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Cross bearing

Rev. Vernon Ibe

The covenant and Dordt Head IV: Herman Hoeksema on faith and conditions

Prof. Russell Dykstra

Christian stewardship

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

The covenant of God and our mission to the world

Rev. Daniel Holstege

Entitlement

Rev. Ryan Barnhill



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Meditation

Rev. Ibe is the pastor of the Berean PRC in the Philippines

Cross bearing

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:27

Jesus, the Christ of the triune God, the Savior and Lord of the church, left His bride and body with what to expect in this world as she takes heed to her Master's call to follow him, namely, *suffering*. At one point, Jesus told His disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). We understand that the *cross* mentioned above is not the same wooden cross used in Jesus' crucifixion. Nor does it refer to the one atoning sacrifice of Christ made at Calvary. Jesus is not telling us that whosoever does not *pay for his sin and satisfy God's justice...cannot be My disciple*. Jesus did that, and we have no part in it whatsoever. In that sense, Christ's death on the cross can never be repeated, “for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:27). But the cross in the words of Jesus here mean, *suffering*. It points to the fact that suffering (*cross bearing*) is inevitable for God's people who desire not only to follow Christ in this life but more so in living out one's faith that Jesus is “...the way, the truth, and the life: (that) no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). In following Christ, one must be ready “to take up his cross” (to bear the cross of Christ), that is, he must be willing and ready to *suffer* for Him, and with Him, for His sake!

This is exactly what Jesus clearly testified of to all His followers. In pursuing Christ, one must understand that cross bearing is an *inescapable reality* in the life of every disciple of His!

Therefore, Jesus confronted the multitude that went with Him that they must count the cost first. And He went on to explain to them what it means to follow Him, using the analogy of building a tower (14:28). Christianity is like building a huge tower. It is very costly. One must reckon to himself that once he has made that confession of faith, or once a candidate for the ministry of the gospel has been ordained, he is also making a pronouncement of his death to self! He is prepared to be hated by his own household, and thus willing to

sever his tie with them for the sake of following Christ. A young man or a young woman marries in the Lord! And if married, they stay married and they face together every difficulty God may in His sovereign pleasure bring upon them.

Jesus goes on to say that Christianity is also like a king going to a war (14:31). Following Christ is like a gigantic war campaign against the enemies of the cross of Christ! It is a war against the Devil and his hosts. It is a war against the world of darkness. It is a war against the flesh, and in that sense, war against yourself! You will have to wage war in your mind, heart, and soul if it gets to the point of leaving father and mother, or forsaking wife and or husband, of turning away from your children and brothers and sisters in the flesh with resentment and indignation for Christ's sake! Of course, we do not hate them in the absolute sense of the word, but as far as they are the enemies of Christ, we hate them with a holy indignation, hoping that they turn from sin and trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is in that sense that we show our love for them. We love them and, therefore, we pray for their salvation. We ask God daily and continually to look upon them in His mercy in Christ. But the point of the matter is not them but you! You who are a member of His body, you are called to bear the cross of Christ for God's glory and for Jesus' sake.

The same truth is expressed by Paul to Timothy when he said that indeed, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). The word “shall” is vital in understanding the place of suffering in the lives of God's people on earth. It means first of all, that in the *future* we will experience persecution. But in the second place, and more importantly, it means *certainty*. It is certain those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, tribulations, heavy burdens, unbearable afflictions and, at times, even martyrdom.

This is also what we discover in the experience of the saints to whom Peter writes his first general epistle. They were in the midst of suffering. They were enduring many trials of various kinds. They suffered for being believ-

ers in Jesus Christ. They were mocked for their witness of Jesus as the Lord and Savior of God's people. They were maligned, spoken evil of, and ill treated by the enemies of the gospel of Christ. They were astonished to experience pain and misery in their pursuit of holiness. Instead of drawing people closer to Christ as they lived out God's gift of faith, believers found the people of the world becoming more hostile against them. And though they answered every man that asked for a reason of the hope that was in them "with meekness and fear," still, the unbelievers found fault with them and labeled them even as "evil doers" (3:15-16).

Think of the saints in the Old Testament who experienced persecutions and great trials. Hebrews 11 records the difficult times in the lives of God's people as some of them, "...had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented...they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:36-38).

And what of the tribulations of our forefathers before and during the time of the Reformation movement of Martin Luther and John Calvin? And likewise, the great testing of the faith of the saints today as we grapple with the abounding apostasy in the whole of Christendom, the growing coldness and indifference within the churches all over the world. We suffer as we hear the news of the rapid growth of immorality in every fiber of our society. There are Christian schools that have already succumbed to the pressure of the world, and are thus fashioning the minds of the children and the young people according to the philosophy of the unbelieving world. For some saints, bearing the cross means caring for their loved ones with debilitating illness. Some parents' cross is dealing with rebellious teenagers, while for other saints it may be an unbelieving spouse. Some of the brethren and sisters in the Lord might be struggling with utter poverty. And the list goes on and on.

Perhaps you might be wondering, *why* do we need to go through such difficulty in following our Lord Jesus Christ in this life? The answer lies in the word "disciple." We will experience pain and misery in this life precisely because we belong to Christ, because we are His disciples! The idea of a disciple here is that one associates himself with Jesus. In other words, not a mere follower with no attachment whatsoever but a disciple, one who *binds* himself closely to Jesus—to the extent that he shares all of Jesus' life. Hence, he desires nothing but to gain Christ, even if it means suffering to death! The bearing of the cross of Christ is a necessary

part of being in the body of Christ. Christ in me, and I in Him. I share not only in His glory but also in His sufferings because I am a part of Him. This is true of all the saints then, today, and tomorrow, and therefore we bear the cross with and for Christ! Peter explained this as well in his letter that it is the will of God for us as believers in Christ (or disciples of Christ) to suffer for His sake. "For even hereunto were ye called..." (2:21). We understand this to mean that God called us not only "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (2:9b), and not only "unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (5:10a), but also to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (4:13). In other words, as stated by Paul in Philippians 1:29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

This is a hard doctrine for many people today. The Reformed perspective of bearing the cross for Christ's sake in this life is for many too narrow and negative. The churches that teach this doctrine are endangered! It is only by the sovereign grace of God that you can find one here and there that faithfully and boldly preaches this doctrine. Most churches in our generation teach exactly the opposite. These churches proclaim a pseudo-gospel. They proclaim a Christianity that has a freedom from troubles, persecution, affliction, trials, and great difficulties. Nothing out there but joy and peace and prosperity. That's a lie! Therefore, it is not from God but from the Devil himself.

But is it really *possible* for us to bear the cross of Christ and deny ourselves and follow Him? Who would want to suffer anyway? Who would raise their hands to volunteer to bear the cross for Christ's sake even for just a minute or two? We know the answer, don't we? None will. None will ever do such. For by nature we are all inclined to hate God and His Christ! In and of ourselves, we *cannot*, that is, we do not have the ability or power to deny self, bear the cross of Christ, and follow Him. The apostles of Christ, the prophets of old, our forefathers in the faith, all of the saints who lived and are still living were and are efficaciously called by God unto Himself through His gift of faith alone in Christ! It is only the power of the Holy Spirit, who has begotten us unto the lively hope in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, that can cause us to bear the cross of Christ. He must work in us and through us, for otherwise we would even detest to be labeled followers of Christ! Followers of Christ we are. We bear His cross daily and continually, but only because He is in us and by His power we are able to endure the pain and sorrow of suffering for His sake.

Needless to say, we will suffer as long as we live. Nevertheless, we do so with great joy and delight! Because

we know the *end* for which God ordained our suffering in this life. Yes, in faith and with that confession, we “greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:6-7). Our loved ones with debilitating illness might not recover and be healed, but may die. A rebellious teenager might never come home again. You might not be delivered from poverty

all your life. Yet, we know and are assured, that God purposed all these things in order to fashion us in the image and likeness of Christ more and more. And that even in our afflictions and cross bearing, God is magnified and Christ is exalted!

Therefore, do not dwell on what you are going through right now, no matter how painful and aggravating the circumstance is, but by faith “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Christ” (I Pet. 1:13b). Be of good cheer, for Christ has overcome the world!



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The covenant and Dordt (12)

Head IV: Herman Hoeksema on faith and conditions

In the last editorial on the Canons’ explanation of faith in Head IV, we called attention to the fact that faith is an instrument that embraces and appropriates Christ and His benefits. This faith, however, it not a condition that man can or must fulfill in order to be saved. This is evident, first, from the fact that faith flows out of election. Second, faith, even the act of believing, is the work of God in the elect. To call a work of God in His people a condition that they must fulfill is wrong on the face of it. And most important, faith is not a condition unto salvation because it is part of God’s saving work.

We concluded with a quotation from Herman Hoeksema (pastor of First PRC in Grand Rapids and seminary professor) in which he pointed out a better way to express the relation between faith and the blessings of salvation. He wrote:

But let me suggest that instead of the Pelagian term “condition” we use the term “in the way of.”

We are saved in the way of faith, in the way of sanctification, in the way of perseverance unto the end.

