

# *The Banner* *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

*In This Issue...*

Kindness to the Least  
of These

Take the Young Child

Spiritual Warfare with  
Spiritual Weapons

Cleansed!



THE BANNER OF  
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

Publication Number (USPS 010584)

Official Publication of the Heritage Reformed denomination. Typeset at Grand Rapids, Michigan (Gardner Graphics); printed at Grand Rapids, Michigan (Gilson Graphics).

Subscription price for ten issues per year: \$20.00 in the United States. \$30.00 in Canada, payable in U.S. funds. To foreign countries \$35.00 surface mail) or \$65.00 (air mail), payable in U.S. funds. Rates listed are for one year subscriptions.

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Copy for the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* is due the 5th of the month prior to publication. All copy (including announcements, obituaries, anniversary notices, and ads) should be sent to the editor. All announcements submitted for publication should be typed, and are subject to editorial policy. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to the subscription manager. Change of address should be forwarded to the subscription manager one month in advance of moving date. Please provide both new and old address.

PERIODICAL Postage is Paid at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to "The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth," 1875 Leonard Street, NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504.

**Additional Sources**

For a list of printed Reformed literature (both new and used books in English, and used books in Dutch), write: Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard Street, N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525, or visit our on-line bookstore at [www.heritagebooks.org](http://www.heritagebooks.org).

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For material related to theological training write: Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, 2965 Leonard Street, N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525.

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## THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATION

*"The glory of the incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze not a humanized God or a deified man, but a true God-man—One who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is: One on whose almighty arm we can rest, and to whose human sympathy we can appeal."*

—Benjamin B. Warfield

## Take the Young Child

*Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*

—Matthew 2:13

*“Take the young child and his mother.”* The Child is named first. The mother does not go with her Child; no, the opposite is true. In the same manner as Christ takes His mother to Egypt, He takes His church with Him, for His mother typifies the church in this Scripture passage. He has not only assumed the flesh and blood of Mary, but also through her He has assumed the flesh and blood of His church. Through His birth He has become one with His church except in sin. Through this union He takes them with Him in His humiliation and in His exaltation.

Christ takes His people with Him in His humiliation, for unless they are humbled with Him, they will not be exalted with Him. His church must go along in a way that they do not understand. It is a way in which they are exposed to their sinful nature. That is why Herod was only used as the means to send this Child to Egypt. It had to be to Egypt, the house of bondage, where once the people of Israel were slaves to the evil one and to their own sins. They had served the idols there, and if God had not brought them into great need, they would never have wanted to leave.

For that reason this Child must go to Egypt. Christ must suffer and go through a way of humiliation even from the day of His birth. The church must travel along, also today, because they must learn from whence they came. Their origin lies in Egypt, in a lost paradise, in sin. Therefore, this Child must go in a way of humiliation. The more Christ is followed, the smaller, the more sinful, and the more insignificant a person will be. Or is it not true that Christ, as Surety, takes His mother along? This is the way of His mediatorial suffering through which He shows guilty sinners where their guilt lies. Only in this way can He become a Surety for His people.

Perhaps there are among our readers those who see their salvation in this Child. What an unspeakable joy this is for sorrowful sinners! A way is opened for them where there was previously no way. There is a desire, at such a time, to build tabernacles in Bethlehem because they cannot find life in any other place. They must not marvel too much, however, when that blessed time is broken down. There may come periods in their life when they do not know what to believe. It is so necessary that after Bethlehem they come into Egypt. It is not a way that they would have chosen or could have known.

That Child is dearly beloved in Bethlehem but no less beloved in Egypt, because His going into Egypt points to the fact that He is fulfilling His mediatorial work. He takes His mother along, for He knows better what must be done to fulfill the law of God than does His church whom He must save. If His church would have to show the way, then it would be lost forever, for they are more lost than they realize. They want to build tabernacles with the disciples. They want to rest too soon. But the fact that Christ went to Egypt is rich comfort for lost sinners; otherwise they could never be delivered from Egypt. Scripture had to be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt have I called my Son.” Oh, what a wonder that Christ takes them along in His humiliation so that He can take them along in His exaltation! The deepest trials provide at times the deepest reasons for thanksgiving.

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## DEFEATING SATAN: OUR CHALLENGE AS CITIZENS (1)

Finally, our challenge to defeat Satan as Christian citizens in our respective nations involves resolutions that we should make in the strength of Christ by faith:


1. *Resolve to evangelize by spreading the truth wherever possible.* Satan is the father of liars; he is both liar and the lie. He is the antithesis of God, who is the essence of truth. God the Father declares truth (John 1:18), God the Son is the personification of truth (John 1:17; 14:6), and God the Holy Spirit leads us into truth (John 17:17; 16:13). God is absolute, unconditional truth; He cannot lie or be untruthful (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). As Psalm 111:7–8 says, “The works of his hands are truth and judgment; all his precepts are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.” Truth is a glorious attribute of God. All lies are sin, for they are a contradiction of God as truth.

Therefore, God loves truth. Thomas Goodwin said, “God hath but three things dear unto Him in this world—His saints, His worship, and His truth, and it is hard to say which of these is dearest unto Him.” People who are committed to Satan’s downfall and Christ’s increase spread the truth. Resolve to be such a person.

Do you wonder how to go about that? Spreading the truth begins in the closet of prayer. Ask God every morning to make your life a force for truth that day. Ask Him to help you forget yourself and remember Him by proclaiming His truth in what you say and do. Pray for openings to speak a good word for God, then anticipate and act upon such opportunities. Force yourself not to let any opportunity slip by without saying some word for God. The more you do that, the easier it will become.

Let me give you two quick examples. As a pastor, I am often asked to visit people in the hospital. When I get on the elevator, I usually make it a point to converse with those who are riding with me. I break the typical silence on elevators with a friendly comment or two, perhaps about the weather. Most of the time, other people respond warmly. I then ask, “Do you have a relative or a good friend in the hospital?” In almost every case, they do, so they talk about whom they are seeing and what the situation is. If we get off at the same floor, conversation often continues. I have had many opportunities to pray with such people, who, minutes before, had been total strangers to me. I have often followed up those pastoring opportunities by sending them Reformed literature.

I also initiate conversation with people on airplanes. I have resolved to do that whenever I fly alone. At first this was hard work! But, over time, I have come to enjoy witnessing to people on airplanes. For one thing, due to the anonymity of airplanes, people are almost always willing to open up about their lives. Most of the time, they accept some Reformed literature that I purposely carry with me. Before we land, I offer to send them more free literature. About

 Our challenge to defeat Satan as Christian citizens in our respective nations involves resolutions that we should make in the strength of Christ by faith:

1. *Resolve to evangelize by spreading the truth wherever possible.*
2. *Resolve to extend Christ’s love to the poor and needy.*

half of the people accept that offer and provide me with their address.

No doubt many of these efforts remain fruitless, but who can tell? Ecclesiastes 11:1 says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." One time while flying over New York state, I gave some literature to a stewardess, who was an unbeliever. As we were landing, she asked me if I would send her some sermons by tape because she had to drive ninety miles to work every day. I sent her twenty tapes. A few weeks later, she sent me a letter expressing how much the sermons meant to her. Needless to say, I sent her more tapes.

Life is incredibly short. Let the truth convict you of sin, liberate you in Christ, and transform you into a spreader of truth. "Keep the truth, and the truth will keep you," said William Bridge. Spread the truth wherever you can, in whatever way best fits the gifts that God has given you. Spread truth in private conversations, tracts, tapes, periodicals, books, radio, and email. Spread truth in your home, your church, your Sunday school, and among your neighbors. Spread truth in society, in jails, in nursing homes, and on the street.

A friend in Cape Town, South Africa, gives himself to a full-time ministry of spreading John Blanchard's *Ultimate Questions* to anyone who will take them. He has numerous stories to tell of how God has blessed the handing out of tens of thousands of these booklets. His greatest expense is buying several pairs of shoes each year, due to their wearing out from his walking the streets for ten to twelve hours a day. Closer to home, I have an uncle in his eighties who always carries in his pocket several copies of the Inheritance Publishers' sermon booklets. Wherever he goes, he seeks to spread truth by striking up a conversation with people with the goal of getting a booklet into their hands. Once, at a church meeting, we heard numerous sirens; he disappeared for a while, only to return with great excitement. "A large crowd had gathered around a motorcyclist who had hit a car, flipped onto the grass, and was doing well," he said. "But, best of all," he added, opening his suitcoat, and showing his empty pockets, "I was able to give away all my sermons in one place!"

What truth do we spread? If we are not saved, we pervert truth and our lives spread lies, for we belong to the liar, Satan. Every moment that we do not glorify God, live by faith, and walk according to the spirit of the law, we bear false witness to our Creator. If we are saved, our lives must increasingly spread the truth, for we are of Christ, who is the Truth. Do not be shy about speaking up for Christ. The world isn't shy about its false agenda; why should Christians be shy about telling others about life-changing Truth? Thomas Brooks wrote, "Every parcel of truth is precious as the filings of gold; we must either live with it, or die for it."

If you would expose Satan's weakness, resolve to live

as a light on the hill and salt in the earth. Let your life be contagious. Let love and truth abound, remembering that the deepest need of our nation is not the legislation of godliness and morality from the top down but the conversion of ordinary people, one at a time, from the grass-roots level. One-on-one evangelism, not national politics, can save our backslidden countries.

Buy the truth (Prov. 23:23). Be a prayerful, persistent, dedicated spreader of truth. Know the truth (John 8:32), do the truth (John 3:21), and abide in the truth (John 8:44). Be a truth-teller and a truth-liver. Follow the advice of John Hus: "Search the truth, hear truth, learn truth, love truth, speak the truth, hold the truth till death." Then your salt will not lose its saltiness as a Christian citizen of your nation.

2. *Resolve to extend Christ's love to the poor and needy.* Satan's cause gets stronger when Christians turn a blind eye and deaf ear to social concerns. James sternly warns us of God's judgment on not caring for people in need. He says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (2:15-17).

We must reach out to our needy neighbor both in word and deed. John Stott says, "Why should Christians get involved? In the end there are only two possible attitudes which Christians can adopt towards the world: Escape and Engagement." "Escape," Stott explains, means turning our backs on the world. It means rejecting unbelievers, washing our hands of them, and steeling our hearts against their agonized cries for help. By contrast, "engagement" means turning our faces toward the world in compassion and getting our hands dirty, sore, and worn in its service. It means "feeling deep within us the stirring of the love which cannot be contained." Stott concludes: "If we truly love our neighbors, and...desire to serve them, we shall be concerned for their total welfare, the well-being of their soul, their body and their community. And our concern will lead to practical programs" (*Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, pp. 14, 19).

The Dutch Reformed liturgy for marriage challenges a new husband to work faithfully so that he may maintain his household honestly "and likewise have something to give to the poor" (*Psalter*, p. 77). What are we giving of our time and financial resources to help the poor? Are we reaching out to them in word and deed?

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## Cleansed!

Read Nehemiah 13

*There is a subtlety to sin. It covers its tracks. It blinds the eyes of the sinner to its evil and often moves imperceptibly to further sin. This is true at a personal level as well as at a collective level. Churches regress, but many call it progress. It takes a man whose eyes have been opened to understand the evil of evil, expose it, expel it, and exchange it for the good.*

Nehemiah had been given this kind of extraordinary grace; we see a very apt account of it in this last chapter of the book. While he had been away for some years, earlier reforms were reversed. Sin was allowed to go unchecked and it had festered and corrupted very important things: the temple was defiled, the Sabbath was desecrated, and marriage was dishonored. These were blessings that God had given for the people's good, and they had corrupted them by their sin. But God sent His servant Nehemiah to shine the light of the Word of God so that sin would appear exceedingly sinful. Nehemiah ordered and undertook the cleansing of these beautiful institutions. Herein, he was a shadow of Jesus Christ, who has accomplished a far greater cleansing. He cleansed His people from all sin and consecrated them to God.

