

The *Banner* of Sovereign Grace Truth



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**Targeting the
Growing Believer**

**The Bath Made with
Mirrors**

Four Sorts of Conscience

A Periodical for Young and Old

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.

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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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ZEAL

"In those things in which all the people of God are agreed, I will spend my zeal; and as for other things about which they differ, I will walk according to the light God hath given me, and charitably believe that others do so too."

— Philip Henry

"If by excessive zeal we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then glory to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of heaven."

— Charles H. Spurgeon



The Lord Is Risen Indeed

Unbelief is not found only in unbelievers; far too often, and sadly so, it prevails in God's children as well. We see it in the two traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus the day Jesus arose from the dead. Though they had heard earlier in the day about His resurrection, they did not believe it was true. They were disillusioned and dejected because they only considered their own opinions, thoughts, and feelings, without yielding to God's Word. Can you identify with them?

Having had such blessed times with Jesus and having their expectations raised, they now find their hopes dashed. As they walk home, they share their discouragement with a stranger who joins them: "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24:21).

They did not see it was Jesus Himself walking with them, for "their eyes were holden that they would not know him" (v. 16). Though this was part of God's sovereign plan, it did not provide an excuse for their blindness nor for their unbelieving response to the testimony of those who told them Jesus was alive. So Jesus rebukes them in verse 25, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

Their unbelief was not exhibited only in their disregard of what some people said, but more importantly, in their disregard of what God Himself had revealed about Jesus in His Word! If only they had been more familiar with the fact that the Messiah was to come with the intent to suffer, to die, and to rise again, and if they had only believed it, they would have been prepared and kept from despondency. Isn't this often what keeps us from finding comfort in our distress, whether physical or spiritual? We pray to Jesus without believing He hears us. Aren't we then also acting as if He is still dead?

Jesus asks them, and us, in verse 26, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" In other words, wasn't it necessary and to be expected that the Messiah would go this way? You doubt He was the One to redeem you because He died on the cross, but the opposite is true! The very fact that He died and arose, as He foretold, is wonderful evidence of His being the Savior of sinners. They were sad and

despondent while they should have been filled with joy and hope! But Jesus knows how to exhort and comfort them. He opens His Word: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (v. 27).

If you really wonder whether Jesus came to redeem you, turn to God's Word; search it and hear it preached to you, praying for the Spirit's enlightening and life-giving power. Notice what happens to these two as they have a meal with Jesus. Not only do they recognize Jesus when "their eyes were opened and they knew him" (v. 31), but we read in verse 32, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Why is this so important? They already began to hope while Jesus expounded the Scriptures.

Is this not the way God still works today? Has He not enlightened your understanding and kindled your affections as He led you away from your distress and despair in yourself to Him who died on the cross to redeem sinners such as you? Is not this God's way once and again with you, too, to bring you as a needy sinner to the One who was dead but is now alive?

If this is not true for you, flee to Him even now in humble submission as He speaks to you, confessing your sins, especially your unbelief, and be received by Him as He promised.

If it is true indeed, do what these two did. Go and share the good news with those who are yet ignorant of it (Rom. 10:9-10). Do it in His strength, for God's glory and the salvation of others—or, as a pleasant surprise, to meet those who already have experienced this salvation speaking to you before you can even open your mouth. That is how God provides confirmation and encouragement for His children, granting them blessed fellowship as these travelers discovered upon their return to Jerusalem when they heard from the disciples gathered there, "the Lord is risen indeed" (v. 34).

Targeting the 15-Yarder: The Growing Believer

In regular pulpit ministry, we address the assembled congregation which normally contains a mixture of saved and unsaved people. A primary target for our preaching, as Paul shows us in his epistles, should be the children of God, those true believers in our particular flock of sheep who have made a genuine confession of faith (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). They, who are the future of the church, are looking to be fed, instructed, corrected, admonished, and challenged.