This term is capable of maintaining both: the absolute sovereignty of God in the work of salvation and the responsibility of man.¹

This quotation is found in an eleven-part series entitled “As to Conditions” written by Herman Hoeksema in 1949 and 1950. It was written in the heat of the controversy over conditions in the Protestant Reformed Churches that had been prompted by the conditional theology of Klaas Schilder. Andrew Petter, a minister in the PRC, was writing a lengthy series of articles defending the legitimacy of “conditions” in the other major Protestant Reformed paper, *Concordia*. Hoeksema did not intend to answer all that Petter wrote because others (George M. Ophoff and Herman Veldman) were doing that in the pages of the *Standard Bearer*. Nonetheless, Hoeksema saw the need to set forth some clarity on the question of conditions in the covenant. He focused on the place of faith. All these articles demonstrate, especially from the Reformed confessions, that faith is not a condition.

It was in that context that he asked (in installment 5):

But, you say, how then about the responsibility of man? Do we not need the term *condition* to denote that man is a responsible creature? Do we not make man “a stock and block” by laying all emphasis on the truth of election and sovereign grace?

Then he followed that with the point about speaking of “in the way of” instead of using the term “condi-

¹ “As to Conditions [5],” *Standard Bearer*, December 15, 1949, (Vol. 26, No. 6), 125.

tion.” But he promised to return to the matter of man’s activity and his responsibility.

In this editorial we intend to quote at length from this series of HH. I encourage readers to read all eleven articles, which are available online (prca.org). I hope that you do for a couple reasons. First and most important is the spiritual profit. The articles are profitable for one to grow in understanding the confessions’ teaching on faith. Second, one can see how Hoeksema dealt with a fellow minister in the PRC who was writing something with which Hoeksema completely disagreed. There are people who believe that the *Standard Bearer* is supposed to be a place where writers who disagree with other writers should rip and tear into each other. *That*, some allege, is the history of the *SB*. That is false. Reading these articles of Hoeksema will go a long way in showing how members and ministers in the PRC ought to speak to and about each other in their disagreements.

But our interest now is not the tone, but the content of HH’s series.

First, we quote Hoeksema as he responds to Andrew Petter on a particular assertion that Petter made, namely, that Hoeksema had changed his views on faith as a condition. To disprove this, HH quoted from his dogmatics notes in Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) that he had taught, he writes, twenty years before. The section he quotes treats the subject of justification. Let us “listen in” on his instruction.²

To be rejected are the following modes of representation:

a) As if faith is the ground of our justification. There is in faith even considered as a work no merit before God. The ground is only the obedience of Christ.

b) As if faith were a condition on which God justifies us. There are no conditions on our part in the covenant of God. All the benefits of grace are bestowed upon us absolutely unconditionally. Never may the sentence, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved” be presented as condition and promise. Faith itself is an act of God and a benefit of grace bestowed upon us.

c) As if faith were the means on our part whereby we can accept Christ, the hand whereby we can take hold of Him, or the taking hold of Him itself by means of that hand. This presentation is principally Remonstrant.

The correct presentation is the following:

a) Faith is the instrument of God in as far as it is the bond that unites us with Christ. All our righteousness is in Christ Jesus. As long as we are not grafted into Him

by a true faith we are of and out of ourselves children of wrath. Through faith, however, God unites us with Christ and declares us free from sin. For that reason the Word of God uses the preposition *dia* [through] with the genitive of *pistis* [faith] to express this. And only in this way can we understand that God imputes the faith of Abraham for righteousness.

b) Faith is also instrument on the part of God in as far as He brings us through faith to the consciousness of our justification, and speaks to us of peace *in foro conscientiae* [in the forum of the conscience].

c) And on our part faith becomes means in as far as we through the act of faith accept and appropriate unto ourselves the righteousness of God in Christ. For that reason the Word of God uses in this connection also the preposition *ek* [out of] with the genitive of Christ.³ Rom. 5:1: “We therefore being justified out of faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I consider this instruction to be very helpful in that it shows clearly the importance of faith and how God uses it. It also teaches the proper place of faith as an activity in the believer. But in none of the ways that faith is used is it correct to speak of faith as a condition.

Later in the series (9), HH returns to the idea of man’s responsibility, and refers to the expression “in the way of.” He writes:⁴

Does this mean, then, that man in the work of salvation is “a stock and a block”? By no means. He is and remains a responsible, rational, moral creature. And in the work of salvation God never violates his rational, moral nature. Rather must we say that through the work of grace man becomes responsible in the highest sense of the word. Not, indeed, responsible for what God does, but freely responsible for the new obedience unto which he is called. Just because God works within him to will and to do of His good pleasure, he heeds the admonition to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Phil. 2:12, 13. Just because he has the glorious promises of God that He will dwell in them and walk in them and will be their God and they shall be His people, they cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. 7:1. God regenerates them, and they live. God calls them, and they come. God gives them faith, and they believe. God justifies them, and they are righteous. God sanctifies them, and they walk in a new and holy life. God preserves them, and they persevere even unto the end. And all this work of God is without condition. That is the relation between the work of God and our work, as it is expressed in Art. 12 of Canons III, IV, the

2 “As to Conditions [6],” *Standard Bearer*, February 1, 1950, (Vol. 26, No. 9), 196.

3 It seems that Hoeksema intended to write here “faith” rather than “Christ,” for he next quotes Romans 5:1 where the construction is the preposition *ek* [out of] with the genitive of faith.

4 “As to Conditions [9],” *Standard Bearer*, April 15, 1950, (Vol. 26, No.14), 316.

end of which we quote once more: “Whereupon the will thus renewed, is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active. Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received.” By faith, through faith, and in the way of faith we are saved, but never on condition of faith.

Key to the proper understanding of the relation between God’s activity and the activity of man is that God’s activity is always first and sovereign. Man lives out of what God does in him. And though the Scriptures make it plain that God commands certain activities—Believe! Be ye holy! Love the brethren!—these are never conditions, for God sovereignly works faith,

sanctification, and love in the regenerated elect. Rather, these commands are God’s powerful word coming to the regenerated child of God, calling the work of God in that person into activity.

Returning to the point of the current editorial and applying this to the doctrine of the covenant, there is no place for conditions for man to perform in a Reformed theology of the covenant. Is man (also the baptized child) responsible? Absolutely, but not for what only God does, and can do. He is called to live out of God’s work. He is saved in the way of faith. God gives faith, and the child believes.

Next, D.V., we turn to Head V, the perseverance of the saints.



Search the Scriptures

Rev. Thomas Miersma, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

The days of our years

Ecclesiastes 11:7, 8

Turning from our calling to labor under God’s providence in the preceding verses, the text turns to a similar subject but from a more subjective viewpoint. We are to sow our seed and labor, not knowing what shall prosper in God’s providence. We labor under the sun in a transitory world. Our works and labors, as has been shown over the course of the book, do not abide. God gives us in our labor seasons of light and joy in this present life when our works prosper. Hence, the point is raised:

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun (Eccl. 11:7).

The Word of God draws on our natural response to a bright and beautiful day. It is a delight; we feel energized. The tasks of the day do not seem burdensome. Going forth to sow in the morning, the light of the day seems to charge the day with promise and our hands are ready to work. As the text says, “Truly the light is sweet.” We, as it were, drink in the sweetness of the light.

God created it to be so. When God saw all that He had made, it was very good in the beginning and the mark of that goodness as a work of God is still impressed upon the creation.

“...and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.”

The light brings a certain joy to the eyes; it dispels the dark of the night, the gray and the gloom. It warms the earth and the beauty of the creation unfolds before our eyes.

Yet in the figure is more than the sensation of light, for the text has a figurative idea underlying the idea of the light. The description is not just for the moment, leading not only to a day, a month, or a year, but also to “many years” in the next verse. There are phases of life when things go well, when the sun shines upon our labor and activity, when life is rich and fruitful. This is especially the case when we are young and the possibilities of life stand unfolding before us. For Solomon would turn our attention in the following verses particularly to the time of youth in contrast with the time of old age.

Beholding the sun and enjoying the privilege of living under the sun, particularly when our strength is full and the power and activity of life given us is strong within us, is, after all, a good gift of God. For a child of God, that is indeed a blessing when he walks in the way of the fear of God and remembers his Creator in his youth.

The fool, however, takes such times in his days under

the sun as if they were his due, holding on to them as if he owned them, or as if they were under his power. God is not in all his thoughts. To the fool these good gifts of God work his condemnation. For he receives them in the service of sin and folly and is unthankful for them.

Therefore, setting that figure before us the text continues:

But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity (Eccl. 11:8).

The text moves from the light of the day to the years of life. The portion of each one is not the same in this life, but to some are given many years, and the text envisions one who seemingly rejoices in them all. Whether he be a believer or a fool is not on the foreground directly, rather it is what he considers and holds in mind. The question is what he keeps in remembrance in his life in the passing of the years, what he holds in the light of the sun, and on what is his rejoicing is founded.

How so? The purpose is not to introduce a despondent or morbid note, to be a gloomy voice in the light of the day. Rather, it calls us to a certain spiritual sobriety and discernment. The fool will not listen, for when dark days come he is bitter; his joy in himself is marred. His life is of the earth and tied to this world. Its pleasures and treasures are his only possession. He strives with the hand of God when the sun is veiled.