### The Temple Defiled and Cleansed

How did a man who at one time wanted to destroy the walls of a city later have his own room in the most sacred precinct of the city? When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem after some years back in Shushan, he found Tobiah's name virtually on the door of a room in the temple (Neh. 13:5). God had specifically instructed that "an Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD" (Deut. 23:3). And now Tobiah had office-space in the very courts of God! Scripture calls the space he was using a "great room." It was the room where at one time tithes were stored that would go to the Levites and other temple servants (v. 5).

How had this happened? It had happened because the guardian of the temple, Eliashib, did not guard his heart. That is where the problem began. Verse 4 tells us that

he "was allied unto Tobiah." How could someone guard the temple when he couldn't guard his own heart? If you can't keep the enemy out of your desires, you can't keep him out of your domain.

By contrast, Nehemiah recognized this as evil (Neh. 13:7). Thank God for men who see evil as evil and aren't afraid to call it so, and God help us if we don't see it. Our natural hearts are not sensitized to sin. The tempter proposes something to us, and our hearts are blinded. Sometimes this happens gradually. What at one time appeared as sin may gradually seem less evil, then seem neutral, then seem potentially helpful, then seem actually good. In the end, we call evil good and good evil (Isa. 5:20).

Nehemiah was so sensitive to sin that he was sorely grieved by it. This is what true godly sorrow does to a man. According to Paul, godly sorrow shows itself in "carefulness," "indignation," "vehement desire," and "revenge" (2 Cor. 7:11). This is what we see in Nehemiah's reaction to sin. With holy boldness, Nehemiah "cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber" (v. 8). He showed something of what we see later in Jesus, who was consumed with zeal for the house of the Lord and overturned the tables of the moneychangers. Nehemiah issued the command to cleanse the chambers and restore the rooms to their proper use, namely, the storage of the tithes. For the proper collection and distribution of the tithes, he set up a committee of faithful men (v. 13). Nehemiah understood the primary importance of faithfulness in the execution of any office. It is not without cause that we are told that Christ was preeminently faithful, and that through Him we, too, must and can be faithful (Heb. 3:1-5).

## The Sabbath Desecrated and Sanctified

Next we read that Nehemiah noticed some Judeans working their crops on the Sabbath day; others were buying from merchants from Tyre on the Sabbath. Nehemiah was not afraid to confront the Sabbath-breakers themselves. But he also addressed the authorities, who were turning a blind eye to it. He said, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?" They may have thought that, since they were not personally breaking the Sabbath, they were off the hook. However, in their official capacity, they were part of the problem. Because they were *omitting* to do what they were supposed to do, others were *committing* what they were not supposed to do. This is a perfect example of how great a responsibility it is to be a leader in the household of faith, or even a leader at home!

Nehemiah showed the courage of a godly leader. He challenged other leaders to lead righteously and set the example. He even took an extra step to beat sin back. According to verse 21, he confronted the merchants from Tyre who had set up camp outside the city gates. Presumably, they were planning to enter at the first opportunity. Nehemiah saw how this threatened the Sabbath. Sin was lying at the door, and it needed to be beaten back. Nehemiah's response shows how concerned he was to nip sin in the bud.

Nehemiah not only acted negatively in forbidding things on the Sabbath; he also took positive steps. He instructed the Levites to cleanse themselves in order that they could aid the people in sanctifying the Sabbath day (v. 22). What a delight the Sabbath can be when we use it as God has ordained! Sadly, we don't know what is best for us, and we regularly let the world encroach on the day of rest that God has given us. How we should seek the cleansing of Christ's blood and the new obedience that can be found in the Lord of the Sabbath Himself.

## Marriage Dishonored and Reformed

A third gift of God that man often ruins is the gift of marriage. The specific issue Nehemiah faced was the problem of mixed marriages: Judeans married people from surrounding cultures who had not wholeheartedly joined the people of God. Israel then was to be ethnically separate in a way that no longer applies now. Yet, God's gift of marriage can still be ruined by heedlessly engaging in an unwise union. This happens when believers marry unbelievers, or people raised under the truth marry those who do not know the truth. Mixed marriages are still a plague in the household of faith. How they can ruin lives, not to mention the church and children!

Why are mixed marriages so tempting? Sadly, we can quickly throw caution to the wind, especially when emotions overtake us. Sin has the tendency to hide or

excuse itself. We need discretion, discernment, and submission to God's Word. Parents need wisdom to give biblical guidance and teaching to their children about marriage, and courage to face their teenage son or young adult daughter if they come home with a contemporary "Ammonite."

Nehemiah knew the power and authority of Scripture. He used the example of Solomon to convict and convince the people of their treacherous actions. In one particular case, he chased away a priest, who had married into the family of an arch-enemy of God's Zion.

Reformers like Nehemiah swim upstream. When the rest of the world or church commits and countenances sin, they search it out and stand against it. Let's thank God for courageous leaders like Nehemiah and, in the power of Christ, seek to emulate his godly example. And especially let us see in Nehemiah the faint outline of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for the church "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

## Questions:

1. How was Nehemiah sensitive to the subtlety and damage of sin? Look at the references he makes to "evil" in this passage.
2. How can leaders be guilty of the sins they don't personally commit? What does this say to us if we are officers, parents, etc.?
3. How did Nehemiah use the Scriptures? What can we learn from him about their value in the battle against sin?
4. How did Nehemiah nip sin in the bud, and how important is this? Give examples of how this can be done.
5. Some think that Nehemiah's prayers (vv. 14, 22, 31) sound self-righteous. Yet, they express his need for God's mercy. What was Nehemiah praying for?

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## Spiritual Warfare with Spiritual Weapons

*“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth” (Deut. 20:16).*

In Deuteronomy, God commanded the Israelites to remove a number of nations and peoples out of the Promised Land by killing all the men, women, and children living there. The difficulty of vindicating God for commanding this, and His people for doing it, was raised in a letter I received. As it gives us a clear summary of this difficulty and the questions it provokes, I will quote a section of it:

I’m still left with the difficult problem of Jericho.... My question would be why were the Israelites so aggressive? I’m sure in those days there was plenty of land for all; was it really necessary to butcher the whole city except one family? Yes, I know that the penalty for sin was death, but couldn’t they have tried to at least convert them? This murderous attitude is the attitude the Muslims had when Mohammed was trying desperately to start his religion. This kind of story is one which many people use to preach against Christianity, especially Muslims. How can we call Muslims bloodthirsty? How can we call ourselves peaceful? If we take the Old Testament example of Israel’s destruction of Jericho, should we cut the throats of those that don’t believe?

The question, then, is, “Should we kill our spiritual enemies?” Or, in the context of our letter-writer, “Should we kill Muslims or others who are strongly opposed to the gospel?” First, some negatives. The Canaanites were not killed because Israel was good. Israel was explicitly forbidden from coming to this conclusion (Deut. 9:4). Neither were the Canaanites killed because God was bad. We must not think that God’s actions were arbitrary, capricious, or bad-tempered. As we shall see, there was wise, reasonable, and thoughtful purpose behind the command to kill the Canaanites. Also, we must disagree with those who explain this policy by proposing that God changed between the Old and New Testaments—from angry to loving, from wrathful to gracious. God is unchangeable in His being.

What then can we say in defense of God’s commands and the Israelites’ actions? We would like to make ten points.

### 1. The Canaanites were some of the most wicked people that ever lived

Over recent years, historians and archaeologists have uncovered numerous clues and artifacts which clearly portray the moral, social, and spiritual depths to which the Canaanites had sunk. They were indescribably, and

almost unimaginably, depraved. By some reckonings, they were probably about the third most wicked race that ever lived—after Noah’s generation and the people of Sodom and Gommorah. And, as such, far from being innocent victims of an unjust and cruel foreign policy, they were a moral cancer endangering the whole human race. The kindest thing that God could do for humanity, then, was to cut out every root and fiber of these wicked people, whose lifestyle invited widespread, international, divine judgment. Moreover, God had given the Canaanites hundreds of years to repent (Gen. 15:16). God had given them time, but now God gave them up. Their iniquity was now full to overflowing, and so, therefore, was God’s anger and judgment.

But, even in this display of God’s holy justice, we find mercy in God’s offer of peace to the more peripheral Canaanite cities (Deut. 20:10–11). If they surrendered to Israel, they were to be spared. And, even if they didn’t, Israel was to spare the women and children in these cities.

Do we not see here a picture of gospel grace to evil and wicked men and women everywhere? God has announced the sentence of judgment on the whole human race. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4). However, in the gospel, terms of mercy and peace are whispered to those who have ears to hear. Have you taken this opportunity to surrender?

### 2. It impressed upon the Israelites the exceeding sinfulness of sin

On these killing fields, the Israelites learned in a new and unforgettable way that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). They saw the bloody and fatal consequences of sinning against God right in front of their eyes. But, some say, why was hand-to-hand killing necessary? Why did God not send a natural disaster—say, a plague or a flood? Well, by being God’s personal executioners of wicked people, Israel would best understand God’s hatred for sin. Instead of hearing the news of thousands of deaths in distant cities and lands, the deaths of the Canaanites were a daily, depressing, and exhausting experience. Imagine how awful to have awakened every day knowing that the cold-blooded killing of men, women, and children was going to fill the day. Imagine what it must have felt like to go to bed after a day of such killing, knowing that many more days of this lay ahead. How fearfully and awfully suited this was to teach Israel the sinfulness of sin, which required such justice!

One reason why people are unable to understand the need for the Canaanite conquest is the inability to under-

stand how heinous and punishable sin is. The Canaanite conquest was caused by their sinful rebellion against God. Is the Canaanite conquest a cause of sinful rebellion in you? The more we leave behind our shallow views of sin and understand more and more of its true nature, the more we will understand not just the Canaanite conquest, but the grace that has spared and saved us who also deserve judgment and death.

### **3. The honor of God's attributes was at stake**

One of the results of the Canaanite lifestyle—or should we say “death-style”—was that God's character was being impugned. People were looking at what the Canaanites were doing, without any apparent consequence and concluding, “God cannot be holy if He does not act against such behavior.” Or they would say, “If He is holy, He cannot be powerful, for we would see evident divine action.” God's character was at stake, and the Canaanite conquest helped restore it in the public eye. Afterward, onlookers would surely conclude, “God is holy and God is powerful.”

But, it might be said, “Does not the killing of women and children put a stain on God's attributes?” Israel's history reveals that it was often the heathen women who were a greater danger than the men. All the powers of Balaam and Balak could not touch Israel in Numbers 22–24, but in the very next chapter we read of the success of the Moabite women in making Israel sin (Num. 25:1–5; 31:15–16). The virtue of women is often one of the main restraints on immorality in society. But, when this is removed, women can become more dangerous than men and, as we can see all around us, the degeneration of society accelerates.

What about the children, though? Was it really necessary for them to die? Well, it has been shown that very young children follow in the habits and morals of their parents, even if removed from them at a very early age. Even today, in parts of the Arab world, we can see the powerful effect of anti-Israel indoctrination at an early age. Any one of these Canaanite children could have grown into a Pharaoh or a Nebuchadnezzar.

God is the Potter and we are the clay. We must, therefore, be willing to be used and shaped by Him to show forth His attributes (Rom. 9:21–23). God's honor is more important than ours. God's character is more important than our comfort.