Ministers are a bit like the two spies, Joshua and Caleb, who went into the Promised Land to bring back a good report to the people of Israel. Figuratively speaking, we weekly search out the promises and riches of the Bible for God's people and bring back a good report the following Lord's Day, showing them God's promises while feeding, instructing, correcting, admonishing, and challenging them with the Word.

Healthy, growing believers need to hear the whole counsel of God, which focuses on Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). The minister must lead the flock into the green pastures of God's Word so that they grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. William Perkins says, the heart of all preaching is to "preach one Christ, by Christ, to the praise of Christ."¹

We can learn much from the Puritans about preaching to the children of God. They were master instructors and comforters who led their sheep to Christ to drink deeply of the wells of salvation. J. I. Packer writes: "Puritan preaching revolved around 'Christ, and him crucified'—for this is the hub of the Bible. The preacher's commission is to declare the whole counsel of God, but the cross is the center of that counsel, and the Puritans knew that the

traveler through the Bible landscape misses his way as soon as he loses sight of the hill called Calvary."²

Perhaps you say, "All of this is obvious. Of course, we preach first and foremost to the people of God. But my question is: should I distinguish in my audience the children of God at various stages of growth, and minister at times to them at their particular stage of growth?"

Three Types of Believers

Too many preachers today approach growing believers among their flocks as a solid, undifferentiated group, forgetting that, as John says in 1 John 2:12–14, some are only infants in grace, while some are young men in grace, and some are fathers in grace. Of course, a preacher cannot distinguish these subgroups in every sermon, but he can and should make appropriate applications to various maturity levels among the children of God when the text or doctrine he is expounding warrants his doing so. It takes time and experience to develop a skill for this precise kind of target preaching.

To target believers among believers, the preacher must understand these subgroups and precisely which believers belong to these various maturity levels. Let us turn to John's presentation in 1 John 2:12–14 for help on this:

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the



Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

By referring to each group twice, I believe John has three groups in mind. It is difficult to come to any other conclusion when you compare verse 12 with verse 13c, verse 13a with verse 14a, and verse 13b with verse 14b. Though the general context of the epistle indicates that the “little children” in verse 12 (τεκνία, *teknia*) usually refers to the entire church since John uses it several times that way in his first epistle (2:1, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), the immediate context of our verses justifies three levels of experience. Moreover, the second word translated in verse 13 as “little children” is παιδία (*paidia*), which definitely means young children. These, then, are the three groups:

1. *The young convert in the faith.* The young convert, whom John calls “little child,” is a recent convert or a child of the covenant recently awakened and newly arrived at personal faith in Christ. He is only newly aware that his sins have been forgiven, and he is beginning to appreciate what it means to have God as his Father. So John says in verse 12, “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” and in verse 13, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.”

The minister should periodically describe clearly from the pulpit what a joy it is in the first days after conversion to cling to Christ the Savior and God as Father, to learn about God, to delight in Him, to depend on Him, to be embraced by Him, and to sing His name in praises and petitions before the throne of grace. The joy of forgiveness and a personal relationship with God are most precious to young converts.

But the minister should also provide wise counsel for the young convert. Although the new believer has experienced the goodness of the Father and wants to behave like an obedient child, he has had little experience in doing so. He has much love for God and a tender conscience for God, but he does not understand the warfare of daily sanctification, the intense battles of daily Christian living, or the need continually to live out of Christ. It is the minister’s task to help the new believer grow in maturity by explaining how these matters have been experienced in the more spiritually mature. The minister should make clear that though the young believer’s simplicity and strength of faith as well as the brightness and joy of his initial experiences of grace and forgiveness are a gracious blessing for the church, he still has much to learn. He may yet depend too much on his feelings at a given moment; he may be lifted high in times of obedience and fresh communion with God, then plunge

low in times of disobedience or feeling separation from the Father. He is both easily encouraged and easily discouraged.

The minister should teach the new convert from the Scripture how to walk by faith and not by sight, how to trust God in times of darkness, and how to surrender all to God in the midst of great trials. Since the young convert knows little about what is expected of him but is hungry and thirsty to know more, the minister has a wonderful opportunity to target him when preaching from Scripture’s histories of conversion or from some of Paul’s epistles, particularly his pastoral epistles to Timothy.