We need a spiritual sobriety that puts the pleasant time in perspective. That spiritual sobriety consists in a true understanding brought about exactly in the way of remembering the days of darkness. The days of darkness belong to the trials and troubles of this life. They are the days when the good in life seems to depart and we have trial and sorrow, when it seems as if all is dark and the way full of burdens that are heavy to bear. To them belong also times of weakness and care.

These things too come from the hand of God and under His providence. The Word of God repeatedly addresses our heavenly Father's purpose in them for our comfort in chastening, trial, and affliction. Here what is on the foreground is the fact that it is God who sends them as days of darkness in our life. And their purpose is to work a sober assessment of the meaning of our life under the sun. The remembrance of them is to give us

to see the days of light and rejoicing under the sun as good gifts of God and work a thankfulness for them.

But they also serve to draw us away from this present life under the sun. They lead us to set our priorities aright. For this present life is not where our hope lies nor where our abiding treasure is to be found. That treasure belongs to the things that are above, to our eternal salvation and communion with God. To learn daily to seek the things that are above, to labor in the joy of this present life, yet with an eye to its eternal end and where our true hope is to be found, is the purpose of this remembrance. Then we can also rejoice in the midst of affliction and trial, for we have a light that is beyond the sun of this world and earthly days. It is a light that does not fade away.

For one who walks as a sojourner in this life, seeking his life out of himself in God, there is a meaning and joy in this present life. This is true when the sun shines, but also in the days of darkness the believer finds there is consolation and light from above in the presence of God's sustaining care.

That remembrance leads us to the conclusion set before us more than once in Ecclesiastes and found here again: "all that cometh is vanity." Both days of light and days of darkness, days of rejoicing and days when, in an earthly sense, rejoicing is difficult, "all that cometh is vanity." They are passing things of this life under the

sun; they do not abide. The very transitory character of the days of our life makes it vanity, it gives to life under the sun a certain emptiness. That emptiness lies in a world subjected to vanity because of sin. The days pass, the years flee away. If our hope is only in this life, we have nothing that endures, and we ourselves pass away.

For one who walks as a sojourner in this life, seeking his life out of himself in God, there is a meaning and joy in this present life. This is true when the sun shines, but also in the days of darkness the believer finds there is consolation and light from above in the presence of God's sustaining care. All that cometh under the sun is indeed vanity. But what God has wrought in His saving work in Christ alone answers that reality of the present vanity under the sun. The light of the sun points to it. The days of darkness press upon us the need for that light of God's Son and His salvation.

In the midst of the truth that "all that cometh is vanity," we have hope. But it is not of this world under the sun but from God who is above and works all things for the glory of His own name.



Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Revelation, inspiration, and infallibility (28) Discrepancies and apparent contradictions

Previous article in this series: October 1, 2019, p. 15.

Benefits of written communication

God has chosen to reveal Himself to men through written language. Even apart from the miracle of divine inspiration, written language is an amazing form of communication. To be sure, throughout history it has often been subverted into the service of the lie, from false advertising to Nazi propaganda to outright denial of the truths of the Word of God. But at the same time, it is unparalleled as a means of setting forth the truth.

Of all possible forms of communication, the written word is one of the most reliable. How often in our everyday conversations do we not insist, “If you want me to remember it, write it down. Put it black on white.” If you are forced to stop while driving in order to get directions to your destination (something we men are always inclined to do, of course), especially if the directions involve several twists and turns, it is much better to write them down than to rely on memory. If a housewife asks a friend for the recipe of the delicious meal or dessert that her friend has served up, she will want the recipe in writing, rather than to rely on her memory of the ingredients, the amount of each ingredient, and the baking instructions. Having something in writing is always preferable.

Written language is one of the best ways to communicate our thoughts, desires, ideas, plans, and purposes to others. By comparison, other forms of communication are often inadequate to convey fully what is in our minds and hearts. Written communication is far more accurate than drawing pictures. We often say that a picture is worth a thousand words. And, from a certain point of view, there is truth in that statement. But often it takes more than a thousand words accurately to reflect the meaning of a picture. People who look at the same painting often see quite different things in the painting. And even then, without the input of the artist, we can never be sure that we have accurately understood what he intended to convey by that which

he has drawn, sketched, sculpted, or painted. This is one of the reasons on account of which the Heidelberg Catechism in Q&A 98 teaches that God disapproves of His people being taught by “dumb images,” as is the practice of Roman Catholicism. In contrast to every art form, the written word is a far more complete, detailed, and accurate means of communication.

That which is written is also much more enduring than the spoken word. How often does it not happen that an hour or two after someone has told us something, we wonder whether we are able accurately to recall what was said. “If only I had written it down,” we chide ourselves. If we had written it down, we would have a record of what they said, which we could then consult, often much later—long after they have said it. Especially difficult is passing down from one generation to the next what someone of a former generation is reported to have said. Often aspects of “oral tradition” are lost with the passing of time and generations. Or it happens that things are added that were not part of what was originally said. But a written record preserves much more accurately for future generations information that otherwise might be lost or mistakenly recalled. Our memories are not infallible, as we all too often discover.

Students may try this exercise at school, with the permission of their teacher, of course. It will demonstrate the weaknesses connected to the spoken word as it is passed from one human being to another. Start at one end of your classroom by whispering something into the ear of the student next to you. Begin with the phrase, “Not everything that barks is a dog, and not everything that roars is a lion.” By the time the phrase reaches the last student in the classroom, have that student say aloud what was whispered into their ear. It is quite likely that it will not be, “Not everything that barks is a dog, and not everything that roars is a lion.” Sometimes what the last person hears is not even close

to the original saying. Although the spoken word is an especially powerful means of communication, it cannot preserve nearly as accurately or as permanently that which is written.

Written communication is also often easier to understand than the spoken word. Frequently the accent of the speaker, the fact that he does not clearly enunciate his words, or the fact that she tends to speak very softly is an obstacle to the clear understanding of what is said. And then there is the challenge—the older we become the greater the challenge—to remember what we heard. In the case of that which is written, many of the barriers to understanding what is communicated are removed. And because it is written communication, we can always re-read it and refer to it again.

And then there is the richness of expression that is possible by means of written language. Consider the array of genres in which written communication can be classified, as the Bible exemplifies: historical narrative, prophecy, poetry, wisdom literature, allegory, parable, and epistolary literature. Written language is often enriched by figures of speech, symbolism, and the style of the writer. Most of the readers of this magazine would be able to read the editorials found in each issue of the *Standard Bearer* and be able to identify which of the three editors penned the editorial.

It belongs to the wonder of the Bible that it can be read by a wide array of readers. It does not make use of technical jargon or scientific vocabulary; neither is it street jibe—crude and uncouth. Its language is exalted at the same time as it is down to earth; eloquent, but also easily understood. The Bible is written in the everyday language of the ordinary believer so that men of all different classes, learned or unlearned, university professor or factory worker, businessman or housewife, married or single, rich or poor, old or young, men or women are able to understand what is written.

What makes the Bible a still greater wonder is that God preserved all the human writers of Holy Scripture so that what they wrote was without error. What they wrote was the Word of God—the Word of God in the words of men. God preserved the human writers so that what they wrote was completely free from intentional error, as well as from inadvertent mistakes. As individuals, apart from the Holy Spirit's moving of them to write the Bible, they may have been ignorant of many things and mistaken about others. David was likely ignorant of the place of the earth in our solar system. Paul was ignorant of many of the laws of physics and thermodynamics. But their ignorance did not carry over into their writings that became part of Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit kept the human writers of the

Bible from errors of every sort. This did not prevent them from writing as ordinary human beings, in ordinary human language, which other ordinary people like themselves could understand. Not at all. But it guaranteed the infallibility and inerrancy of all that they wrote that became part of sacred Scripture.

Questioning the Bible's infallibility

One of the reasons, often the main reason, given by those who deny the Bible's infallibility is that the Bible contains contradictions. There are mistakes, they allege, in God's written communication to His people. They point to discrepancies (differences) in Scripture and suppose that these discrepancies indicate that there are contradictions in God's Word. Obviously, if the Bible contains contradictions, it cannot be the Word of God.

I am not referring to apparent contradictions between science and Scripture. Such contradictions are often alleged. According to the "findings" of science, it is alleged that the proponents of a "young earth" cannot be correct. The earth cannot be approximately 6,000 years old. The findings of science indicate that the earth is billions of years old. According to the findings of science, the earth could not have been created in six literal, consecutive, 24-hour days. The findings of science indicate that the universe and all life forms evolved from the simpler to the more complex, from inorganic matter into living organisms over great spans of time. I am not referring to these sorts of apparent contradictions.

Rather, I am referring to the discrepancies and apparent contradictions within the Bible itself. Such discrepancies often concern numbers, or apparent contradictions between two parallel accounts of the same event in two or more places in Scripture. How can Christians claim that the Bible is infallible, when there are these obvious discrepancies and contradictions within its pages? Some even scoff at the absurdity of an infallible and inerrant Bible. This is true sadly in some Reformed churches, seminaries, universities, and high schools. This was already the case nearly fifty years ago when I was a student in a Reformed college.