### **4. It may have been God's way of saving the souls of some Canaanites**

Terrible though the end of these Canaanite children was in this world, it is worth noting the possibility that if they were elect infants, they were perhaps spared something far worse—a lifetime of abuse and depravity followed by an eternity in hell. Canaanite children were often forced into temple prostitution, sodomy, sacrifice

to idols, and other unspeakable practices. Early death spared them these traumas.

Also, if we believe that there is an age of responsibility in children, before which they will not be held accountable to God for their response to the gospel because of their mental incapacity, then we can see that the Canaanite conquest may well have been God's way of saving some Canaanite children not only from a traumatic life in this world, but also from a tormenting eternity in hell. Perhaps there are elect Canaanite children in heaven right now, thanking God that they were slain in infancy before they became culpable and answerable for their sins.

You have perhaps lived a long and privileged life. Unlike these Canaanite children, you have been blessed with many temporal and spiritual blessings. But what have you done with them? Remember you will be held accountable. “To whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required” (Luke 12:48).

### **5. The physical line of the promised Messiah was under great threat**

The Promised Land was required for Israel to be formed into a secure nation, and a secure Israel was required if the promised Messiah was eventually to come forth from it. This is why only the six or seven nations and peoples which occupied the Promised Land were to be exterminated, and the more distant peoples were offered peace.

Why, though, it might be asked, could Israel not live side by side with the Canaanites? As our correspondent put it, was there not plenty of land? Well, Scripture records that the aggressors were often the Canaanites themselves. The Canaanite conquest was based partly on the premise, “Kill or be killed. Exterminate or be exterminated.” If Israel did not conquer, they would have been conquered, the Messiah's descent from Israel jeopardized, and with it the salvation of sinners everywhere. Out of love to humanity, physical threats to Israel's security had to be removed. It was “save none alive” so that, eventually, many might be saved alive (Deut. 20:18). It was better that some lives perish than that God's truth, God's Messiah, and God's church disappear.

The whole of history leads up to, centers upon, and flows from the Messiah. God's plan for this world revolves around Christ. Everything else is secondary. Does your life lead up to, center upon, flow from, and revolve around the Lord Jesus? Is everything else secondary?

### **6. God commanded other nations to war against Israel at times**

Old Testament wars were often judicial. They were God's way of punishing evildoers. As such, Israel was not exempt. There were times when God commanded other

nations to go to war against Israel for their sins to teach Israel not to presume upon God's favor (Jer. 4:19–31)

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Let us beware of presuming upon God's favor. Let us be warned that God will chasten even those whom He loves, if they require it.

### **7. It was a temporary requirement at a unique time in redemptive history**

There are once-for-all and unrepeatable events in the unfolding plan of God (e.g., the creation, the Exodus, the giving of the law at Sinai, Christ's death, Pentecost, etc.). To this we should also add the conquest of the Promised Land. The aggressive holy war it required was limited to the seven named nations at that one special period in history when God's people were being formed into a nation.

Let us be careful about making exceptions our rules. Let us be aware of the danger of making a temporary one-time necessity a pattern for everyday Christian living. By so doing, we "wrest the Scriptures" to our own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). The charismatic church's errors in the area of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the result of failing to see Pentecost as a one-time, unrepeatable event which was necessary to energize the New Testament church by giving signs and wonders to confirm the truths the apostles were preaching.

### **8. We should marvel at the longsuffering of God today**

When we see the just judgment that God visited on the Canaanites for their sins, we should marvel that He is not visiting us more severely today. Many of the evil Canaanite practices are among us. There is the blood-filled tidal wave of abortion sweeping away millions of babies a year. There is the homosexuality that is now not only tolerated but promoted in legislation, in our schools, and even in some churches. There are the false religions that are being given preferential treatment above the true religion of Christ. There is the blasphemy that fills the TV channels. There is the pornography that is destroying so many marriages and young people.

Oh, the longsuffering of God! Oh, the patience! Oh, the slowness to anger! However, perhaps in Islamic terrorism we are beginning to hear the distant whispers of divine judgment. Perhaps this is the new Babylon which, like the old, results in curtailed personal freedom and a captivity of national fear. Think of the terror that stalks us at home and abroad. Are these whispers of judgment not getting louder? Is the thunder getting closer? Oh, that the longsuffering of God would lead us all to repentance!

### **9. An idea of the final judgment is vividly set before us all**

God is spoken of in Scripture as a "man of war" (Ex.

15:3) and the Lord of hosts ("armies"). This war imagery is continued in the New Testament when it speaks of the events leading up to and including the final judgment (2 Thess. 2:5–10; Rev. 16:16). In other words, the Canaanite conquest is a foreshadowing of Christ's final conquest, armed with His sharp sword and clothed with His blood-stained vesture (Rev. 19:11–16).

Are you ready for this final battle? Which side will you be on? Will you be with the Conqueror or the conquered? If only souls were more concerned with and interested in Christ's conquest than the Canaanite conquest, how many more souls would be saved and safe! May consideration of the Canaanite conquest save you from Christ the Conqueror.

### **10. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual**

As we have already said, this period of conquest was limited in time. The weapons of that time must be sheathed, blunted, and broken. The New Testament church has no right to take the sword to advance the cause of Christ in an aggressive way (John 18:36). But He has not left His people defenseless. He has provided them with both defensive armor and aggressive weapons made not of metal but of truth, peace, faith, etc. (Eph. 6:13–17).

So, should Christians kill Muslims in order to advance the church of Christ? Of course not. But we should wage spiritual war against their beliefs with spiritual weapons (2 Cor. 10:4–5). They may come to us with bombs and bullets and terror. We come with the almighty power of words and love and peace. It may, of course, be necessary for a nation to take military action to protect the citizens entrusted to its care (Rom. 13:3–4). But this must not be confused with the response of Christians and churches to Islamic hostility. The right response is to love Muslims "to death"—to love them until they are converted to Christ one by one and Islam dies out. Or, better said, we should "love them to life."

Let the whole world know that Christians are the Muslim's greatest friends, the Roman Catholic's greatest friends, the secular state's greatest friends—even if they treat us as if we were their greatest enemies and wish to even kill us. We come to them with a crucified and risen Christ. We declare: "We come to you with the Christ who said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10). We come to you with the Christ who loved the very enemies who tortured Him to death, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). We set Him before you and say, 'Look and live.' Oh, false religions, look to the incomparable and all compelling Christ!"

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## PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

Mary Beeke

# Kindness to the Least of These

The least are the most. Let's listen in. Jesus, the Master Teacher, is privately instructing His disciples on the Mount of Olives. He is telling them what will happen in the near and distant future. He said, as it were, "You will have hard times because you are a believer. Watch out for false prophets. I have given you resources. Use them wisely. Be ready at all times, because you don't know when I am coming back."

Jesus said He would return on the Day of Judgment with His angels to gather all people around Him. He would divide them into two groups. On His right will be the chosen ones who will live in heaven with Him, those who have followed Him in their lives. On His left will be those who have rejected Him and who will be cast into the torments of hell.

He describes their character as He addresses them. To those on His right, He says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:34-36).

They are bewildered. They don't remember doing these things for Him. When had they seen Him hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, or imprisoned?

Then comes our Lord's marvelous, humble, beautiful answer. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

King Jesus is actually saying that the very lowliest Christian is so much a part of Himself that an act of kindness shown to one of them is the same as if it had been done to Himself. What precious, astounding love this is! He is perfectly holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, and unchangeable. And He places Himself right next to lowly sinners.

That same tender love should be so ingrained into God's children that they perform these acts without thinking about them and without expecting recognition or reward. The power of the Holy Spirit breeds compassion, love, and humility, which are the source of these acts of kindness. It then happens spontaneously, and it gives such joy that they repeat it, and it becomes a habit.

**Yes, but. . .**

These little acts of kindness are wonderful, we might say, but aren't they optional? What's wrong with neutrality? Isn't it enough just to live as a decent, law-abiding citizen? Let's see what Jesus says.

Jesus addresses those who did *not* feed the hungry, give a drink to the thirsty, take in strangers, clothe the naked, or visit the sick and the prisoner. His words are strong: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

They are just as bewildered. They make excuses. They also ask when it was that they saw Him hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, or imprisoned. His answer is similar, yet so very different: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Does this mean that we earn heaven with our good works? No. Jesus earned salvation for believers. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Rather, it is the fruit of salvation we are discussing. God's grace emanates from the believer in the form of love to the needy. It is the result of being a Christian, not the cause of it.

This passage focuses on being kind to Christians. What about the rest of the world? Galatians 6:10 clearly explains the balance: "As we have therefore

opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Give special care to believers who are needy, then don't hold back with kindness to everyone else. And let's look for many opportunities!

### **The least are the most—today**

What does this mean for us today? It means our worldview is turned upside-down. Rather than the rich, the famous, and the beautiful standing in our spotlight of importance, we turn our gaze to the down-and-outers.

It means we look at the man with out-of-date clothing, a crooked face, and a dripping nose, and we see gentle eyes reflecting years of devotion to God and to his family, the loss of an infant son and his wife of 55 years, and a stroke.

It means we observe a person walking with a crooked limp, speaking loudly and slowly and not very articulately, and we see a man with cerebral palsy who works full-time, who remembers everybody's name and what he told them he'd pray for that week, and who expresses heartfelt gratitude for the smallest gesture of kindness.

It means we visit the ninety-eight-year-old lady—her hair disheveled, her eyes pale and blank, her arms cradling a doll as if it were a real baby—and we see the shadow of past beauty, her long-forgotten skill for decorating and cooking, and the twinkle in her eye that is no more.

It means we watch the frazzled mother yelling at her kids in the grocery store, and we see a woman who has been abused and deserted, who is hanging on to each day by her fingernails, trying to care for her children.

Do you know some people like this? I do. Isn't it time we take them from the lower tiers of our worthiness ladder, and place them at the top, near Jesus' heart? If Jesus values His children so much that He gave His life for them, ought we not value them highly as well? God is looking at our hearts. When He sees pure motives of love and humility, He honors them. "Love God above all, and our neighbor as ourselves" is the law for life. The astounding thing is that He plants that love there in the first place, and then He rewards what reflects His own love.

Once our hearts are properly aligned, the action can start. It is amazing what small, simple deeds Jesus recognizes: a meal, a drink, clothes, a visit. Taking someone into our home is a little bigger, but we must use the opportunities we have. God doesn't expect one person to do everything, but what opportunities has He placed on your path? Maybe you have a neighbor who is overwhelmed with her colicky newborn. Could you take care of the baby for

an hour a week to give her a break? Maybe your son's friend doesn't get along with his parents and escapes to your house frequently. Could you insert bits of wisdom into dinner conversation and be an example of a loving family to him? Maybe your co-worker is facing divorce because of his violence when he's drunk. Could you answer his questions about the Bible and teach him about the Lord?

There is a large group of little people that fits the description of "the least of these." They can't speak for themselves. They can't defend themselves. They are vulnerable. They are not protected from murder by the law. They are the unborn. Too many millions have died already. Since kindness to the least of these is so important to God, then surely these little ones are at the top of the list. Let's muster all the love of our hearts and do everything in our power to defend the lives of the unborn. Even though the war against abortion has been waging for decades, let's not grow weary, but fight on for the life of these precious unborn children. It's the least we can do. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

There is something very liberating about showing kindness to the least of these. We can let the floodgates of kindness go wide open. We don't have to worry about impressing others or who to be impressed by. We can simply look around us and find the most needy people, then go show love to them, no holds barred. We can allow ourselves to be vulnerable. We don't even have to worry about overdoing kindness. True kindness can't be wasted.