Then, too, as William Perkins has said, new believers must repeatedly be taught the basic doctrines of justification, adoption, and sanctification. They need continual teaching on the objective work of Christ—who He is and how they are pardoned through Him, what justification is, how it connects with sanctification, and how those benefits are worked out in the life of faith.

2. *Young men in the faith.* Between the new convert and the mature Christian is the young man in the faith, which, of course, by extension, implies young women in faith as well. A young man in his early twenties is partly mature and partly immature, but he is gaining experience from the rigors of daily adult life. Similarly, these spiritually young men and women are being prepared for full Christian duty in the thick of the battle and in bearing the burden and heat of everyday troubles. They search the Scriptures with spiritual vigor and they are fervent in faith, mighty in prayer, intense in action, and bold in testimony. They are strong in Christ, endure by Christ, and resist attack through Christ. They represent the church’s first line of defense against attack in the midst of the strain of Christian living.

These men and women of faith are grateful that God has broken the reign of sin and Satan in their lives. Though they still stumble and fall into error, just as young men and women are apt to do in life, they have felt the thrill of spiritual victory. They have been made strong by grace through the Word, they earnestly contend for the faith, and they, at times, are able to overcome the wicked one. Such conflicts then become conquests.

Yet these young believers lack maturity. Their experience is by no means complete. They struggle hard against ungodliness, but they need to persevere in grace. They have yet to learn that “old Satan may prove too much for young Melancthon.” They often think too much of themselves and are unsettled by emotional highs and lows. Too often they are more impressed by what they have been doing and how they feel than by what God has been doing and how God feels. The min-

ister must lovingly show them that they need to grow more in living for the glory of God, not themselves.

3. *Fathers in the faith.* Fathers or, by implied extension, mothers in the faith are spiritually mature and stable. They have come to know the eternal God in Christ in an intimate way. John stresses the fathers' consciousness of the immutable, eternal God of grace by saying twice in verses 13 and 14 that he writes to fathers "because ye have known him that is from the beginning."

Spiritually mature fathers and mothers focus on Christ. They have insights into the wonders of Christ's glorious person and His distinctive offices. They see Him as the center of all Jehovah's counsels, the image of the invisible God, and the One in whom all the promises of God are fulfilled (Eph. 3:11; 2 Cor. 1:21).

The experience of the spiritually mature in Christ is more complete than that of young men and women in Christ. Like Mnason in Acts 21:16, these fathers and mothers are seasoned disciples. Their knowledge is deeply rooted (Col. 1:23), influential, and stable (Phil. 1:9; Eph. 3:18). They are settled in the truth, prudent, sober, and self-controlled (Eph. 4:14; Titus 2:2). Faith and obedience are evident in their lives. They have a mature understanding of the ways of holiness and are equipped to practice it in the strength of Christ. They have experienced that the Lord Jesus Christ is an excellent master to serve. They have experienced how patiently God has borne with their ignorance, how graciously He has pardoned their sins, and how faithfully He has supplied their needs. Christ's goodness moves them to exercise love, obedience, and gratitude. They have reached, in some measure, what Paul calls "the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Through mature expository preaching, ministers can assist spiritual fathers and mothers in letting the Word of God continue to dwell richly in them. Ministers should encourage them to use their good spiritual sense, their experiential life in Christ, and their seasoned counsel to benefit the church of God. Paul said, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers" (2 Cor. 4:15). So ministers should call upon the spiritually mature to guide patiently and lovingly the ignorant as well as children and young men and women in the faith, so that their winsome lives will move others to emulate their Christ-centeredness.

Ministers should admonish fathers and mothers in Christ not to grow lukewarm about the precious truths of the gospel, but rather to keep their conversation filled with rich talk of Christ in interacting with children and young men and women in the faith, as well as with the broken-hearted and the doubting. They should be encouraged to use their mature gifts to discern between form and power, hypocrisy and sincerity; to resist foolish ideas and enterprises that will not prosper the church; to help a congregation focus on the Triune God and His truth; and to maintain the purity of the gospel.