In the course of only one or two articles in the *Standard Bearer*, it is not possible to list all the apparent contradictions that are found in Scripture and provide a reasonable explanation for them. I do intend, the Lord willing, to provide a few examples in my next article, to show how it is possible often to harmonize apparent contradictions. There are books that attempt to explain the apparent contradictions in the Bible. Two of the best are *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, by Gleason L. Archer and *A Handbook of Biblical Difficulties*, by Robert Tuck. Both books are currently in print. They

can also be consulted in the library of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, if there is a biblical discrepancy to which you would like a possible solution.

At the outset, however, we must affirm what I refer to in my teaching in the seminary as the presupposition of faith. The presupposition of faith is that there are no real contradictions in the Bible. There are discrepancies and *apparent* contradictions, but there are no real contradictions in Scripture. Faith presumes that there is an explanation for every apparent contradiction, even if we do not for the moment know what that explanation is. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it cannot contain any real contradictions. God cannot contradict Himself. If the Bible were the word of men, even if only in part, it would almost certainly contain real contradictions. Because of man's weaknesses, compounded by his sin,

he is prone to halt and stumble, to use the language of a well-known Psalter number. Because man is weak and fallible, there would certainly be mistakes and contradictions in the pages of Scripture. But the Bible is not the word of man, not even in part. It is not the Word of God *and* the word of man. Rather, it is the Word of God *in* the words of men. And that is entirely different.

The presupposition of faith is that as the Word of God, Scripture contains no errors. It contains no errors of doctrine, no errors of facts, no errors of history, no contradictions. As the seamless robe of our Lord Jesus Christ, a part cannot be torn from the whole without ruining the entire garment. To pluck one thread is to cause the whole to unravel. So is Scripture the one Word of God to men, infallible and authoritative in its entirety and in every part.



Believing and confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington

Christian stewardship

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 42

Question 110. What doth God forbid in the eighth commandment?

Answer. God forbids not only those thefts and robberies which are punishable by the magistrate; but He comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devices whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbor, whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, usury, or by any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness, all abuse and waste of His gifts.

Question 111. But what doth God require in this commandment?

Answer. That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may, and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others; further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.

“Thou shalt not steal.”

This brief commandment speaks to two things: first, to my love for the neighbor by respecting the possessions that God has given to him; and second, to the proper use of the things that God has given to me, which I call my possessions. It addresses our day-to-day life in the world of commerce and personal finances. It deals with work and income and spending.

Underlying principles

Behind this commandment are several important principles.

First, God is the owner of all things, because He has created all things (Ps. 24:1-2). This includes money (Hag. 2:8). This principle should have a profound, life-changing effect on our view of the material world and of our place and purpose in this world.

Second, since God is the owner, we are to consider ourselves as appointed stewards and caretakers of God's things. In all our financial responsibilities we answer to God. Financial records and decisions are a telling spiritual biography. There is nothing hidden from the eyes of God. Not only does He see what we do, but He also perceives all our desires.

Third, God is the distributor of wealth. Proverbs 22:2 says of the rich and the poor that the Lord is the Maker of them both. I Samuel 2:7 tells us that He makes rich and He makes poor. I Corinthians 4:7 says that anything we have, we have received from God. This means that our wealth and possession are not achieved or attained by our own strength and ability. Rather, God gives to us the opportunities, talents, privileges and education by which we are able to acquire these things. We must not squander those opportunities that God gives to us. But, in the end, God is the One who makes rich and who makes poor. This principle puts faithfulness above financial success and it teaches us to trust God's provision.

Fourth, God's purpose with our earthly possessions is not our happiness or prosperity but His own glory. You must ask yourself: Why do I work? Is it merely for money, for food and for health? Is it for my advancement, success, and pleasure? Is it so that I can build barns, take it easy, and eat, drink and be merry? "Thou fool!" (Luke 12:20). A fool does things without reference to God. God the Creator has redeemed me through the blood of His Son so that I, with all that He has given, might glorify Him. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

Those are the grand biblical principles that stand behind the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." There are many other financial principles in the Word of God, but the main thing is that we live before God; that we remember Him; that we honor Him with what He has given; that we understand that He owns all things; that He is the distributor of wealth; and that His glory is the ultimate purpose of our existence and of our possessions.

A heart sin

"The love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim. 6:10).

While this commandment certainly addresses identifiable, external sins that are punishable by the law of the land, the real application of it for the believer is internal; it addresses heart issues. Forbidden are embezzlement, corporate money laundering, fraudulent marketing over the Internet, burglary, theft and shoplifting, all sins that God hates; but the greater sin is in the heart of man and his love of money.

Before this commandment we must examine our own hearts. There is what man sees and there is what God sees, and God's eyes discover thieves and robbers who appear to others to be honest citizens. God sees greed and covetousness. God observes manipulation and dishonesty. God watches over commerce and sees the seller trying to trick the buyer or the buyer trying to deceive the seller. He sees how the rich deal with the poor and what the poor will do to get money out of the rich. He observes what goes on in the workplace—the employee extending his lunch break, manipulating his working hours; the employer who does not deal fairly with his employees. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3).

We need to be aware of the many, many areas in our life in which we can fall into the sin of theft. All of them come back to this: selfishness, covetousness, greed, and thus the sins that are in our heart. Wherever this ugly sin of putting self first shows up, we will do anything to steal from others, to steal their honor, joy, praise, or possessions. There is theft that is punishable by the law, but there is also theft in our hearts whenever we put ourselves first.

Not abusing His gifts

We may be very honest in the way we obtain our material things, through hard work without greed or deception, but still sin against this commandment in the way we *use* what God gives, either by wasting His good gifts, or by being miserly and overly protective of our stuff. Every dollar, every opportunity, every talent, and every relationship is given of God. Even when our wallet is empty, God has still given us many things: home, food, family, friends, abilities, and more.

We steal from God when we do not use these gifts properly. In Proverbs 18:9 we read: "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." We see here that theft includes wasting and that theft includes laziness and abuse of the things and the opportunities that God has given. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, how often are we not wasteful and thoughtless in the use of our God-given resources?

Here is stewardship, to use everything as best we can in the love and service of God. "Honor the Lord with thy substance" (Prov. 3:9). That, really, is the sum of Christian living. That we are stewards means we are accountable. Too often, in the area of money, we want to be free. We are very private, and we want nobody in our business. Perhaps this is the impact of affluence, that we have not learned to be good stewards, we know this, and so we want no scrutiny or accountability. This privacy gives us our desired freedom to spend, to waste,

and to consume on our own lusts, forgetting that what we have belongs to God and that we must answer to Him.

The positive requirements

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). This verse, perhaps as no other in Scripture, sums up the positive requirement of this commandment, as also the Catechism reflects in its answer.

There are two things here, working and giving, and the two go together. Perhaps we can think of them as two steps of obedience. You can stand on the lower step of working with your hands. Then you might say, “Well, I’m obeying this commandment. I’m acquiring my possessions in the God-appointed way. I’m not stealing from others.” Certainly, that is obedience. God has ordained work as a way for man to acquire the possessions and the necessities of this life. Work is not a curse. God put man on the earth to work, to multiply and replenish and subdue the earth. But, why do you work? Do you work in order to live, or do you work in order to give? That is the second step of obedience. The expression of real stewardship of what God has given to us is generosity in heart and in action.

God has given me possessions and money, not for me (that would be self love), but for me to love Him and to love my neighbor. That is the Christian purpose in working. I do not work to get ahead myself or to make sure that my children have a good position and education, but I labor as a Christian in order to alleviate the cry of the needy. In a world where it is “each for himself,” and all trying to get ahead (of the pack), this is revolutionary thinking. The Christian motivation for work is not greed but grace. It is because the believer has experienced grace that he labors so that he may be gracious.

This was the purpose of Jesus Christ in His work, was it not? He came into this world to work, and that work was motivated by grace, by generosity towards you and me who are sinners and thieves. Zacchaeus had been a thief, and Jesus came, graciously, to bring salvation to his house. So also, crucified between two thieves, He guaranteed the believing one a place in His kingdom. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9).

This is God’s world. He puts us in it as stewards and calls us to work, and to do that for His glory and out of love for Him. That love comes to expression in this, that we give cheerfully for the kingdom and with gener-

osity to our neighbor in need. May God so guide us as we live as Christians in the midst of a material world.

Questions for discussion

1. Why is it important to understand that God is the Owner of all things (Hag. 2:8)?
2. How does the truth that God is the One who makes rich and poor affect your outlook on life?
3. What does stewardship mean? What does it involve for us?
4. How can you better use all that you have for the glory of God?
5. What are some forms of theft punishable by the magistrate? Are these still punished today?
6. What are the main heart sins related to this commandment? Which of these are a struggle for you?
7. How do these passages relate to this commandment? What application is there here for you?
 - a. Colossians 3:5
 - b. Hebrews 13:5
 - c. Matthew 6:25-34
 - d. Proverbs 3:9-10
 - e. Luke 12:13-21
8. How does our spending reflect our spiritual priorities? Are you willing to share your spending record (check log or credit card statement) with others for their input? How would God evaluate your spending?
9. What are some ways we might abuse God’s gifts? Is there a proper concern we should have for the environment? Why/why not?
10. Is work a curse, or a part of God’s original purpose for man in His creation? Can you prove your answer from the Bible? What is it that makes us averse to hard work?
11. What is God’s purpose for work (there are several answers given in different parts of Scripture)?