Jesus walked and talked kindness. He won souls by restoring broken lives. The politically correct Pharisees despised Him. The rich people didn't need Him. The strong and healthy didn't have time for Him. So He poured out His love and His Spirit to the lame, the blind, the demon-possessed, the poor, and the sinners. They repented of their sins, believed on Him, and followed Him.

For three short years, Jesus turned society on its head by making the least into the most, by taking the rejects of society and making them into Christians. His message has not dimmed. We must be Christians, and we must serve others. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42). "Be ye kind, one to another" (Eph. 4:32).

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# Christmas 2007

Rev. David Lipsy

## ***We Reformed folk find ourselves positioned between two worlds when Christmas comes around each year.***


We have always commemorated the great events of New Testament salvation history—Christ’s birth, His death, resurrection, etc.—with simple worship services. We reject the blatant commercialization and exploitation reflective of the world’s version of Christmas. On the other hand, some strains of Puritan convictions resident among us occasionally tap our consciences on the shoulder, asking from their perspective, “What about the regulative principle of worship?” So while the world is laughing and our conservative Presbyterian brethren perhaps are frowning, we annually find ourselves in a middle way between the two, commemorating Christ’s birth the way we do all the other salvation events—with a simple Word-centered worship service in church.

Perhaps some of us have never felt much of a tug from the one side or the other. Some of us have felt both—strongly. What are we to make of our peculiar situation? Is it laudable? Laughable? Reformed?

Perhaps this author is a bit more sensitive than the average reader about these things. Brought up Roman Catholic, thoroughly schooled in both secular and Reformed ways of celebrating the Savior’s birth, and having become increasingly conversant with the thinking of our Puritan forbearers and their modern-day counterparts, I have the advantage of a personal, even visceral appreciation for where we stand as Reformed Christians in relation to others.

From the very beginning of the Reformation, and particularly in the Netherlands, varied points of view about the commemorative days were present. Newly freed from the shackles of Roman Catholic theology, the Dutch Reformers knew that reformation would not take place overnight. Many lay folk had grown accustomed to Romish pageantry and traditions. So even though the gospel of free grace was, by God’s mercy, a welcomed breath of spiritual fresh air, there is evidence, even in the Church Order of Dort (1618–19), that the transition in practical matters from Roman Catholic traditions to Reformed principles was a gradual, sometimes painful one. Consider the original version of Article 69 which read:

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Song of Mary, that of Zacharias, and that of Simeon shall be sung. It is left to the individual Churches whether or not to use the hymn, “Oh God! who art our Father.” All other hymns are to be excluded from the Churches, and in those places where some have already been introduced, they are to be removed by the most suitable means.



In this one article alone we find the promotion of Psalmody, the sanction of a few “spiritual songs,” one hymn that might or might not be used, while all other hymns are forbidden and to be removed by the most expedient means. Thirty years later, the Westminster divines were able to make their stand on what came to be known as the “regulative principle of worship,” and more specifically the version of that principle which basically taught that nothing which Scripture doesn’t explicitly sanction ought to be included in the public worship of God.

So why a church service commemorating the Savior’s birth? Because the New Testament saints did not cast away days of special remembrance. Upon taking leave of Ephesus (Acts 18:21), Paul said to those who would have had him tarry longer, “I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.” Some would argue that the apostle was only using this feast where the Jews would be gathered together as an evangelistic opportunity—which we can be fairly certain he did. But why then say “keep this feast” if he meant only to attend it? Two chapters later we read, “For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.” Is the point that we should still be keeping these feast days? No. But Paul was doing what God had ever commanded His church to do regarding the great acts of salvation—remember them! Try a word search sometime on the word “remember” and consider some of the many passages in which it is found.

But didn’t Paul warn the Galatians, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain” (4:10–11)? Indeed, he did. Yet this warning in Galatians, like several others in that epistle, is not so much about *practices* as about *purposes*—the Galatians’ attempts to add law observance to gospel grace, hoping this combination would produce acceptance with God. If the apostle was for the abolishing of all days of remembrance, why would he exhort the Christians at Rome, “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it” (Rom. 14:5–6). If days of remembrance were abrogated, would the apostle leave the matter to individual consciences of believers? And how could one possibly regard such a day “unto the Lord”?

*(continued on page 274)*

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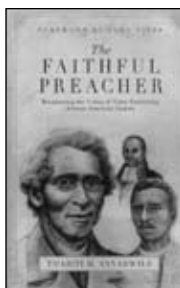


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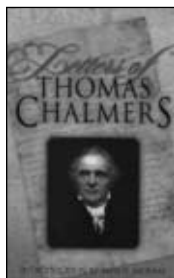
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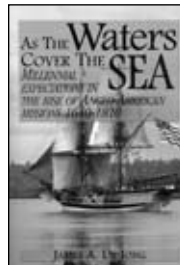


**Letters of Thomas Chalmers — Thomas Chalmers**

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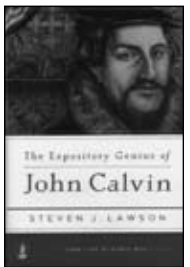


**The Backslider** — *Andrew Fuller*  
*The Backslider*, originally published in 1801, is among the best of the practical writings of Andrew Fuller. Like a trained physician, he explains the nature of the spiritual disease of backsliding, exposes its subtle symptoms, warns of its dangerous effects, and prescribes a gospel tonic for recovery. This book is not only for those who are suffering from a declining passion for God; it also serves as an excellent checkup for the healthy Christian.

(Solid Ground, 122 pages) \$13.00/9.00p

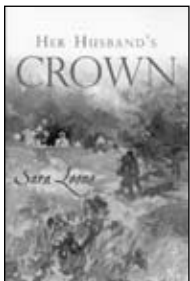
**Communion with God** — *Kelly Kapic*

John Owen is known as one of the heavyweights of Puritanism, whose profound treatises often overwhelm the casual reader. This has led many to think of Owen as a merely academic and abstract thinker. However, as Kelly Kapic ably demonstrates, Owen's methodological approach to theology always had a practical goal in mind. This book underscores Owen's sensitivity to the human condition and how he sought to cultivate communion with God in all of his theological pursuits. (Baker, 284 pages) \$28.00/20.00p



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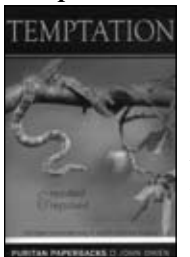
practical tips for beginning expositors and seasoned preachers alike. May God use it to revitalize Christ-centered and Spirit-empowered applicatory preaching today. (Reformation Trust, 158 pages) \$15.00/11.00



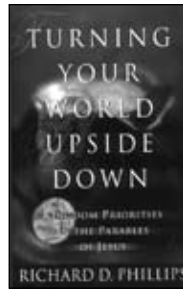
**Her Husband's Crown** — *Sarah J. Leone*  
 Although much has been written to prepare men for the work of the Christian ministry, there is comparatively little in print that will help prepare a pastor's wife for her role within the church. In addition to helping pastors' wives, *Her Husband's Crown* will be of encouragement to Christian wives in general, and will doubtless stir up much-needed prayer for pastors and their wives every-

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James W. Beeke

## The Advent Parent and Teacher

*“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.... Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste... and returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them” (Luke 2:8–20).*

The shepherds were familiar with darkness. Think of the darkness they experienced “keeping watch over their flock by night.” Their nights were long, lonely, and dangerous. How much they would anticipate the morning light! Think also of the darkness of Israel, of God’s people, at the time of the shepherds in our text. Israel was in bondage, serving the Romans! Think also of the darkness of God’s church at that time. Four hundred years of darkness without a single prophet from God, without any new word from the Lord!

Are you experiencing any personal darkness—the darkness of indwelling sin, darkness of your inward depravity, darkness of failure to love God above all and others as yourself, darkness of your inability to subdue sinful pride and lusts? Parents, if you evaluated your parenting this past year, are you discouraged and disappointed? Teachers, would you need to record a failing mark on your report card for living Christ-like before your students at all times?

Amazingly, as dark as the setting of Luke 2:8–20 is, this portion of Scripture is not about darkness, but about light. “And, lo, [“lo” is like an exclamation point for emphasis] the angel of the Lord came upon them [the shepherds in their darkness], and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.” This great light conquers darkness. We read of the glory of the Lord shining round about the shepherds and the angel of the Lord speaking to them. We see “with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.” What glorious light! How this light must have dispelled the shepherds’ darkness!

What was God’s message to the shepherds? What is God’s message to us today? Parents and teachers, what would God have you consider when you are discouraged and burdened under the weight of personal sins and shortcomings? What does the Lord want to draw your attention to when you are depressed over dark circumstances with your children or significant problems with your students? “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy...for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Consider the message this way: “Look and focus on this: I, God Himself, bring you who sit in darkness good tidings of great joy; for unto you, in your great need and darkness, is born this day in the city of David as promised, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” And what words of praise came from the heavenly host? “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

Are you looking for this Jesus? Is this the salvation you are anticipating? Are you an advent parent, an expectant teacher? This is how your life can glorify God and how you can experience peace of heart. The gospel is the glad tidings of God. This is the message of hope and deliverance. The Savior, Jesus Christ, is born. Look to Him. Go to Him. Bring the bill of your sins, no matter how high the price, to Him. Consider the infinite value of His blood-purchased righteousness. Roll the burdens of your sins and problems, no matter how heavy, upon Him. Go with your deepest pains and sorrows, no matter how distressful, to Him. Meditate on His high-priestly, infinitely merciful, and compassionate heart.

But you say, “I have not experienced the gospel. I have not found this ‘babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ I have not discovered Jesus personally in my life.” Let me illustrate with an example. If you, as a parent, tell your ten-year-old son that you will buy him a new bike, what is his reaction? As a teacher, if you tell your class that you will be going on a special class trip, how does the class respond? Your son has not received his bike yet and the class has not experienced their special trip yet, but don’t they respond with joy and anticipation? Why? Because they believe your word. They do not respond by saying, “But I have not seen anything of this bike yet, or we haven’t experienced anything of this class trip,” do they?

Similarly, when God announces the gospel of Jesus Christ, the glorious tidings of great joy to you and to all people, what is your response? The advent response is one of joy and anticipation. Do not focus on whether or not you have experienced the entire fulfilment of the gospel or enough of Jesus yet. Rejoice in



this announcement of the gospel. God often works in steps. Trust the Lord. He will fulfill every word that He promises.

You ask, "So what should I do?" Do what the shepherds did when they heard the wonderful announcement of the birth of the Savior. They said, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste...." There were no doubts here. No delays. No questionings. They went immediately, with haste. They went fully expecting to find exactly what God had told them. That is advent.

Go like the shepherds to find this Savior of sinners. You ask, "Where can I find Him?" Read God's Word expecting to find the Savior. Go to church looking for Jesus, trusting that you will find Him there. Go to prayer and use God's means of grace with anticipation. Go with all your burdens of personal sins and with all your burdens of parental and teacher concerns and problems. Go with expectancy. Go with an advent spirit.

What did the shepherds find? What did they experience? The same thing that everyone experiences when he or she trusts God and takes Him at His Word, expecting to find the fulfillment of that which He has promised. "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger"—exactly

as God had promised. What was the result? "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

God works in a way of misery, deliverance, and gratitude. See this truth illustrated in the lives of these shepherds. Do not be overly discouraged when you experience the misery and burden of your sin and the impossibility of your circumstances; God may use these experiences to direct you to hear the glad tidings of the gospel. To experience that, you must find Jesus. By going, by taking God at His Word, you will also experience the joy of His deliverance. This will overflow in gratitude, so that you will return, as the shepherds, "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

Those who live out Advent will truly experience the value of Christ's birth and will live lives of gratitude and praise to God. But lives without advent expectation will result in Christmases without Christ and lives devoid of living to God's honor.