A Comparison of Believers

The three types of believers John addresses can benefit greatly from specific targeting from the pulpit. All three groups are a blessing to the church: the children are the church's reaching hand; the young men and women are the church's strong arm; and the mature fathers and mothers are the church's backbone. Children represent the church's tender love; young men and women, the church's strength; fathers and mothers, the church's knowledge. Yet each group of believers has its weaknesses. Children in the faith are prone to make too much of what they feel, young men and women make too much of what they do, and fathers and mothers make too much of what they know. Believers in all three categories need the constant, daily ministry of the pastor and the Holy Spirit to remain unspotted from the world.

Distinct preaching to various groups among believers must never take priority over the most common form of preaching—namely, proclaiming God's Word to all believers at once. Even in the context of 1 John 2:12–14, John asks Christians of all levels of maturity to reflect on three major truths that apply to all Christians: (1) their sins are forgiven, (2) they know the Father and the Son, and (3) they have victory over sin and Satan in Christ. John emphasizes the foundations upon which believers' lives have been established so that they might be encouraged to go forward and build upon these foundations.

A mature preacher often will find himself almost unconsciously moving from distinct applications to subgroups among believers to distinct applications to the entire group of believers. Here is a summarizing example:

"Fathers and mothers, lay aside childish things. Young men and young women, be strong in Christ Jesus. Children, obey your Father who is in heaven. And, everyone, remember that God builds us up by the same means with which He saved us—His Word and His Spirit. Search the Word, depend on the Spirit, and look to Christ."

This kind of diversity, flowing from the heart of a seasoned pastor, is a great blessing for the sheep of God.³

1. William Perkins, *The Art of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 79.

2. J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 24.

3. Parts of this section are adapted from my *The Epistles of John* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2006), 78–87. For several of these ideas, I am indebted to Dr. Andrew Woolsey of Northern Ireland.

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The Authorized Version and New Translations

*Part of an address given at the National Bible Rally
in the Royal Albert Hall, London, on October 24, 1961*



I suppose that the most popular of all the proposals at the present moment is to have a new translation of the Bible.... The argument is that people are not reading the Bible any longer because they do not understand its language—particularly the archaic terms. What does your modern man...know about justification, sanctification, and all these biblical terms? And so we are told the one thing that is necessary is to have a translation that Tom, Dick, and Harry will understand, and I began to feel about six months ago that we had almost reached the stage in which the Authorized Version was being dismissed, to be thrown into the limbo of things forgotten, no longer of any value. Need I apologize for saying a word in favor of the Authorized Version? Well, whatever you may think, I am going to do it without any apology.

Let us, first of all, be clear about the basic proposition laid down by the Protestant Reformers: we must have a Bible which is, as they put it, “understood of the people.” That is common sense; that is obvious. We all agree, too, that we must never be obscurantist. We must never approach the Bible in a mere antiquarian spirit. Nobody wants to be like that or to defend such attitudes. But there is a very grave danger incipient in much of the argument that is being presented today for these new translations. There is a danger, I say, of our surrendering something that is vital and essential.

Look at it like this. Take this argument that the modern man does not understand such terms as “justification,” “sanctification,” and so on. I want to ask a question: When did the ordinary man ever understand those terms?... Consider the colliers to whom John Wesley and George Whitefield used to preach in the eighteenth century. Did they understand them? They had not even been to a day school, an elementary school. They could not read, they could not write. Yet these were the terms which they heard, and the Authorized Version was the version used. The common people have *never* understood these terms. However, I want to add something to this. We must be very careful in using such an argument against the Authorized Version, for the reason that the very nature and character of the truth which the Bible presents to us is such that it is extremely difficult to put into words at all. We are not describing an animal or a