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Holstege, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

The covenant of God and our mission to the world (1)

The covenant of God.
Our mission to the world.

How often have we thought about these highly significant biblical concepts *together*? How often, when discussing one, have we been led to discuss the other? How deeply has our thinking penetrated into the glorious realities and urgent callings that lie at the intersection of these truths? It is the humble opinion of this writer that there is room for growth in our understanding of the relation between these marvelous truths of Scripture. The burden of this and subsequent articles will be an attempt to develop the relation between them as it is set forth in the Word of God.

The promise of God to establish His covenant with believers and their seed is very dear to me personally. I am a child of believers, baptized as an infant and trained to walk in the ways of God in our “covenant home” and in “covenantal schools” that were established by Protestant Reformed believers zealous for God’s covenant. I grew up “in the sphere of the covenant.”

Let the reader know too that our mission to the world as the church of Jesus Christ has also become exceedingly important to me personally. Our Lord called me to leave my homeland, the United States of America, with my wife and children, to leave behind our friends and family in the PRCA, and to go out into the world, crossing thousands of miles of ocean to enter the Philippines, which was a foreign nation to us, to preach the gospel of salvation.

Maybe the Lord used the conjunction of these two facts in my life to make me realize that this area of our thinking, the covenant and missions, could use some development. But the Lord also put this sentiment into my mind through other men in our circles who have noticed the same need because I am certainly not the first to notice it.

The covenant and missions

The covenant is that intimate relationship of sweet fellowship and friendship with God, which God graciously establishes and maintains with all whom

He loved and chose in Christ; which Christ secured by shedding His blood on the cross in His love for us that we might be forgiven and justified; in which God is our Father who dwells with us His people today and will do so forever in the new Paradise that is still to come; and in which He calls us to love Him who first loved us by keeping His commandments.

The covenant...and our mission to the world. After His glorious resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to the apostles on a lofty mountaintop somewhere in Galilee and announced our mission to the world as the church from that day forward. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples in all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us.

So, what do these have to do with each other?

In order to begin unfolding the answer to that question, let us go back to the beginning, because God revealed significant truths about His purpose with regard to His covenant and the world already in the Old Testament. At the very dawn of history, God revealed His great purpose to establish His covenant with the world of men, the highest of all His creatures, and to walk with them and talk with them in the midst of the elegant world that He made. For after bringing forth out of nothing the marvelous cosmos of heavens and earth, God created a man and a woman. He created them in His own image and likeness, unlike all other creatures, so that He could walk with them in the sweet communion of His covenant. He then put them into Paradise, that breathtaking garden at the center of the prediluvian world, where He walked and talked with them in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8).

Notice, God did not at the dawn of history create a world of many different nations, immediately narrowing down His covenant to just one of them and promising to be the God of them and their seed after them in their generations. But God created two human beings in His own image, Adam and Eve, the parents of the whole human race. Thus, when He established that original

covenant of creation with Adam and Eve in Paradise, He revealed that He has a grand covenant purpose with regard to the world of men, which would soon develop into many nations, kindreds, and tongues.

But that grand purpose was not to establish His covenant with all men in Adam, for Adam was only “the figure of him who was to come” (Rom. 5:14). Hence, Adam fell into sin. After the Fall, God began to reveal that He has a twofold purpose with the world of men, flowing from an eternal decree: to destroy the world of wicked men whom He ordained to be vessels of wrath and to establish His covenant with that new world of men in all nations whom He loved and chose in Christ.

God realized both of those purposes in the history of the flood. He destroyed the wicked world that had filled up the cup of iniquity. But He established His covenant with believing Noah and his family and saved them in the ark through the very waters that destroyed the ungodly. God foreshadowed in the flood that He would save the world of men whom He loved from sin and destruction through the cross of Christ so that they might dwell with Him in His covenant. After the flood, God said to Noah, “And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you...” (Gen. 9:9-10). Then He put His rainbow in the clouds, which seemed to embrace the whole world as it arced brilliantly from one end of heaven to the other, a token of His covenant with the earth (Gen. 9:12-17). God revealed that although He had just destroyed the wicked world with a flood, He still purposed to establish His covenant with the world of men, and through men with every living creature.

God soon revealed that He would establish His covenant with some men in the world but not with all. For He called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and established His covenant with him and his seed after him in their generations (Gen. 17:7). God revealed His great purpose to establish His covenant with the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ, and with all those who belong to Christ, who are His beloved elect children. God demonstrated His sovereign decree to establish His covenant only with those people whom He would choose and with no others, for He chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but not their contemporaries. God also revealed that He would establish His covenant with believers and their children in their generations, though not with every child of believers, for He loved Jacob but hated Esau.

But notice this, which seems neglected in our thinking about the covenant, God would establish His covenant with Abraham *as a father of many nations!* When this man named Abram first came out of Ur of the

Chaldees, God promised him, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Then, right there in the immediate context of that great covenant promise that we always quote to refute the Baptists and prove that the children of believers are included in the covenant, God said to that man Abram, “And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.... As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a *father of many nations*. Neither shall thy name any more be Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a *father of many nations* have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee” (Gen. 17:2-6). Notice! *Before* God promised to establish His covenant with Abraham and his seed after him, with believers and their seed in the lines of continued generations, He promised to make His covenant with Abraham as the father of many nations! God was not simply referring to those few little nations that would spring from the loins of Abraham through Ishmael, Midian, Jacob, and Esau. But God was promising that, as He had extended His covenant to Abraham, an elect believer, so also He would extend His covenant to men and women in all the nations of the world. He was promising to make Abraham the spiritual father of many nations, namely, those men and women whom He had chosen out of all nations under the starry heavens, who constitute the new humanity in Christ, the world whom He loves!

Have we done justice to this promise of God to Abraham in our thinking about the covenant? How long have we stood here and examined this intersection of highly significant concepts, where there is a promise of God to establish His covenant with all the families of the earth, the foundation of our mission to the world? How long have we wrestled with this astounding revelation of the purpose of God to establish His covenant with men and women in all nations? How much have we contemplated the stunning fact that God *first* uttered a promise to all the nations of the world and then to the children of believers in their generations? Have we truly appreciated this purpose of God to establish His covenant not only with us and our children, but also with the elect in the nations who are still lost in darkness? If so, have we also appreciated the tremendous importance of our mission as the church to preach the gospel in all the world and of our calling as believers to echo that gospel in personal witnessing to the Chinese man with whom we do business, the Indian woman who lives next door, or the Hispanic with whom we work?

Hundreds of years after Abraham, God established His covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Deut. 5:1-3).

He separated them from the ungodly nations that surrounded them and commanded them to live as His people in the midst of the world.

But the prophets of God spoke of a day when those nations would flow into the covenant. The prophets lived in those days when the wicked little nations around Israel fell away one by one...Moab, Ammon, Edom... and mighty empires of darkness rose to power...Assyria, Babylon, Persia. But God revealed to the prophets that the day would soon come when all nations would flow into Mount Zion (Is. 2:2), for He would gather all nations and tongues, and they would come and see His glory (Is. 66:18). God promised to raise up the Messiah “for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Is. 42:6-7). “Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD” (Zech. 8:22).

In the fullness of time, God sent His Son. God the Father, eternally communing in sweet fellowship with His Son through the Holy Breath between them, *sent* His Son into the world! Covenant! Mission! The triune God of the covenant sent His Son on the mission of founding a covenant with men in His own blood, which God now establishes with men in China, India, America, Ireland, Philippines, and many other nations.

Jesus was born. Visited by Gentile wise men from the east. Called a light to lighten the Gentiles by aged Simeon. During His life, God was still establishing His covenant almost exclusively with the nation of the Jews. He sent His disciples with the words, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5-6). Yet He also taught and exhorted, “Ye are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:13-16). Also, when a Gentile centurion demonstrated great faith in Him, He exclaimed, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness...”

(Matt. 8:10-12). He taught that God would soon fulfill His purpose to establish His covenant with the elect in all nations of the world.

Then Jesus was crucified. That nation with whom God established His covenant in the past rejected Him. The powers of the wicked nations nailed Him to the cross. But in reality, He gave up His life on that cross as Mediator of the covenant, the one Mediator between God and man, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Heb. 8:6; I Tim. 2:5-6; John 1:29). For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). For God will have all men to be saved, that is, all kinds of men, and to come to the knowledge of the truth...and Christ gave Himself a ransom for them (I Tim. 2:4-6). God has a purpose to save the world that fell in Adam. It is not a purpose to establish His covenant with all men, nor did Christ die for all men. But Christ died to take away the sin of the world of the elect in all nations, the world God loves.

Then, having risen from the dead and received all authority in heaven and on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ issued to us this last great commission: Go into all the world and make disciples in all nations. The mission of God to establish His covenant in all nations will be realized through the mission and witness of the church of Jesus Christ in the world. Peter proclaimed to Jews from many nations on the day of Pentecost, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, *and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*” (Acts 2:38-39).