*Are you an advent parent, an expectant teacher?*

---

**James W. Beeke** is an elder in the Chilliwack, British Columbia, Heritage Reformed congregation and is currently an educational consultant and superintendent of schools in China.

### **O Love Beyond Compare**

Thou art good when Thou givest,  
when Thou takest away,  
when the sun shines upon me,  
when night gathers over me.  
Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world,  
and in love didst redeem my soul;  
Thou dost love me still,  
in spite of my hard heart, ingratitude, distrust.  
Thy goodness has been with me during another year,  
leading me through a twisting wilderness,  
in retreat helping me to advance,  
when beaten back making sure headway.  
Thy goodness will be with me in the year ahead;  
I hoist sail and draw up anchor,  
With Thee as the blessed Pilot of my future as of my past.  
I bless Thee that Thou hast veiled my eyes to the waters ahead.  
If Thou hast appointed storms of tribulation,  
Thou wilt be with me in them;  
If I have to pass through tempests of persecution and temptation,  
I shall not drown;  
If I am to die, I shall see Thy face the sooner;  
If a painful end is to be my lot,  
grant me grace that my faith fail not;  
If I am to be cast aside from the service I love, I can make no stipulation;  
Only glorify Thyself in me whether in comfort or trial,  
as a chosen vessel meet always for Thy use.

— Valley of Vision

## The Undeserved Gift

Christmas is a time of joy, celebration, and gift-giving. Both Christians and non-Christians look forward to the Christmas season, but only believers can really appreciate the meaning of Christmas because they understand that Jesus is the “unspeakable gift” of God (2 Corinthians 9:15). They know that Christmas is meaningless without the Savior. Millions of people celebrate Christmas, but how many celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ? Many people go to special Christmas services even though they do not attend church throughout the rest of the year. Do they understand why God sent His only Son into the world?

Long ago, Gabriel announced to a few people that the Messiah was to be born. How many believed the angel’s words? When Zacharias was told that he and Elisabeth would have a son in their old age, Zacharias did not believe the angel’s message. Their son John would announce the coming of the great Messiah! But Zacharias doubted Gabriel’s words because he and Elisabeth were old, and had never had children. But did Zacharias’s unbelief stop God from fulfilling His promise? Did God become angry and change His mind? Did He punish Zacharias by giving the baby John to another, more “worthy” family? No, for God is not limited by His people’s unbelief. Even though Zacharias doubted Gabriel’s words, God remained faithful. Not long afterward, this elderly couple had a baby boy whom they named John, just as the angel had commanded.

Not everyone doubted the words of the angelic messengers. Mary and Joseph believed and obeyed the messages God sent to them by the angel. The shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem received the message with great joy. Simeon and Anna waited expectantly in the temple for the promised Messiah.

What about the rest of Israel, however? Tragically, many Jews rejected the Lord Jesus; many of them shouted “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” when He stood before Pilate. They did not want this Man to be their Savior. They did not believe that He, the son of Joseph and Mary, could be the promised Messiah. They were expecting a powerful king who would drive away the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel as a strong and united country.

Did Israel’s unbelief prevent God from finishing the great work of redemption? Did God have less power because of the Jews’ rebellion? Not at all! God is almighty



and needs no help from sinful people. What’s more, God does not become discouraged because of the rebellion and unbelief of His enemies. Even when His own people doubt Him, God continues His work. Even though Jesus was rejected and despised, God through Him continued and completed the great work of salvation. Unbelief will not stand in His way.

Why was God so determined to send the Lord Jesus, even though it seemed He was not welcome? One of the reasons is that His love cannot be measured. Who would ever give as freely and fully as God has? Paul exclaims in Romans 5:7–8: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” There is a greater reason, however, for God’s faithfulness. Paul gives us the answer when he writes to Timothy: “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). God’s greatest priority is His own honor. He cannot and will not break His promises. When He promised that a Savior would come to save His people from their sins, He was sincere and determined. No unbelief, no rebellion, no rejection would stop Him from carrying out the great work of salvation.

Does that mean it is all right to be an unbeliever? No! Unbelief will be severely punished. There are consequences for rejecting the greatest Gift ever given. Think how we insult God when we turn our backs on His beloved Son. God is patient and loving, but, one day, He will punish unbelief. If you are still an unbeliever, flee now to this precious Savior and beg for mercy. Confess your unbelief and your unwillingness to accept this perfect Gift. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you willing and to give you faith to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you will have a really blessed Christmas, for you will enjoy the best Gift! “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

# Bible Quiz

Look up the texts to find a word that begins with the letter given and which fits the number of spaces indicated in the "star."

**A. The letter H is at the center:**

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Matthew 2:7  | 5. Luke 2:13 |
| 2. Matthew 1:18 | 6. Luke 1:32 |
| 3. Luke 1:17    | 7. Luke 1:38 |
| 4. Luke 1:40    | 8. Luke 1:69 |

**B. The letter P is at the center:**

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Luke 2:10 | 5. Luke 2:29 |
| 2. Luke 1:70 | 6. Luke 2:36 |
| 3. Luke 2:20 | 7. Luke 1:5  |
| 4. Luke 2:19 | 8. John 1:15 |

**C. The letter D is at the center:**

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Luke 1:78 | 5. Luke 2:21    |
| 2. Luke 1:27 | 6. Luke 2:25    |
| 3. Luke 1:80 | 7. John 1:5     |
| 4. Luke 2:1  | 8. Matthew 2:12 |

**D. The letter E is at the center:**

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Luke 1:7     | 5. Micah 5:2    |
| 2. Matthew 2:1  | 6. Matthew 1:18 |
| 3. Matthew 1:23 | 7. Luke 2:21    |
| 4. Luke 2:30    | 8. John 1:23    |

**E. The letter B is at the center:**

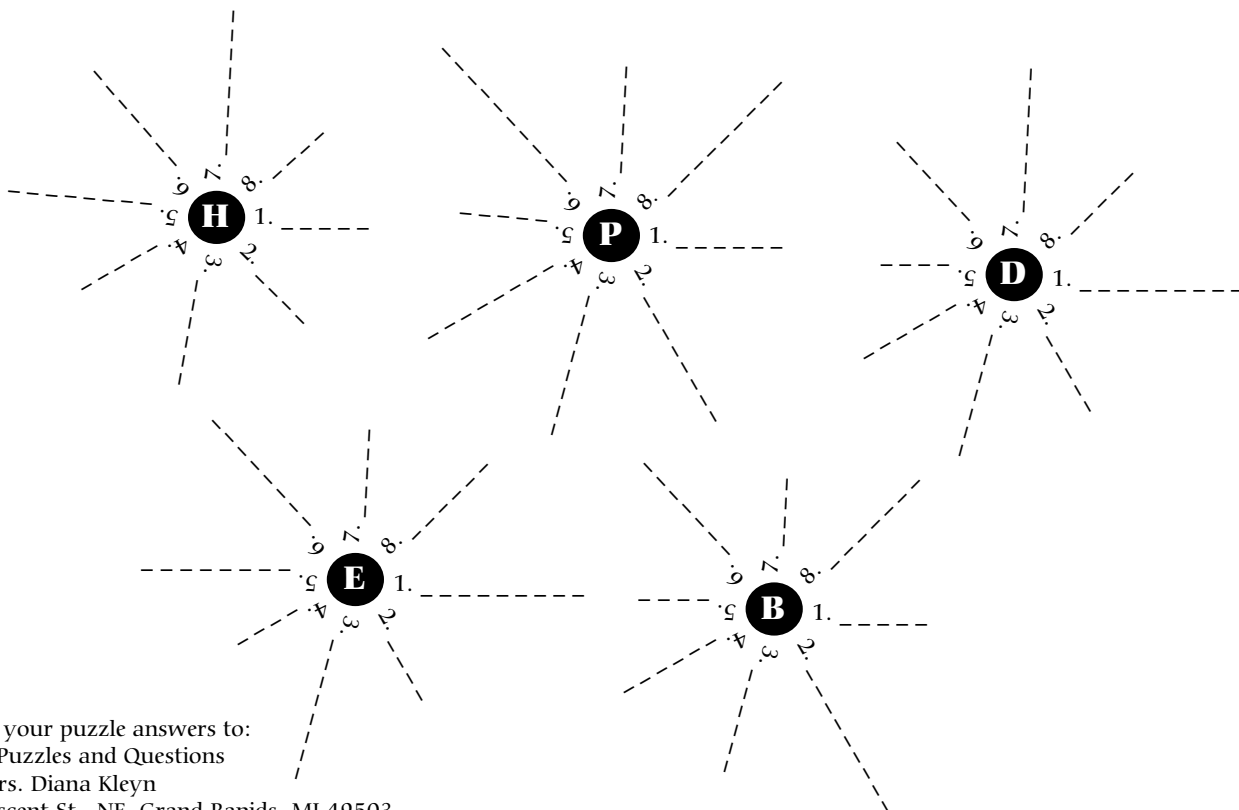
- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. Matthew 1:18 | 5. Luke 2:11 |
| 2. Luke 2:4     | 6. Luke 2:7  |
| 3. Luke 1:36    | 7. Luke 2:12 |
| 4. Luke 1:31    | 8. Luke 1:42 |

Here are the answers to last month's puzzle.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Reap       | 13. Deliver  |
| 2. Profit     | 14. Rich     |
| 3. Thieves    | 15. Himself  |
| 4. Sell       | 16. Fool     |
| 5. Lazarus    | 17. Levite   |
| 6. Silver     | 18. Entering |
| 7. Received   | 19. Gate     |
| 8. Dogs       | 20. Every    |
| 9. Seek       | 21. Yet      |
| 10. Knowledge | 22. The      |
| 11. Evil      | 23. Eyes     |
| 12. Lord      | 24. Steal    |

Thanks again to all who answered last month's quiz.

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Joel Averink         | Heino Ruitenbeek  |
| Emily Beeke          | Alex Talbot       |
| Lauren Bilkes        | Amanda Talbot     |
| Becky Boot           | Matthew Talbot    |
| Shelly Boot (2)      | Calvin Timmerman  |
| Hannah Burgsma       | Jared Timmerman   |
| Maggie Burgsma       | Leah Van Beek     |
| Matthew Burgsma      | Calvin VanBrugge  |
| Jessica DeWaal       | Jayden VanBrugge  |
| Joshua DeWaal        | Edwina Veldhuizen |
| Joanna Gillies (2)   | Erwin Veldhuizen  |
| Jonathan Gillies (2) | Elizabeth Wolfe   |
| Amanda Koppert       | Virginia Wolfe    |
| Hailey Meerdink      |                   |
| Nicholas Meschke (2) |                   |
| Angel Roos (2)       |                   |



Please send your puzzle answers to:  
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## Lessons in Patience

*"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, without walls" (Proverbs 25:28).*

"Be patient, my dear, be patient!" Mrs. Brown said those words many times one morning while she was helping her little boy, Johnny, wash and dress himself. Her words of admonition did little to restrain the restless, wide-awake little fellow, however. If a tangled curl did not come right the first time, or if the comb pulled a bit, he was sure to cry with frustration. He was always in such a hurry about everything.

"This is taking too long!" he kept saying, and sometimes he would stamp his little foot and a frown would turn down the corners of his mouth.

It was clear that little Johnny had no patience—not a single bit! Though his dear mother tried very hard to teach him by her words and her example to be quiet and cheerful under all circumstances, she sometimes feared he would never learn the lesson of patience. Johnny was otherwise a wonderful child—when things went his way. His mother would talk to him about his hasty temper, and Johnny would promise to do better in the future. He did not mean to break these promises, for he sincerely wanted to please his mother, but the first time his will was crossed or something went wrong, he would become tearful and angry.