machine; we are concerned here with something which is spiritual, something which does not belong to this world at all, and which, as the apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians reminds us, “the princes of this world” do not know. Human wisdom is of no value here; it is a spiritual truth; it is something that is altogether different. This is truth about God primarily, and, because of that, it is a mystery. There is a glory attached to it, there is a wonder, and something which is amazing. The apostle Paul, who understood it better than most, looking at its contents, stands back and says, “Great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Yet we are told, it must be put in such simple terms and language that anybody taking it up and reading it is going to understand all about it. My friends, this is nothing but sheer nonsense! What we must do is to educate the masses of the people *up* to the Bible, not bring the Bible *down* to their level. One of the greatest troubles in life today is that everything is being brought down to the same level; everything is cheapened. The common man is made the standard of authority; he decides everything and everything has to be brought down to him. You are getting it on television and in newspapers; everywhere, standards are coming down and down. Are we to do that with the Word of God? I say, No! What has happened in the past has been this: an ignorant, illiterate people in this country and in foreign countries, coming into salvation, have been educated *up* to the Book and have begun to understand it, to glory in it, and to praise God for it. I am here to say that we need to do the same at this present time. What we need is, therefore, not to replace the Authorized Version. We need rather to reach and train people up to the standard and the language, the dignity and glory of the old Authorized Version.

Very well, my friends, let me say a word for the old book, the old Authorized Version. It was translated by fifty-four men, every one of them a great scholar, and published in 1611.

Here is another thing to commend it to you: this Authorized Version came out of a time when the church had not yet divided into Anglican and Nonconformist. I think there is an advantage even in that. They were all

(continued on page 102)

The Bath Made with Mirrors

Read Exodus 30:17-21

The purpose of the Tabernacle was to reveal God, and so bring Him near to the Israelites with a view to mutual communion and fellowship. Such a physical representation of spiritual truths and experiences, usually called typology, was a temporary concession to the weakness and frailty of sinful humanity. Patrick Fairbairn writes:

The Israelites would certainly, without such outward and visible help as was afforded by a worldly sanctuary, have either sunk into practical ignorance and forgetfulness of God, or betaken themselves to some wrong methods of bringing divine things more distinctly within the grasp and comprehension of their minds.... Till God was made manifest in the flesh, in the person of Christ, even the pious mind anxiously sought to lay hold of some visible link of communion with the higher region of glory.

However, even we can profit from studying the Old Testament types. We do so by asking four questions:

1. What truths are pictured and predicted? (Old Testament theology)
2. How did spiritual Israelites experience these truths in the types? (Old Testament spirituality)
3. What was the New Testament fulfillment of this type? (New Testament theology)
4. How do I apply or experience these truths? (New Testament spirituality)

Keeping these questions in mind, let us proceed to the second item of furniture in the Tabernacle, the "brass laver" or "brass bath." This was a metal, water-filled tank which sat on a large metal plate. Taps let water flow out of the tank and into the base plate. We do not know the shape or dimensions of it, but the later laver in Solomon's Temple was circular and huge.

Let's first consider the cleansing provided by the laver. Then we will consider how that cleansing is perfected.

Cleansing Provided

Water is the most abundant and necessary element in the world. It has many uses. It is drunk for refreshment. It is sprinkled for fertility and fruitfulness. In the case of the laver, it was used for washing and purifying the priests. Let's ask Priest Elnathan to explain the details.

"Thank you. I love the brass laver. I didn't used to. As a teenager and even into my twenties, I found all the

priestly washings so tedious and boring. 'Why can't they just get on with the sacrificing, and then I can get back to my friends?' I used to think, as I stood with the congregation. However, a year before my thirtieth birthday and my own entrance into the priesthood, I was mercifully and sovereignly born again by the Spirit of God. It was then that I began to understand the holiness of God and my own unholiness. As the day of my consecration drew near, I felt increasingly unfit and unworthy for the priesthood. In fact, on the morning of my consecration service, I remember feeling so dirty and so filthy within and without that I almost ran away. But, by God's grace, I overcame my fears and joined my new colleagues in the Tabernacle for the start of the service. Then came the part of the service I used to find so tedious: the washings. There was the one-time full-body washing with water from the brass laver (Ex. 29:4). Oh, how wonderful that felt! It reminded me so vividly that in the gospel my holy God provides cleansing for unholy souls. What a mercy! I would gladly go through that all-over washing every day I go to serve in the Tabernacle. However, that was a one-time occurrence. Instead, every day I often wash my hands and feet at the laver (Ex. 30:19). This reminds me of my one-time full-body wash. It also reminds me of the ongoing cleansing God continues to provide for my sins—and spurs me on to greater holiness."