As the church of Jesus Christ, we have a mission to the world. It is the mission of God. From the beginning, God purposed to establish His covenant with the world of men. Although He limited His covenant to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, He never changed His ultimate purpose with the world. The promise is not only to us and our children, but to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. How will God realize His promise to make Abraham a father of many nations? How will God establish His covenant with men and women in all nations? How will God finish what He has begun in establishing a living relationship of friendship with the new humanity that He has chosen in Christ? The great commission tells us how.

(to be continued)

God the Father, eternally communing in sweet fellowship with His Son through the Holy Breath between them, sent His Son into the world! Covenant! Mission! The triune God of the covenant sent His Son on the mission of founding a covenant with men in His own blood, which God now establishes with men in China, India, America, Ireland, Philippines, and many other nations.



Strength of youth

Rev. Ryan Barnhill, pastor of the Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer, Indiana

Entitlement (1)

Even the world is ringing alarm bells. It seems the problem centers in the millennial generation: those born in the 1980s and 1990s. The employer in his late fifties cannot believe his ears when a twenty-something young man expects to work minimal hours for fantastic pay and benefits. The tenured professor is disturbed by the number of students in his classroom who expect royal treatment, as if he owes them everything. The veteran police officer is distressed by the rights-demanding attitude of so many youthful drivers he interacts with on traffic stops. What employers, professors, police, and others are noticing is called entitlement, and its fingers are reaching into every corner of society.

The problem

What is entitlement? Entitlement is an attitude or mindset. It is an attitude of deservedness: a person *deserves* to have this or have that. It is a demanding of one's rights: a person has the *right* to do this, or to have that. To put it simply, entitlement is an "I deserve, I have a right to" attitude.

This mindset is not foreign to you, is it? While entitlement is definitely present in the world, we want to see this attitude in *ourselves*. We expect to observe entitlement in the world, for the world lies in darkness. But we should not be surprised when we find this same attitude in ourselves. Why? Because our sinful nature is present with us until we die.

The examples of this "I deserve, I have a right to" attitude are many. Consider just two scenarios.

It is Saturday morning. Frank has worked forty hours this week at his summer job. Saturday is his day to watch sports and hang out with friends. He hears a knock on his bedroom door at 7:30 in the morning; it is his dad, and he wants Frank to help him pull weeds in the yard. Angrily, Frank throws the sheets off his sleepy body: "He wants me to help him in the yard on *Saturday*? Saturday is *my* day," Frank says. Frank thinks that he deserves a Saturday all for himself.

Amy is a junior in college. Her biology professor announces that a big exam is coming up, and that this exam is *not* to be taken lightly. Despite the instructor's warning, Amy slacks off on the night before the exam,

whittling away her time on Facebook. Before long, it's 12:30 A.M., and time to head off for sleep. She takes her exam the next day, but after finishing, she is not very confident. The next week Amy's professor returns the exam, and she discovers to her horror that he gave her a 59%. Upset and disappointed, she clenches the exam in an angry fist and rushes to her friends after class: "Can you believe the harsh grading scale on that exam? And he asked such unfair questions! I would be surprised if anyone did well on it. He should have given me a much better percentage." Amy thinks that she has the right to a much better grade, even though she did not study.

Its root

The world tries to get at the root of entitlement—many recognize clearly that there is a problem, so they try to locate the cause or causes of that problem. Society declares the source of entitlement to be bad parenting. Fathers and mothers tell their children that they are special, unique, and that they have boundless potential. Parents never let their sons and daughters lose at anything. Dads and moms spoil their children, giving them anything they want; these spoiled children grow up to be spoiled, entitled adults. In addition, the world traces the entitlement problem back to laziness. Young people and young adults simply do not want to work for money, but rather expect the money to be given into their slothful hands. If laziness is rewarded, why work? Finally, many today say that entitlement flows out of materialism. We live in an age and country of tremendous wealth. We have so much money, so many cars, such big homes, and a great many electronics; after a while, we begin to think that we *deserve* these things.

There is, of course, truth to these reasons for entitlement that the world comes up with. But these are only surface reasons. To get at the heart of entitlement, we must search the Word of God. Going to the Bible will reveal to us a fundamental truth about entitlement: it is not merely a cultural phenomenon, nor is it only a sad downturn through recent generations; rather, the entitlement mindset is *sin*. Entitlement is transgression of the law of God.

There are four main sins that lie behind the "I de-

serve, I have a right to” attitude: pride, ingratitude, selfishness, and covetousness.

First, *pride* lies behind entitlement. Pride is a loathsome disease. One who is proud looks down on others, thinks very highly of himself, and deceives himself into thinking that he is special, outstanding, and unique: unparalleled athleticism; superior grades; flawless memory; high intelligence. A proud person, so inflated with accomplishment, begins to demand what he thinks he deserves. Does he not have a right to anything he wants—that grade, that job, that position of power? After all, he is outstanding and unique—so he thinks.

Second, *ingratitude* drives this rights-demanding attitude. Ingratitude is thanklessness: showing no thanks or appreciation for what we receive from God and from others. Ingratitude *impatiently expects* something to be given, and does not take into consideration at all that the thing is a *gift*, or given out of *kindness*. Someone with a thankless attitude receives what’s given with an open hand—always an open hand—but rarely, if ever, a “thank you,” or even a smile. Ingratitude flows very easily out of pride—thanklessness inevitably follows from an inflated view of self.

Third, *selfishness* lurks below the surface of this “I deserve” mentality. Selfishness is self-absorption. It is about *my* time, what *I* want, and what *I* should receive. To connect the dots between selfishness and entitlement is not difficult. When a person’s attitude is driven by the “I” inside of them, then there is almost no limit to what they will demand, and what rights they believe they have. Of course, selfishness is also closely related to pride—essentially, pride and selfishness are about the big “I.” Also, selfishness is a twin to ingratitude—those who do not look past their own selves will not be thankful.

Fourth, pride, ingratitude, and selfishness, as three rivers of sewage, flow into the polluted lake of *covetousness*. Covetousness says, “I never have enough. I need more. Give me more. Without more, I’ll never be satisfied.” Covetousness is the all-absorbing desire to have more—more money, more influence, a bigger house, a prettier wife, a faster car, or a job promotion. A covetous person makes the pursuit of more an idol. A covetous heart is an entitled heart.

A farmer

We find all these sins identified by Jesus in His parable of the rich fool. Open your Bible to Luke 12:13-21 and read it a moment.

There was a rich farmer who worked hard for what he had, and the fruit of his hard work was that he had an abundant harvest. He planned to build greater barns

where he could store his plentiful crop. After having built the barns and stored up for the future, he could take it easy and party; he would have no worries in the world. This man was a fool. In him were found all the sins that lie behind entitlement. As you read the parable, did you notice how many times the farmer referenced *himself*—he was proud of his accomplishments. Observe his ingratitude: since it was *he* who worked hard for what he had, why would he ever be grateful to God or anyone else? Do not miss his selfishness, either: he planned to build those bigger barns, and to lay up his crop, all for *himself* and *his own* enjoyment and pleasure. Now, zoom out and see the big picture: this rich farmer was covetous, according to Jesus’ own words in verse 15; this wicked man always wanted more, trusted in his riches to bring him a secure future, and found his happiness in his wealth and goods. Indeed, he was a man who thought he was entitled to everything!

What happened to that man? He worked hard in his fields, prepared his crop for a plentiful harvest, meticulously planned out his future, and looked forward to resting with all his riches and goods in ease and merriment. But...suddenly, all those riches were gone; in a moment, all the fool’s work and plans came to a halt, for that night he died. God required the rich fool’s soul—the life that God had given him. He now demanded back. All his goods, crops, money, and enjoyment in the body were nothing, for he could not take his riches where he was going after death. The rich fool went to hell.

Jesus’ words ring all the louder: “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). By God’s grace, we must take heed—be watching with our spiritual eyes and hearts for covetousness. By God’s grace, we must beware—guard or protect ourselves over against covetousness. Why? A man’s life does not consist in, does not have its significance in, material wealth! Surely, this is a timely and sharp warning for us, whose “I deserve, I have a right to” attitude is, at the root, covetousness.

Do not be discouraged. There is good news, but space demands that we continue this in the following article. In the next article, we will consider the spiritual prescription for entitlement.



Pertaining to the churches in common— Foreign Mission Committee

Rev. Richard Smit, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America,
stationed in Manila, Philippines

Newsletter from the Philippines

January 2020

Dear Congregations of the PRCA,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Here is an update regarding our labor and life here in service to our sister churches of the PRCP in the metro Manila area and in our continuing PRCA mission work in Southern Negros Occidental.

Family life

One of the two main highlights of our family life in the past several months is the blessing of the birth of Violet Joy to Rev. and Mrs. Holstege on December 10. Mother and baby were able to return home soon after birth, and they are both doing well. We rejoice with the Holstege family in the blessing and gift of another covenant child. Arrangements are being made for Violet to receive the sign and seal of the covenant in baptism soon in the Provident PRC with Rev. Holstege administering the sacrament to the family's new daughter and sister.