Mrs. Brown's heart was very sad whenever she thought of the future of her child. She knew that he could never be a truly happy man unless he could learn, by God's grace, the lesson of self-control while he was young. For a long time after Johnny left the room that morning, Mrs. Brown sat thinking the matter over and tried to think of a plan to help her little boy. Sad and thoughtful, she spent some time in prayer, asking God for His guidance and blessing.

As soon as breakfast was over, Mrs. Brown took Johnny by the hand and led him outside into the backyard. It was a beautiful day; the flowers were in bloom, the birds sang their songs of joy in the trees and bushes, and the golden sunlight smiled brightly down. Johnny, however, could not appreciate these blessings, for his heart was once again rebelling and he was not pleased with anything. Even the wonderful nest Mrs. Brown discovered in the lilac bush, with its



four speckled eggs, had no interest for Johnny, and he walked in sulky silence by his mother's side until they came to the far side of the garden, where there was a swing under the large maple tree.

"Come and sit down beside me, Johnny," said Mrs. Brown "I have something I want to say to you."

Johnny did as he was asked, though it was clear he was unhappy. His mother put her arms around him and spoke earnestly. Before long, his stubborn heart melted and tears filled his eyes. "I'm sorry, Mama!" he cried. "I promise I will be more patient!"

"But you have promised this so often," replied his mother sadly.

"I know," admitted Johnny, "but this time I will try really hard—harder than I ever have before!"

Mrs. Brown was about to reply, when they heard the sweet voice of a child singing a song of praise. They stopped talking to listen. The voice seemed to come from the other side of the fence. "Let's go see who it is!" suggested Johnny eagerly.

The two of them went softly along the fence until they came to a place where creeping vines and roses had woven their branches together so that they draped over both sides of the fence. There the fence stopped and Mrs. Brown and Johnny stepped around it into the neighbor's yard. Sitting on the thick green grass was a little boy about Johnny's age. At first he did not notice his visitors and continued singing. Then he turned and saw them, and his face lit up with a bright smile.

Hesitantly, the two boys greeted each other.

"You seem quite happy," commented Mrs. Brown kindly.

The little boy nodded. "Yes, ma'am, I am happy."

"And why are you so happy? What has happened to give you so much joy?"

"Oh, just what happens every day," replied the child. "I have so many blessings, and now I am enjoying this beautiful day. Mr. Jameson told me I could look at the rocks and flowers in his rock garden," he added, explaining his presence in the yard.

Mrs. Brown glanced at Johnny, who stood beside her with a thoughtful expression on his face. Turning back to the little boy again, she asked him if he would like to come and join them in their garden.

"Oh, thank you! I love flowers!" Stepping forward, the child picked up a crutch from the ground.

"Look at that funny stick, Mama!" exclaimed Johnny. "What is it for?"

"It is my crutch—it helps me walk," explained the little boy with a smile. "I cannot get around without it."

Johnny's eyes grew big and round. "You are lame and still you are happy?" he cried in astonishment. "I don't know

how you can sing and laugh when you can't even walk!"

"God is teaching me to be patient and to trust Him," replied the child quietly. Leaning on his crutch, he hobbled over to the opening in the fence and entered the Brown's yard.

"I am glad to hear that," commented Mrs. Brown. "But what happened to make you lame?"

"I have a bad sore on my leg, ma'am. It has been there a long time. I think the doctors think it will never heal because they stopped treating it. It's been a long time since I went to the doctor."

"That's awful!" exclaimed Johnny. "So you will have to hobble around this way for the rest of your life?"

"I guess so," answered the boy cheerfully.

"How can you be so cheerful about it?" frowned Johnny. "If I were lame I would be very sad—and mad, too!"

"But that wouldn't do any good. I used to cry a lot at first, but I discovered that only made things worse. My mother taught me that God wants me to be patient, so I ask Him to take away my anger and frustration and to teach me to be patient. He showed me that it is sinful to complain, and that I have many more blessings than I deserve."

Mrs. Brown looked at Johnny again to see his reaction. His head was tilted to one side as he absorbed his new friend's words. Was this God's answer to her fervent prayers? Gently, she asked the little boy about his family. The boy, whose name was Henry, told her that his father had died years ago, and his mother supported herself by sewing.

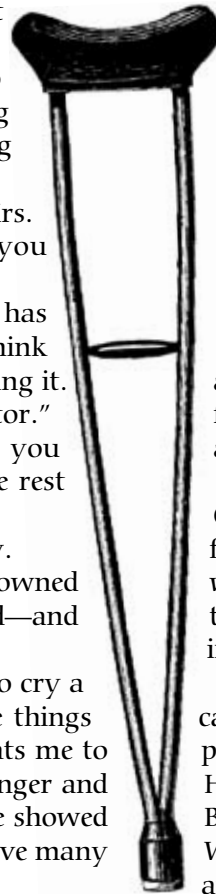
"Does your mother always have enough work to do?" inquired Mrs. Brown.

"Not always, but we have enough to eat. Mama says the Lord provides for His children when they put their trust in Him."

Mrs. Brown looked pleased, and she laid her hand on his head as she said, "That is true." In her heart, she heard God prompting her to take this opportunity to show kindness to the widow and the fatherless in their affliction (James 1:27). Leaving Henry and Johnny to play together in the yard, she hurried inside to fetch some things that needed mending. When she returned, she asked Henry to lead the way to his home. Henry's eyes sparkled with delight; he said his mother would be very glad, for she was out of work just then. He hobbled along by Mrs. Brown's side, chattering so pleasantly all the way that he quickly endeared himself to both Mrs. Brown and Johnny. After walking nearly half a mile, Henry pointed out a little brown house set back from the road. "That is where Mama and I live," he said.

"Have you lived there long?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"No, only a week. We used to live in Chesterville, but



everything was so expensive that Mama thought it would be cheaper to live here." Hopping nimbly forward, Henry opened the rickety gate and held it open for the lady and Johnny. Then he went in quietly and introduced his new friends. "Mama, this is Mrs. Brown who has come to see you about some sewing. And this is her son, Johnny."

Henry's mother rose to welcome her guests and offered her own chair to Mrs. Brown. The women talked about the sewing that needed to be done, and Mrs. Doyle promised to have it ready by the following afternoon. Thus began a relationship between the two families. Mrs. Brown supplied Mrs. Doyle with sewing and the boys would play while the women visited.

Soon a plan began to form in Mrs. Brown's mind. One morning, she asked Joe, the farm boy who worked for her, to harness the horses to the carriage. Then he was to drive to the little brown house over the hill, and tell the lady who lived there that she and Henry were invited to spend the day with her and Johnny.

Mrs. Doyle was very surprised when the elegant carriage stopped before her home, and still more surprised at the message Joe delivered. Quickly, she and Henry got ready, and in a short time they arrived at the Brown's home, where they were warmly welcomed. When they were settled in the living room enjoying tea and cake, Mrs. Brown said, "I wanted to talk to you about a plan I have. A few weeks ago, my housekeeper told me that she is getting married very soon and will be moving away with her new husband. I need someone to fill her place right away. Mrs. Doyle, I would very much like it if you could take her place. You and Henry would live with us in your very own apartment on the second floor. The work is not hard, but you will earn more than you can possibly earn with your needle. What's more, Henry can go to school along with Johnny. Would you like that?"

For a moment, Mrs. Doyle was speechless. Tears of gratitude filled her eyes. "Yes, I would like that very much! Maybe this way I can earn enough to save for the doctor's fee. Lately, I haven't been able to earn enough to pay the doctor, so Henry's leg is not able to heal."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "Is there a possibility that Henry's leg can be treated?"

"Yes," responded Mrs. Doyle sadly. "Only a lack of money prevents it. Dr. Batchell cared for Henry as long as I had the money to pay him, and he was doing well; but as soon as I ran out of money, he left my poor child to suffer with this terrible sore, saying he had so many patients, that he could not afford to waste his time caring for those who couldn't pay him."

"Is this possible?" cried Mrs. Brown indignantly. "I thought Dr. Batchell was a Christian!"

"So he says," replied Mrs. Doyle, shaking her head. "But people who have money don't know his real character as the poor do. This is not the only instance where

he has left the sick and distressed because he feared he would not be paid."

"What a shame!" said Mrs. Brown, her cheeks flushed with anger. "Well, Mrs. Doyle, there are other physicians in the world better than Dr. Batchell. If you like, we will take Henry to another doctor tomorrow, and see what can be done for him. If his leg can be cured, I will consider it a pleasure and a privilege to cover the expense and to help care for him."

Mrs. Doyle was completely overwhelmed by this sudden turn of events, and when she tried to thank her friend, the tears came so fast that she could not utter a word. Covering her face in her hands, she sobbed aloud. Johnny and Henry, who had been playing in the corner, came to see what was the matter. Henry put his arms around his mother's neck and said, "Don't cry, Mama. I love you."

Mrs. Doyle embraced her son, and told him the good news as she dried her eyes. "Oh, how grateful we ought to be to our heavenly Father for all these blessings!"

"May I go and thank Him right now?" asked Henry. Slipping away from his mother's embrace, he went off by himself. In childlike simplicity, he thanked the Lord for His goodness to them in supplying for their needs so wonderfully.

The next morning, Joe brought the carriage once again to the Doyle house. Mrs. Brown and Johnny accompanied Mrs. Doyle and Henry to another town to meet a new doctor. The doctor carefully examined Henry's leg. He spoke so encouragingly about the condition that they all were greatly relieved. Johnny danced around the room with delight, and Henry cried with joy at the thought of being able to walk without his crutch.

"Henry," said the doctor, turning to the little boy, "I must warn you that these treatments will be very painful. Do you think you can bear it patiently, my little man?"

"I will ask God to help me, sir," replied Henry with a quiet smile.

The doctor applied the first treatment to Henry's leg, showing Mrs. Doyle how to do it herself. Then he packed a box of bandages and several medicines for her to take home. "If you follow these directions carefully, the treatments should be very effective. Come back in a few days and I will check the progress."

The four of them chatted merrily all the way home. Certainly, there is joy in giving as well as in receiving. That night, Henry suffered very much, for the medicine seemed to be searching for the root of the problem in order to cleanse and purify it. Henry bore it bravely, though once in a while he moaned in pain. Johnny stood by Henry's bed for a long time, stroking his hand or wiping his forehead with a cool cloth. When he saw how much his friend suffered and how quiet and patient he was through it all, Johnny thought to himself, "How

sinful I have been to whine and complain so much when I have so many blessings. I am ashamed of myself." Then he prayed and asked the Lord to give him a new heart filled with love and patience.

The days and weeks passed quickly for Johnny but slowly for Henry, for he suffered much pain. Finally, however, the doctor smiled and told Henry his leg was cured. He could begin to walk without his crutch a few steps at a time. You can imagine how happy everyone was at the good news! God blessed Johnny through his friendship with Henry, and he learned, with the Holy Spirit's blessing, the lesson of patience.

Children, let me offer a little advice to you. Do you ever give in to a hasty and angry temper? I hope not. But if you do, let me give you a few words of friendly advice: learn to be patient. Ask God to teach you the lesson of patience and self-control, so that later on you will be able to say, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

Adapted from *Pearls for the Little Ones; A Series of Stories from Real Child-Life*, by Mrs. Mary Jane Phillips. New York: Carlton & Porter, n.d.

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Diana Kleyn is a member of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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(continued from page 265)

Personally, I find these days of remembrance both helpful and a hindrance. Helpful, because we keep up a lively remembrance, at least once a year, of the great things Jesus Christ and His Spirit have done for us in New Testament salvation history. A hindrance because we keep up a lively remembrance once a year, but sometimes neglect to remember them far more often.