New Testament believers, Christ has not only consecrated all of you as priests (1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 5:10) but has also provided a double cleansing. There is the one-time, all-encompassing washing of the soul in regeneration. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). And there is the oft-repeated ongoing sanctification of various areas of the soul. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). This same two-fold work of the water is referred to by Christ when seeking to wash the disciples' feet: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13:10).

The brass altar preaches pardon of sin. The brass laver preaches purging from sin. The altar is concerned with the believer's status; the laver with the believer's condition. The altar's blood aims at acceptance with God; the laver's water aims at communion with God.



The altar says, “without shedding of blood is no remission,” while the laver announces “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Cleansing Perfected

The laver itself was made of brass, a symbol of strength and indestructibility, endurance and solidity (Dan. 10:6; Rev. 1:5). The base, however, was made out of the burnished and polished metal mirrors of the ladies who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:8). They gave up the mirrors which showed them their appearance and helped them to adjust to the fashions and standards of the day. By doing so, they were saying, “No longer will we judge ourselves by our standards or others’ standards. We want to please God and live by His standards.” In his excellent commentary on Exodus, Dr. Philip Ryken suggests that this must have been a time of spiritual revival in Israel. And A.W. Pink writes:

The very material from which the laver was made spoke of *surrender*, a willingness to part with what was calculated to make something of self; and this, in order that conditions of holy purity might be maintained in the priests. Thus we, too, must sacrifice what would minister to pride if we are to obtain that cleansing which fits for communion with God.

Patrick Fairbairn translates the phrase referring to the women as “the mirrors of the serving-women who served at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” Fairbairn presents evidence that there were groups of pious women who gathered around the Tabernacle entrance and “devoted themselves to regular attendance on the worship of God, for the purpose of performing such services as they might be capable of rendering.” They were Old Testament prototypes of Anna “which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37).

It is likely that this polished metal not only formed the basin at the base of the laver, but also acted as a mirror in which the priests might look at themselves to remove every last spot of dirt.

The vital necessity of this cleansing is emphasized in the instructions: “When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water that they die not” (Ex. 30:20, 21). A speck of dust or dirt not only rendered them unfit for God’s presence but also rendered them subject to fatal judgment. For the conscientious priest, this must have caused excruciating worry. He would have thought: “If a minimal neglect of outward purity be judged so severely, what hope do I have with my impure heart?” With what trembling and fear would he go about his daily duties (Ps. 24:3–5; 26:6).

The imperfect Old Testament priests, in need of both outward and inward purity, in need of both regeneration and sanctification, must have longed for a priest they could rely on without fear or worry. As they

looked anxiously in the mirror at the base of the laver, how they must have longed to see a reflection of one who was perfect and undefiled. Such a one was Jesus Christ—the One toward whom the laver and the mirrors pointed. “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19; cf. Heb. 7:26–28).

The hope of perfect cleansing becomes a personal reality for believers in heaven. In Revelation 15:2–3, we read of a heavenly laver. The saints are standing on a “sea” (a laver) of glass, singing to the One who has washed them and made them clean forever. As Samuel Ridout concludes:

When all the redeemed of God are gathered there, the day of cleansing from defilement is over, no more need to wash one another’s feet; no more need for the Lord’s washing our feet, but there we stand with harps of God in our hands, nothing to hinder praise and worship. But the sea of glass, the witness and perpetual reminder of our cleansing, will flash forth there a continual remembrance of our Lord’s gracious and humble service throughout our journey here.

