Anne Veldman

Ruth Ann, Geoffrey, Randall, David  
3 great-grandchildren

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

# NOTICE!!

Hope Christian School of Red-  
lands needs a teacher for the coming  
school year. For information, please  
contact Mr. Ed Karsemeyer at the  
school, (714) 793-4584, or Mr. Bill  
Feenstra, (714) 793-3597.

# WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1991, the Lord will-  
ing, our dear parents and grandpar-  
ents

**RAYMOND and TENA BRUINSMA**  
will celebrate their 45th wedding anni-  
versary. We are thankful to our heav-  
enly Father for giving us God-fearing

336 / Standard Bearer / April 15, 1991

parents and for the Christian love and  
instruction we have received from them  
in these many years. It is our prayer  
and hope that the Lord will continue to  
keep and bless them in the years that  
He may give them.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from  
everlasting to everlasting upon them  
that fear him, and his righteousness  
unto children's children; to such as  
keep his covenant and to those that  
remember his commandments to do  
them" (Psalm 103:17, 18).

Jim and Kathy Bruinsma

Kristen, Ryan, Eric

Jim and Lois Rau

Carol, Cheryl, Kim, Rodney

Jerry and Martha Bruinsma

Karen Bruinsma

South Holland, Illinois

# RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Aid Society of the  
First Protestant Reformed Church  
(Grand Rapids, MI) mourns the loss of  
one of her faithful members,

**MRS. HENRIETTA HARKEMA**  
who was called "Home" on March 11,  
1991.

We know from her testimony that  
she loved the Lord and may we, and  
her loved ones, be assured that she is  
now rejoicing with the saints in glory.

Mrs. George DeVries, President  
Mrs. Sidney DeYoung, Secretary

# RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of the Hope  
PRC of Grand Rapids, MI expresses  
its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs.  
Mart Daling and family in the death of  
their father and grandfather,

**MR. JIM DALING.**

"For this God is our God forever  
and ever; He will be our guide even  
unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

Pete Petroelje, President  
Marv Mastbergen, Secretary

# WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 5, 1991, our parents  
and grandparents,

**MR. and MRS. VERN KLAMER**  
celebrated their 35th wedding anni-  
versary.

It is our prayer that our faithful  
God will continue to guide them and  
bless them in the future together.

"Mark ye well her bulwarks,  
consider her palaces; that ye may tell  
it to the generation following. For this  
God is our God forever and ever: he  
will be our guide even unto death"  
(Psalm 48:13, 14).

Tom and Vicky VanOverloop

Brandon, Heidi, Heather, Hillary

Rev. Chuck and Verna Terpstra

Corey, Amber, Kimmi, Thad, Kyle

John and Valerie VanBaren

Jennifer, Jordan, Jill, Jared

Bruce and Jo Klammer

Alyssa, Jaycen

Dave and Vonda Jessup

Nathan

Steve and Brenda Langerak

Daniel

Brent Klammer

Hope, Walker, MI

# IN MEMORIAM

In memory of

**KYLE RICHARD FLIKKEMA**

Rev. and Mrs. R. Flikkema wish to  
thank the churches, pastors, and people  
who have remembered Kyle and his  
family during the times he was in the  
hospital and especially at the time of  
his death. We are so grateful for the  
prayers, cards, and gifts that were  
given. How precious to us is the  
communion of saints we have experi-  
enced. Above all we give thanks to  
God, who in His covenant faithfulness  
gave us Kyle and united us together in  
the body of Christ. We commend him  
and us to His eternal care and keep-  
ing.

Rev. and Mrs. R. Flikkema  
and family

Wyckoff, New Jersey