Christmas is admittedly a man-made date printed on our calendars. The birth of Christ, however, is a God-made event that ought to be etched upon our hearts and souls. Let us pray for grace that in this matter we "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

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Rev. David Lipsy is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## MINISTERIAL CALL

Rev. David Lipsy pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey has received a call from the Jordan HRC to labor in the Yellville, Arkansas congregation.

## HRC CLASSIS MINUTES

Following are the abridged minutes of the HRC Classis meeting, recently held in Chilliwack, British Columbia on Friday, October 19, 2007.

### Opening of Classis

Dr. Joel R. Beeke opened the Classis meeting with prayer and a brief meditation on Genesis 18:1-15.

In these verses we see God coming in a condescending way to reassure Abraham and Sarah of His love, covenant mercies, and faithfulness. This condescension comes first by God's reception of Abraham's covenant hospitality. Secondly, God condescended to Abraham by reaffirming His covenant promise (vv. 9-10). Thirdly, in this passage God condescends in rebuking Sarah's unbelief (vv. 11-13, 15). And fourthly, in this passage God condescended to remind Abraham and Sarah of His unlimited power (v. 14). God is saying, "My omnipotence intersects with your practical, daily life." We must ask, "Let us see Thy mighty hand in saving sinners, causing Thy people to grow in grace, bringing glory to Thy name."

Dr. Beeke then acknowledged the Lord's goodness for the following special events.

In May, three students received their M.Div. degrees from PRTS: Mr. Bill Boekestein, Mr. Don Overbeek, and Mr. Mark Raines. Mr. Overbeek and Mr. Raines have received and accepted calls to labor as ministers of the gospel in Bradford, Ontario, and Holland, Michigan, respectively, and Mr. Boekestein is presently considering a call to Carbondale, Pennsylvania.

We thank God for the arrival of Dr. Murray and his family in Grand Rapids to join our seminary faculty.

Dr. Brian DeVries has completed his doctoral dissertation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has moved to South Africa, where he is Vice-principal of Mukhanyo Theological College and regularly preaches in local churches.

Very recently Covenant College in Zambia has hired another lecturer to assist Rev. Molenaar. Also, the Molenaar

family is very grateful for their new house and permanent electricity.

### Credentials and Officers

Credentials for the delegates were received and approved, and the following officers appointed:

- Chairman: Rev. Jan Neels
- Vice-Chairman: Rev. Foppe Vander Zwaag
- Clerk: Elder Glenn Tanis
- Treasurer: John VanWoerden

### Approval of Agenda and Previous Minutes

Classis moved to accept the agenda supplied by the standing clerk with minor re-arrangements.

Classis then moved to approve the March 23, 2007 Classis minutes.

### Spiritual Welfare Reports

Each local consistory and outreach presented a report of the general spiritual health of the flock as well as particular reasons for encouragement and causes of concern. It is clear that the Lord continues to work in every flock of our small denomination. Membership appears to be remaining steady in most of our congregations, with some experiencing encouraging internal growth. A few churches acknowledged the Lord for well-attended prayer meetings and mid-week services, however most consistories are discouraged by the consistently poor turn-out of members at these important occasions. Finally, every report included encouraging material on the faithful participation of members in every congregation in Bible studies and different areas of outreach.

### Old Business

Classis moved...

- that in order for Rev. Molenaar to be able to attend the Classis, the date of the Fall Classis be no earlier than October 17, and preferably during the fourth week in October.
- that the Church Order be made available in a loose-leaf booklet for all office-bearers and interested members, and that the Stated Clerk, with the assistance of Rev. Elshout, be asked to keep this booklet current by inserting any new decisions made by Classis which would be designated by this body as being interpretive of a given article of the Church Order.
- that Rev. DeRuiter's credentials be

extended to and revisited at the 2008 Fall Classis.

### Committee Reports

#### Church Correspondence:

Classis moved to follow the recommendation of the CCC to offer Level One of correspondence to the Southern Presbyterian Church, Tasmania.

Classis moved to accept the Free Reformed Church of North America's offer to upgrade our working relationship to "Limited Correspondence."

Classis moved to follow the recommendation of the CCC to pursue a joint office bearers' conference with the Free Reformed Churches for the fall of 2008, D.V. The Office Bearers' Conference Committee is to pursue this possibility.

Classis moved that Level 1 correspondence be sought with the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK) in the Netherlands.

Classis moved to accept the CCC's recommendation that a delegate from each congregation obtain from Classis a sufficient number of copies of *Reformed Confessions Harmonized* for his local consistory, in order that the consistories might read through the Westminster Standards, discuss them, and come to the Fall Classis of 2008 with a recommendation on whether or not to adopt them as official doctrinal standards, in addition to the Three Forms of Unity.

#### Denominational Operating Fund:

Classis appointed Neil Den Dekker of Burgessville and John Goudzwaard of Grand Rapids to the Denominational Fund to replace the two brothers whose terms end in 2007.

Classis moved to approve Ann Dykema to assist with the bookkeeping for the Denominational Operating Fund and Student Support Fund.

Classis moved to approve the Denominational Fund and the Denominational Student Support budgets as provided.

#### Gospel Trumpet:

James Teunissen and James Westrate were appointed to fill the two spots (one term expiration and one additional member) on the Gospel Trumpet Committee (Don Deater Jr. is the alternate).

Classis approved the Gospel Trumpet Committee's budget.

Obituary notices and church events are printed free of charge; marriage and anniversary notices will be charged at \$5.00 per issue and must be individually submitted. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

**Government Correspondence - Canada:**

Classis chose Rev. Wade Koenen and Tim Roos to fill the vacancies on the Canadian Government Correspondence Committee; both accepted.

**Government Correspondence - USA:**

Classis chose Candidate Don Overbeek to fill the vacancy left by Dr. B. DeVries's term completion. Candidate Overbeek accepted.

**Office-bearers Conference:**

Classis moved to approve that the Office-bearers' Conference Committee attempt to schedule one conference per year in connection with the FRC.

**Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary Committee (TSC)**

Classis approved the following TSC decisions:

1. After listening to and reviewing his trial sermon, TSC moved that Mr. Maarten Kuivenhoven may begin speaking an edifying word in the congregations beginning in December 2007.
2. Upon review of their ongoing calling and academic accomplishments, TSC moved to pass HRC students, Maarten Kuivenhoven, Scott Dibbet, and Marty Slingerland to their next year of study.
3. TSC voted Bruce Kwekel onto the Board of Trustees (BOT) for a second four-year term.
4. TSC moved to share as much information about the PRTS as is prudent with the FRC Education Committee. The TSC will be the primary means of that communication. If there is information needing to be shared in between our biannual TSC meetings the TSC clerk and/or the BOT is to share that with the FRC Education Committee.
5. TSC moved to allow the Westminster Standards to be added as an option to the Three Forms of Unity as criteria to which future PRTS full time teaching faculty must adhere, providing they also agree with the Three Forms of Unity.  
Classis moved to approve the Seminary's budget.

**Puritan Reformed Theological Foundation**

Classis appointed Mr. Peter Schenderling to serve on the PRTS Foundation Board.

**Points**

**Burgessville:** Classis moved to make the ministry in the greater Bradford/Toronto area, where brother Overbeek hopes to labor, a denominational approved ministry through the tent making ministry.

**Chilliwack:** Classis moved that congregations that presently do not have a functioning consistory (e.g. Bradford and Plymouth),

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but still have (a) serving elder(s), be permitted to delegate one ruling elder to the meetings of Classis in an advisory capacity.

Classis moved to extend support for Rev. Greendyk and his family for six months.

**Hull:** Classis rejected a motion that the spiritual welfare reports be shared with all the congregations, which could be sent out with the Classis minutes and distributed at each consistory's discretion.

**Moderatorships /Church Visitations**

Classis moved to appoint Rev. B. Elshout as the moderator for Burgessville.

**Scheduling Of Next Meeting**

Classis moved that the next Office-Bearers' conference, Prayer Service, Theological Seminary Committee meeting and Classis be held in Burgessville on March 28, 2008, the Lord willing, with Hull as the calling church.

**Election of Next Classis Chairman**  
Classis appointed Rev. M. Fintelman as the chairman of the Spring 2008 Classis.

#### Appointments

Rev. Mark Kelderman was appointed as the Spring Classis 2008 Office-Bearers' Conference speaker on the topic of "Engaging our Young People in Study and Service."

Rev. B. Elshout will lead the Spring Classis 2008 prayer service.

Rev. M. Fintelman will open the Spring 2008 Classis, the Lord willing.

#### Closing Of Classis

As Vice Chairman, Rev. F. Vander Zwaag made a few closing comments and closed the meeting with the singing of Psalter 51:1, 3 and prayer. — GT

#### ORDINATION AND INAUGURAL OF REV. DONALD OVERBEEK

On October 27, 2007, the congregations of Burgessville and Bradford and the HRC denomination were blessed by being able to witness our Lord Jesus Christ ordaining another man into the ministry of the Word. The ordination service text, led by Rev. Mark Kelderman, was taken from 1 Timothy 4:12-16. The theme, "A Weighty Consideration in the Face of Ordination," was developed by looking at four points: 1. consider your life, 2. consider the Word, 3. consider God's gift, and 4. consider our salvation.

Paul lays upon Timothy several weighty considerations of what it means to be an ordained servant of the Lord. Even as the disciples experienced, there is great comfort in being ordained by Christ. We must consider our lives, because as we minister to others they will examine how closely we walk to Christ. There are six things in which Paul reminds Timothy he is to be an example: in speech, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. There must also not only be an example of life but a continuing in the study of the Word of God. Be earnest and diligent in your study. But as we do not have strength in ourselves to do these things, Paul admonishes Timothy to consider also the gifts which have been conferred upon him. As the hands of the presbytery are laid upon you, brother Overbeek, you may know that God through these means is Himself sending you forth and will equip you for the task. Finally, Paul admonishes Timothy that he ought to labor on as if his own and others' salvation depended upon it. Therefore, dear brother, consider these things and the Lord of all grace grant you His blessing upon your ministry, with a

total reliance upon the grace of God to fulfill this commission.

Pastor Kelderman then read the Form for Ordination of Ministers, and Brother Overbeek answered, "Truly with all my heart." As Dr. J.R. Beeke, Mr. D. Deur, Mr. J. Greydanus, Rev. M. Kelderman, Rev. J. Neels, and Mr. D. Schmidt laid on hands, several texts were quoted. A personal charge was given from 2 Timothy 4:1,2,5, and words of welcome into the congregation of Bradford and consistory of Burgessville were expressed.

Rev. Don Overbeek then came forward to give his inaugural sermon based on Jonah 4:11 under the theme, "A Ministry Marked by Pity" and developed from the following points: 1. minimum pity, 2. medium pity, and 3. maximum pity. In the sermon, Rev. Overbeek proclaimed the great nature of God's pity, progressing from pity toward creation ("and much cattle"), to pity toward Jonah despite his reluctant labor, and ultimately, the maximum pity in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ, not sparing Him so that He could have pity upon sinners. The ministry of the gospel in Newmarket and the greater Toronto area must align with God's great pity, by proclaiming the God of pity and the Christ who purchased God's pity for His people.