Questions

1. Can you see a link between the Old Testament washings, John the Baptist’s “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” and the New Testament practice of infant baptism? If so, what are the common lessons taught in these washings?
2. How do you know if you have experienced “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5)? What evidence would you present to prove your case?
3. What means, or instruments, does God use to regenerate our souls? (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23; John 3:5).
4. How many times a day do you look in the mirror? How many times a day do you look in the mirror of God’s Word? What does that say about your standards?
5. What would be the marks of revival in our society? What would we expect to see surrendered—by men, by women, by teenagers, by children?
6. Name one thing you could surrender today to keep yourself more unspotted from the world.
7. What difference would it make to your Christian life if you thought more about your priestly role and status?
8. How can you increase your desires for holiness in this world and in the world to come?

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the tongue — between hell and heaven

Read James 3

The Test

During the physical exam of a patient, a physician uses small indicators to test for larger issues. The speed at which blood pumps through the arteries or the cholesterol count from a small blood sample can reveal a lot about how healthy the heart is.

Like a skillful physician, James has been subjecting professing Christians to various diagnostic tests. The test in this chapter involves the tongue. Our tongue is a remarkable organ. With the help of air and the movement of the whole mouth, it produces intelligible sounds that allow us to communicate. We can take the thoughts formed in our minds and the emotions in our hearts and express them by means of our tongues.

Because of its ability to help us communicate, our tongue makes for an interesting diagnostic study. If we take stock of what our tongue produces over the course of a day or week or more, we can learn much about the health of our inner being. Are our thoughts and emotions in accord with God's Word? Do we use our tongue only for good? Do we consistently edify each other and praise God with our tongue?

The Results

Let's follow James as he reviews the results of this test with us (vv. 3-12). First of all, he notes what a *powerful* thing the tongue is (vv. 3-5a). James compares it to a bit in a horse's mouth, that steers its whole body (v. 3); or to the small helm on a large ship, which maneuvers it over a calm sea or even through the fiercest of storms (v. 4). Similarly, the tongue is small but powerful (v. 5a). It can have great influence in steering friends or family into right or wrong paths.

But secondly, the tongue is *destructive* (vv. 5b-6). James compares it to the match that lights a forest fire (v. 6a). Watch how one tongue stokes the next tongue, which passes the flame on to the next. Soon

the world is ablaze with the fire one tongue ignited. Unrestrained, the tongue can ruin lives and cause great distress.

Thirdly, the tongue is *untamable* (vv. 7-8). Try to train the tongue. It's such a small member; you would guess it wouldn't take much effort. Take it out of a bad environment. Praise it when it does well. Punish it when it does evil. Feed it when it does what you want it to. Thrash it when it is unruly. Put in a bit and bridle. Subject it to pressure when it is wild. These are the sorts of things trainers do when they train horses, elephants, lions, and even snakes. Though men have success even with vicious animals, what do we find with the tongue? "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (v. 8).

Fourthly, the tongue is *hypocritical* (vv. 9-12). Listen to the tongue one moment and you'll hear the most beautiful praises uttered to God. No sooner is it done blessing God, but what we do we hear next? The same tongue emitting curses (v. 9). What a contradiction the tongue is! We don't see such inconsistencies in nature. What scientist has ever found a fountain that pumps out sweet water for ten seconds and then switches to salt water for the next ten? What horticulturist has tended a fig tree that produces figs one season and olives the next? The human tongue is such a source of contradiction.

The Fire from Hell

What do all these results mean? Our tongues are devious and destructive. They show an inward disease of cosmic proportions. We who were created to glorify God are cursing Him, ruining ourselves, and setting the world ablaze. Our tongues bear responsibility for the charred world we see around us. How did it happen? James gives us a clue: the original spark came from hell (v. 6b). Our tongue has taken on the characteristics of the devil, who tempted us to eat of

the forbidden fruit. The day that Satan came to Eve in the form of a serpent, our tongues underwent a radical transformation. We were not struck dumb; instead, our tongues turned devilish. Prior to that, Adam's tongue only blessed God. In everything, Adam showed a knowledge and wisdom that resembled and glorified his Creator. He had been made in the image of God and his tongue moved accordingly. He lived and talked in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. His wife, Eve, also only used her tongue to glorify God. As a couple, their speech was always fitting and without malice.