The second main highlight of our family life was the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Brian (Rebekah) Buiter in Redlands, CA, on Friday, December 27. With much appreciated travel assistance from our churches, my family was able to attend and participate in the wedding. For those unable to attend, the wedding was livestreamed to friends and family throughout North America and in the Philippines. We rejoice with Brian and Rebekah, being now joined together in the Lord in lifelong marriage, and going forward down life's pathway together in faith in Jehovah who, according to His promises in Christ, builds their godly home (Ps. 127:1a).

In addition to officiating at the wedding, I preached in one service on December 22 and another on December 29 in our Hope Redland's congregation. We enjoyed the opportunity to worship with the congregation, and enjoyed the hospitality and fellowship with friends, family, and church family in the latter part of December. The brief visit was a great encouragement for our continuing labor and life here.

On Sunday, January 12, the Lord touched the Taal volcano, and it erupted spectacularly. The Lord displayed clearly His awesome power in the volcanic eruption, located about 60 km directly south of our houses and on which some of our visitors over the past several years have even hiked. The towering ash cloud drifted northward so

that by Sunday night the ash was falling in our subdivision and by morning left a thin, gritty coat over everything exposed to the sky. The particles of volcanic ash are actually harmful to breathe, so extra caution has been taken by area residents to clean up the ash. Even at our houses, we were careful with ash clean up (with wet mops (inside) and water (outside), no sweeping). Officials warn of a possible larger eruption of the Taal volcano, which could possibly bring larger amounts of ash northward over our area. We are preparing for that possibility. Nevertheless, we do not live in terror and panic but by faith we find our peace and comfort in Psalm 104:32 and the truth that Jehovah is our God and the God of that smoking mountain, too. It is His clear and comforting sign of the imminent, final appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The children are back at school again at Faith Academy nearby, except on January 13 and 14 when classes were canceled for cleanup of the gritty layer of Taal volcanic ash, spread over the whole campus. After two unusual "ash days," school resumed on January 15. FA's "Spring Break" is scheduled from March 16 to 23, probably a little earlier than "Spring Breaks" in our schools in Canada or the USA. This second semester ends on Friday, May 29, the Lord willing.

PRCP Theological School

With thanksgiving to God, we can report that our first semester of classes was completed on December 6, and final exams were finished on December 13. The second semester began on January 14 so that we are now at the end of our third week of classes.

We have two students (one a pre-seminary student, the other our full-time seminary student) in New Testament Greek Grammar class (Rev. Smit). Hermeneutics (Rev. Holstege), Homiletics (Rev. Kleyn), Church History (Rev. Kleyn), and Dogmatics—Anthropology (Rev. Smit) are being taught again in this second semester. Classes are held in the mornings on Tuesdays through Fridays.

Our full-time student is Mr. Jeremiah Pascual. He and his wife, Leslie, were blessed with the birth of a son on November 1. His name is Iohanne Cauvin, "after the Latin and French name of John Calvin," according to what Mr. Jeremiah Pascual explained to us. He was baptized by Pastor John Flores at the PRC in Bulacan on December

15. We rejoice with our brother and sister in the precious gift from the LORD of a covenant child.

Our part-time student, enrolled only in NT Greek, is Mr. Emmanuel Jasojaso. He and his wife and children are members of the Provident PRC in Marikina, where Rev. Holstege labors. He currently is a full-time teacher, but he has made the time to fit in NT Greek study this school year with a view to enrollment in the PRCP Seminary in the near future, the Lord willing.

The due date for submission of enrollment for new students is at the end of February. Classis will approve new students for enrollment at its next regular meeting on June 12, 2020. After that, we can report on the number of students for the 2020-2021 school year. Course preparations for the next school year are already underway.

A seminary library of theological books continues to grow in one of the rooms of the guest house on the Kleyns' property. This room can be air conditioned in order to avoid mold build-up on the books. The good selection of books, thus far, has been helpful already to the student.

PRCP growth

The Classis of the PRCP approved some changes that affect the involvement of our PRCA missionaries in the PRCP. Before the October 31/November 30 meetings of the Classis, there were two standing committees: Committee 1 and Committee 2. Since 2014, each committee had two of our missionaries as advisors. Now, in order to spread the growing workload among more men, the Classis has expanded the number of standing committees from 2 to 4. Each committee has 3 members of pastors and elders (or former elders), with one missionary advisor. The committee mandates with the missionary advisors are: C1-Theological School (Smit) C2-Missions, Contact with Other Churches (Holstege) C3-Finance, Emeritus, Seminary Student Aid (Kleyn) C4-Translation, Publication (Holstege).

Progress on a PRCP Tagalog translation of the Heidelberg Catechism continues. C4 is recommending to the Classis in February 2020 further review by C4 before final adoption is recommended. Final adoption allows the translation to be used in preaching and teaching in the PRCP congregations and mission work.

Classis reaffirmed the role of missionaries of the PRCA, or other sister churches laboring in their midst, in its broader assembly when it approved for its Rules of Order on October 31 the following decision: "the missionaries of the PRCP or sister churches shall have advisory votes in all matters during Classis meetings. They may give their advice after giving priority to the opinions and suggestions of the official delegates."

PRCP missions

The PRCP has a mission work in Albueria, Leyte. The calling church of the mission work is the PRC in Bulacan

whose pastor is Rev. J. Flores. The Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Albueria is visited every month by a delegation, usually consisting of Rev. J. Flores and an elder or deacon. This delegation preaches, visits the brethren, and disburses benevolence according to need. In January 2020, all of the members of C2 (Missions, Contact)—Rev. J. Flores, Elder E. Mescallado, and Elder B. Montoya, visited the PRFA in Leyte on January 12.

A missionary call was extended in June 2019 to Rev. V. Ibe. He accepted the call in July, but then later needed to withdraw his acceptance. The PRCB Consistory approved his withdrawal and announced this publicly in the PRCP in November as follows:

Last September 29, 2019, the Consistory of the PRC in Bulacan approved the request of Rev. Vernon Ibe to withdraw his previous decision to serve as local missionary in PRFA, Leyte, due to the following reasons: (1) Unavailability of Christian schools for secondary level; and, (2) Should Rev. Ibe consider home schooling as an alternative, the allotted budget will not be sufficient to cover the educational cost of his children. Therefore, the previously announced ordination and installation for the missionary set on November 17, 2019, will no longer push through. Let us continue to uphold our brethren in PRFA, Leyte, in our prayers that the Lord will provide them a missionary in His time.

PRCP contact with other churches

The Classis of the PRCP on November 30 approved having Elder Eric Mescallado represent the PRCP as a visiting foreign delegate at the Synod of the PRCA in June 2020.

Since the sister-church relationship is reciprocal, there will be a delegation from the Contact Committee of the PRCA visiting and meeting with the CC of the PRCP in late February. Rev. Koole and Prof. Dykstra as foreign delegates plan also to attend the PRCP Classis on February 25. We thank the Lord for the opportunities in which the PRCA and PRCP can express our fellowship as sister churches and our unity together in the Lord and His precious truth.

PRCA March delegation visit

A delegation from the Council of the Doon PRC and the FMC will visit the missionary families and our missionary work from March 12 to 25. The delegation consists of Rev. and Mrs. Jonathan Langerak, from the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, and Mr. Caleb Woiwood, a deacon in the Doon PRC and a member of the Philippine sub-committee of the Doon Council. The delegation will have the opportunity to visit the PRCA mission work in southern Negros Occidental among our contacts in Inayauan (The Reformed Free Church), Si-alay, Canturay, and Sipalay. They will have opportunity to observe the preaching and teaching we do there on Sundays (church services, catechism classes) and Mondays (monthly pastors'

lectures on Homiletics and Dogmatics-Christology). They also plan to visit the evangelism work in Guiguinto/Baliwag (north of Manila) that Rev. Holstege is fulfilling in behalf of the Provident PRC. In addition to that, the delegation will conduct annual family visitation, and enjoy some informal visiting throughout their stay with the missionary families.

Reformed bookshelf and Philippine book fund

We express our thanks to the PRCA for their continued and generous support of the Philippine Book Fund that subsidizes RFPA book prices here for the local members of the PRCP as well as the contacts of the PRCP throughout the Philippines. To help move the stock, we had a book sale at the beginning of December, which seemed to go very well. With thanksgiving to the Lord, we can report that we distributed about 1,800 books in 2019.

Holsteiges' furlough

As approved by the Doon Council and FMC, Rev. Holstege

has scheduled his 2020 furlough in North America. He with his family will have a nine-week furlough from May 18 to July 22, mostly in the Midwest USA area. This furlough will provide time for field promotion, PRCP seminary course preparation, and family vacation. In light of that, the Holsteiges are making good progress in obtaining a U.S. passport and Philippine immigration travel documents for baby Violet. It should be an enjoyable time.

We conclude this newsletter in the call, comfort, and confidence of Psalm 104:31-35:

The glory of the LORD shall endure forever: the LORD shall rejoice in His works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

In His service, Rev. Richard J. Smit



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Which is the easternmost PRC congregation in Classis West? See the church profile part of this article for your answer. More trivia next time.

Sister-church activities

The congregation of Covenant PRC in Ballymena, Northern Ireland held their annual congregational dinner at a place called The Thatch in Broughshane on February 21.