After this, Rev. Overbeek thanked various people who have been instrumental in his life and call to the ministry. Several were also given opportunity to address Rev. Overbeek: Dr. Beeke, Mr. Don Doan, Mr. D. Fintelman, Rev. Kranendonk, and Mr. M. Kuivenhoven. The service was closed when for the first time Rev. Overbeek pronounced the benediction upon the congregation. We acknowledge the Lord for His great mercy given to us and brother Overbeek, and we pray that he might be used mightily of God and bear much fruit in the Newmarket/Toronto area. We also commit to the Lord in prayer that a working relationship with the Finch Avenue Free Reformed Church might be forged. Please remember this outreach in prayer that God would own it and bless it richly.

#### BRADENTON, FLORIDA SERVICES

Sunday worship services have begun for the winter season, with one service each Lord's Day at 3:00 p.m. until January 6, 2008, at which time we hope to have two services each Sunday beginning at 10:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Services are held at the Red Cross building located at 2095 59th St., W. in Bradenton. For additional information contact Mr. Noorduyn at 941-747-0313, Mr. Mast at 941-753-6112, or Mr. Staal at 941-751-9970.

## OBITUARY

**KAMP, Peter**, aged 83, passed away Thursday, October 25, 2007, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his granddaughter, Elissa Kamp. Surviving are his wife of 60 years, Emeline; Children—Kay & Robert VanderZand, Joan B. Kamp, David P. & Geraldine Kamp, John R. & Jane Kamp, Lynn E. & John VanDyke, III; Brothers & Sisters—John & Joan Kamp, Gertrude & Rich Westrate, Jane & Dan DeMeester, Helen Kamp, Martina & George Feyter, Richard & Ruth Kamp, Henry & Lena Kamp, Ada & Henry Bloem; Brothers/ Sisters-in-law—Betty & Adrian DeVisser, Jim & Judy Kwekel, Gary & Gerrie Kwekel; 22 grandchildren; 7 great-grandchildren. (Dr. J. R. Beeke, John 11:35; Rev. F. VanderZwaag, 1 Thes. 4:13-18).

## TEACHERS NEEDED

**The Heritage Reformed Christian School** of the Hull, Iowa, HRC invites applications from qualified elementary, middle school, and high school teachers for the school year beginning August 2008. We currently offer grades K-9 in a multi-grade setting. Our plans are to add grade 10 in 2008 with the intent to have all 12 grades in three years, D.V. Please submit your resumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of education to Doug Post, 2787 360th St., Rock Valley, Iowa 51247, phone: 712-722-4258, fax: 712-722-8859 or e-mail: doug.post@interstates.com.

**Rehoboth Christian School** in Copetown Ontario, is soliciting applicants for possible classroom teaching positions in Elementary (K-8), High school (9-12), and Personal Support Workers to begin in September, 2008. For more information, check out our website at [www.rehoboth.on.ca](http://www.rehoboth.on.ca). Applicants please send a cover letter and resumé to the attention of: Mr. Jack Westerink - Principal, 198 Inksetter Road P.O. Box 70, Copetown, Ontario L0R 1J0, tel. 905-627-5977, fax 905-628-4422 e. [jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca](mailto:jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca)

The Board of **Oxford Reformed Christian School** invites applications for elementary and secondary teaching positions for the 2008/2009 school year.

ORCS is currently located in a rural setting 20 minutes south of Woodstock in Springford, Ontario. We are a recently-established, parent-run school serving local Reformed communities. Our present enrolment is 205 students and we offer Kindergarten to grade 11. Our plans are to add grade 12 in September, 2008. Due to growth in the elementary grades and an expanding secondary school curriculum, we have a need for qualified, energetic teachers to join our staff team. All applicants committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education are encouraged to apply.

Applications should include a resumé, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references. Send to: Oxford Reformed Christian School, c/o Mr. J. Beeke (Board President), P.O. Box 68, Springford, ON, N0J 1X0. E-mail: [oxfordreform@execulink.com](mailto:oxfordreform@execulink.com)

## A Great Reward

*“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12).*

This article concludes our look at the beatitudes. We learned last time that the believer will be persecuted in this world. I asked you if you are suffering for Christ’s sake. The answer to that question is indicative of whether or not we are living godly in this present world. In this concluding beatitude, Jesus wants to encourage us, especially in the face of persecution. He says, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” If they treated the prophets this way, especially the greatest Prophet, Jesus, then, when we live as He did, we must not expect to be treated differently from Christ. Keep in mind that the greatest persecution often comes from those who have in some way professed Christianity, but do not live by its essential truths. Formal Christianity is one of the greatest enemies to the true faith. Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:18-21).

What this means is that, as believers, we do not belong to ourselves. We belong to Christ. We have been bought with a price. We are called to a life controlled and dominated by Christ, who is living in us. When we suffer persecution, we ought to rejoice that we have been considered worthy to suffer for Christ. The believer is said to rejoice because he lives like Christ in the midst of persecution. God upholds His children so that they begin to live like Christ, and this amazes them. They confess it is God’s grace that helps them. If the world were persecuted, they would retaliate and lash back, but the believer forgives; the believer prays, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” What do you do when someone drags your name through the mud because of your love for the Lord? What do you do when someone accuses you falsely, when you are

ridiculed, mocked, or slandered? Do not be discouraged in the face of these things, Jesus says; rather, “rejoice and be exceeding glad.” Not glad because you desire persecution or because you have lost all emotions, but glad because you know the outcome already: great is your reward in heaven. Consider what some radical suicide bombers are willing to do for what they believe is their reward: some lustful pleasures in heaven. Why would not a true believer then suffer all things, considering that he will ultimately be with Christ, loved by Him, and taken into heaven itself?

So why is the believer able to rejoice? Is it not for the same reason that his Lord rejoiced, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2)? Jesus counted the cross, the shame, and the persecution of no effect in light of the goal, the salvation of His dear children. The believer ought also to rejoice in the face of persecution. True, we do not rejoice in the mere fact that we are persecuted; persecution is always a burden for the believer. But we rejoice that we have been counted worthy to suffer for His Name. We are being made like Him whom we love. It is the evidence of our connection to Him. And therefore, this beatitude is very plain; Jesus speaks an imperative. It is a command: “I command you to rejoice, and be exceeding glad.”

But then He adds a most blessed incentive: “for great is your reward in heaven.” Coming to the last beatitude, Jesus culminates with the thought of reward. He ties it back to the first beatitude: “...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” However, there is something else to consider. What we find in this last verse—and every promise preceding it, all the way back to the first beatitude—is given by way of promise. All these things are their reward. Reread each of the beatitudes with this thought in mind. Just as surely as persecution is the culmination of walking as a subject of His kingdom, so all these promises are yours, child of God. You have begun to taste them here below and you are now called, in remembrance of them, to walk steadfast, worthy of your calling, for “yours is the kingdom of heaven.”

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Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario. Teens, if you have any questions you would like answered, please e-mail me at [makelderman@execulink.com](mailto:makelderman@execulink.com).

## NATIONAL NEWS

**Oregon to allow same-sex rights.** Oregon will be implementing its previously passed Same-Sex Domestic Partnership Law, after opponents of the law were unable to turn in enough valid signatures to the election commission to block the measure. Oregon now infamously joins eight other states that have same-sex spousal rights: CT, VT, NH, NJ, ME, CA, WA, and HI. Massachusetts also allows gay marriage.

**Ottawa Anglicans back same-sex blessings.** Delegates at the annual synod passed a motion, by a margin of 177 to 97, to endorse the blessing of same-sex civil "marriages." The motion calls on Bishop John Chapman "to bless duly solemnized and registered civil marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized." Bishop Chapman is inclined to approve the measure; however, he has expressed concern that it will cause further division within the Anglican Church. The diocese of Montreal plans to debate the same issue at its annual synod soon. (*Today's Family News*)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**Christians decline in Bethlehem.** Bethlehem, the birthplace of our Savior, continues to lose its Christian population. Bethlehem was once the location of one of the largest Palestinian Christian communities in the Middle East, but continued violence from the Muslim "Intifada" and Palestinian Authority rule has made it difficult for Christians to live there. Unofficial but continued implementation of Muslim sharia law forced on Christians has steadily increased. In 1947, Christians accounted for three-quarters of the population, but recently, less than one-third of the population is Christian. (*Wikipedia*)

**Anti-Christian violence in Gaza.** Police found Christian leader Rami Ayyad murdered near the Christian bookstore that he managed in the Palestinian territory of Gaza. Muslim extremists have repeatedly threatened the bookshop, operated

by the Palestinian Bible Society; it was bombed in April after previous threats. (*Compass Direct News*)

**Egypt denies religious persecution.** Egypt has denounced the US State Department's annual International Religious Freedom Report which says that, within the past year, the Egyptian government's respect for religious freedom "declined." Harsh treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity, ongoing difficulties in building or repairing churches, and official discrimination against Christians are increasing. An official spokesman for Egypt's foreign ministry said he regretted "fallacies" in the report. Egypt's six to ten million Christians (eight to twelve percent of the population) are denied the benefits that the government grants to Muslims, and hold fewer than two percent of the public offices. (*Compass Direct*)

## PERSECUTION FOCUS: BURMA

### RENAMED MYANMAR

A military junta has ruled this once prosperous country in Southeast Asia for the past two decades. Made up of 87% Buddhist, 5% Christian, 4% Muslim and 3% animist religions, the minority religions have been under severe restrictions. While supporting the Buddhist majority, the military rulers have outlawed new Christian church buildings or the repair of churches, and recently enacted a law that worship must be in buildings over a hundred years old, effectively closing the last century of Christian church construction. More than a hundred churches in and near Rangoon, the capital, have been closed since mid-2001, including the Reformed Presbyterian Church, several Baptist Churches, and two Christian orphanages. Many churches must now meet secretly in local homes. While the support of the Buddhist shrines by the military junta was to create favor with the Buddhist majority, recent violent clashes with the Buddhist Monks seeking a return to democracy may change this policy. The junta is further implementing many of the anti-religious policies of their Chinese patron. (*Christian Solidarity*)

## ITEMS FOR PRAYER

*"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2).*

- ◆ Pray that leaders will follow the Word of the Lord and not endorse the sinful practices of man—that marriage as instituted in Genesis 2:24 will be honored as our moral law.
- ◆ Pray that the Anglican Church would desire to honor God in heaven rather than seek to appease fallen man. Pray for the courage and perseverance of Anglicans who oppose the continued decline in moral values in their church.
- ◆ Pray for persecuted Christians in the Palestinian-controlled

areas of Israel, that they would be protected by God's almighty hand, and comforted in celebrating the birth and ministry of the Savior in their land.

- ◆ Pray that Christians in Egypt would be protected from official persecution and that the Egyptian leaders would come to adopt the truth of Christianity, the very truth they seek to destroy.
- ◆ Pray for the return of democracy in Burma, that the Christian church may flourish there. Pray for the reopening of closed Christian congregations, and for the pastors who are now in hiding.

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Publication Number (USPS 010584)  
1875 Leonard Street, NW  
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## JESUS MY ALL

Why should I fear the darkest hour,  
Or tremble at the tempter's power?  
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.

Though hot the fight, why quit the field?  
Why must I either flee or yield,  
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?

When creature comforts fade and die,  
Worldlings may weep; but why should I?  
Jesus still lives, and still is nigh.

Though all the flocks and herds were dead,  
My soul a famine need not dread,  
For Jesus is my living bread.

I know not what may soon betide,  
Or how my wants shall be supplied;  
But Jesus knows, and will provide.

Though sin would fill me with distress,  
The throne of grace I dare address,  
For Jesus is my righteousness.

Though faint my prayers, and cold my love,  
My steadfast hope shall not remove,  
While Jesus intercedes above.

Against me earth and hell combine;  
But on my side is power divine;  
Jesus is all, and He is mine.

—JOHN NEWTON

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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

*A Periodical for Young and Old*

December 2007  
Vol. 15 • No. 10