This announcement about the 2020 British Reformed Fellowship Family conference is now out:

Join Reformed believers from around the world at the 2020 British Reformed Fellowship family conference at Castlewellan Castle in Northern Ireland from Saturday, July 11 to Saturday, July 18. Our speakers, Prof. David Engelsma and Rev. Andy Lanning, will lecture on "Union with Christ." For information see the website <http://brfconference.weebly.com> or contact Briana Prins at 616-214-2779; bprins@covenantchristianhs.org. Rooms are filling quickly, so complete your booking form today!

Our brothers and sisters in Singapore are vitally aware of the Yuhan coronavirus that is so prevalent in the country of China and spreading throughout the world. The following was printed on the CERC bulletin in February:

WUHAN VIRUS ADVISORY: Session's advice to all worshippers regarding Wuhan Virus with respect to Sunday Worship:

1. If you have visited Mainland China recently, you are advised to stay at home 14 days from your date of return to Singapore and to monitor your health closely, and see a doctor promptly if you are unwell.
2. If you have fever, cough or breathlessness, or are feeling unwell, please seek medical attention immediately and you are advised to refrain from coming to church.
3. If you do not have a fever but have runny nose or cough, you are advised to refrain from coming to church.
4. Thermometers will be provided at the reception area for you to take your own temperature for self-monitoring.
5. Those not attending service in church are encouraged to join via live streaming.
6. For latest updates on Wuhan Virus, you may visit

MOH website at <https://www.moh.gov.sg/2019-ncov-wuhan>

CERC is doing this to assure the other tenants of the building where they worship that their members are not contaminating the building with the virus.

Young people's activities

The Western Young People's Retreat, hosted by the Lynden and Spokane young people, will be held July 14-17, 2020, at Camp Sanders in Northern Idaho. This is a retreat for young people ages 13-18 (going into 9th-12th grade). More information and registration will be available in March. Contact Rev. Kleyn at r.kleyn@prca.org if you have any questions.

Young people are always busy. Such has been the case lately. Among other things, Providence PRC young people hosted their annual Chili-Cook-off at Adams Christian School; the young people of Grace PRC held their annual Night of Music; Trinity PRC completed their Culvers' fundraiser; Hudsonville PRC young people held their soup supper and silent auction; and Byron Center PRC young people invited all to their fundraiser entitled "Joyful Praise With One Accord." I see the Grace young people also sold subs, croissants, and cinnamon rolls. A flurry of activity!

The young people of the Wingham, Ontario PRC hosted their annual church skate recently. All were en-

couraged to join in a time of fellowship and fun at the Howick Arena with coffee and donuts to be provided. Hopefully most stayed on their skates most of the time with not too many tumbles!

Denominational activities

Classis West met in Peace PRC, Dyer, IN on March 4.

Minister activities

On February 16 we heard that Rev. R. Barnhill was led by God to decline the call extended to him by the Kalamazoo, MI congregation. The Consistory formed a new trio of Revs. J. Engelsma, S. Key, and C. Spronk.

Cornerstone PRC formed a new trio of Revs. M. De Boer, J. Engelsma, and J. Smidstra. They called on March 1.

Concerning Rev. J. Mahtani and the call to Covenant ERC in Singapore: The last report was that the Singaporean government denied Rev. Mahtani an employment pass and that the Session of CERC, Council of Grandville PRC, and the Contact Committee were considering further options for his laboring in Singapore as minister-on-loan. The Session of CERC decided to file one more appeal of this decision to the Ministry of Defense.

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

Church profile—Peace PRC

Peace Protestant Reformed Church is located in Dyer, Indiana. Our pastor is Rev. Ryan Barnhill. We are a congregation of 47 families, seven single adults, and a quiver full of 104 baptized children.

Our roots are founded in the South Holland PRC, as we are a daughter of that congregation. Peace was organized as a church in 1988. Our first meeting place was Illiana Christian High School in Lansing, IL. We met there for



seven years, and then built our first church building and parsonage in Lansing, Illinois. That building served us well for 22 years.

Two years ago, we purchased and refurbished an existing church building, and now make our home in Dyer, Indiana. We also built a new parsonage with its location close to the church and our Protestant Reformed grade school and high school. This move makes us the eastern most church in Classis West. Our church is blessed with many skilled laborers in building and remodeling projects. We are thankful for the many donated hours of time and labor by members who used

their talents for the good of the whole church. With thankfulness to God we recently sold our Lansing property, including the old church and parsonage. It was for sale for two years. We sold the Lansing property to another church group, and wish them God's blessings in that location.

Our pastors have been Rev. S. Houck (now emeritus), Rev. C. Spronk (now at Faith PRC in Michigan), and currently Rev. R. Barnhill with his wife Miranda and their four children.

Our consistory consists of four elders and four dea-

cons. We have recently had eight marriages and are thankful for these newly established households in our church. Since Peace PRC has many school-aged children, Rev. Barnhill keeps very busy with catechism, as well as with all the societies that he leads in our congregation. We also have a unique group of knitting enthusiasts who call themselves "Stitched2gather." All in all, we have a very active and dedicated body of believers that join together week after week in the communion of the saints for worship and fellowship.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Kalamazoo PRC express their Christian sympathy to Ken and Gleny Feenstra, along with David and Anna Waldorf and family in the death of Ken's father and Anna's grandfather, **Mr. John Feenstra**.

May they be comforted in the words of II Timothy 4:7: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

David Pryor, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Mary-Martha Society of Redlands, CA would like to extend our sincere sympathy to fellow society member, Linda Smit, as well as to fellow church members Beverly Feenstra and extended family in the passing away of their father, husband, and grandfather **John Feenstra**.

We pray the Holy Spirit pours comfort in your hearts during this time as reflected in the words of Psalm 119:76, "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant."

Wayne Buiter, President
Renaë Kaiser, Vice-all

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC, Loveland, Colorado extend our sympathies to Kevin and Carol Scholfield, in the death of Kevin's dad, **Delmar Scholfield**.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (I Thess. 5:9-11).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Erick Solanyk, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Crete PRC in Crete, IL express their Christian sympathy to the families of Ryan and Melanie Zandstra, Brian and Amber Lenting, and Steve Zandstra in the death of their uncle, **Mr. Albert Buiter**.

May they be comforted by the words of Scripture found in Isaiah 43:1b-3a: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

Rev. Nathan Langerak, President
Phil E. Van Baren, Clerk of Council

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland express Christian sympathy to Bill Leep and his family in the death of his wife of 60 years, **Fran Leep**. According to His good and all-wise purpose, the Lord took Fran home to glory on February 4, 2020.

We sorrow for the loss of a member of our body, yet we rejoice that God has brought her into the perfect peace and glory of heaven. Her faith has become sight, and the words of the psalmist truly her own: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Rev. Justin Smidstra, President
Jack Warner, Asst. Clerk

Announcements continued

PRC Synod 2020

All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2020, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

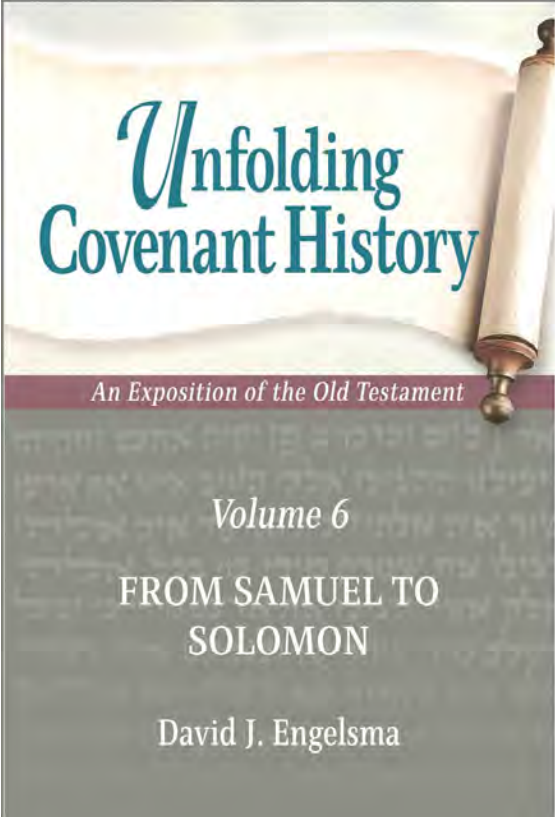
Rev. Ron VanOverloop
O-11243 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(rvanoverloop22@gmail.com)

Teacher needed


Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School (Loveland, CO) will be hiring a full-time elementary teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. All interested applicants should contact the school Administrator BJ Mowery (970) 218.3420 bmowery@lovelandprcs.org or Education Chairman Joe Ophoff (970) 818.6790 joe@scotthomeinspection.com.

Teacher needed

The **Edmonton PR Christian School** is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2020–2021 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–5 minus grade 4. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780.



After a fifteen-year hiatus from the *Unfolding Covenant History* series, and writing fourteen other titles published by the RFPA, Prof. David J. Engelsma continues this covenantal exposition of the Old Testament. The RFPA is happy to report that volume 6: *From Samuel to Solomon* will be available in April and sent to all our book club members!

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