Then that awful day came when the serpent opened his mouth. He promised us that we could be as wise as God; we only had to disobey the command of God, and we would instantly become like Him. We would have knowledge like God—so he promised. No wonder that Scripture calls the devil the father of lies (John 8:44)! His lying tongue has begotten as many lying tongues as there would be people, Christ alone excepted. The world over, down through the ages until our own day, tongues everywhere bear the insignia of hell (v. 6).

The Fruit of Heaven

Can there be any transformation of our twisted tongue? Can the diseased tongue be cured? James unveils how we can be changed in the next verses (vv. 14–17). The cure is not found in anything from this earth. We need more than a *wisdom that is from below* (vv. 14–16). Such “wisdom” is born of envy, that proud ambition that lurks in the depraved soul. It is full of prejudice and hypocrisy (v. 17). That is the kind of wisdom our tongues are used to, so that cannot help us. Such wisdom can't escape its earthly, sensual, and devilish roots (v. 15). If you have been given eyes to see it, you will recognize it by its disorderly confusion and evil practice (v. 16).

Only *true wisdom which is from above can help us* (vv. 17–18). In other words, we need the wisdom that descends from heaven. Such wisdom not only *makes sense* of our problem, but can also *solve* it. James explains what this wisdom is in verse 17. It is first of all pure. It is not mixed or stained, but holy and wholesome. It is next marked by peace, gentleness, and compassion. It is full of mercy and full of good fruits. It knows no favoritism or hypocrisy. Instead, it is humble and leaves in its wake a trail of righteousness like satisfying fruit (v. 18).

Considering ourselves, things don't look good. But the question is: is heaven renewing us after Christ? Do we bear His image in principle? After all, He was the Wisdom that descended from heaven. People blessed Him one moment, saying “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). But when He hung on the cross,

the same people reviled Him. Yet, in His life and death, He sowed a harvest of righteousness that is most perfectly suited to atone for the sins of our tongues. Through the Spirit of wisdom whom He purchased for us, He gives us all we need—namely, the fruit of righteousness.

Questions:

1. Read Psalm 12:1–4. What characteristics of the tongue are described in these verses? Are they consistent with those given by James?
2. Contrast how Jesus used His tongue while on earth with how people used their tongues against Him.
3. The results of physicians' diagnostic tests can range from reassuring to alarming. Where on this scale do the results of this tongue test fall for you?
4. What is James's “prescription” for the disease the tongue reveals? What does this mean practically?
5. Examine and explain the eight characteristics of true wisdom in verse 17. How can this help us?

The Twisted Tongue	The Transformed Tongue
Earthly, devilish, set on fire from hell (vv. 6, 15)	Descends from above (v. 17)
Sensual (v. 15)	Pure (v. 17)
Unruly (v. 8)	Marked by righteousness (v. 18)
Marked by every evil work (v. 16)	Marked by good conduct and good fruits
Boastful (v. 5)	Marked by meekness (v. 13)
Marked by envy (v. 16)	Easy to be entreated (v. 17)
Full of deadly poison and mixed fruits (vv. 8–10)	Full of mercy and good fruits (v. 17)
Blesses God and curses men (v. 9)	Without hypocrisy (v. 17)
Marked by bitter strife (v. 14)	Peaceable, gentle (v. 17)

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What is a Reformed Church? (2)

The term “Reformed” has received considerable prominence in recent years. It has become quite common to speak and hear of Reformed doctrine, Reformed practice, Reformed worship etc., but it is to be feared that many Christians are still unsure about the precise meaning of the term. This is the conclusion of the article that discusses what exactly does it mean? And what kind of church is designated by it?

Fifthly, a Reformed church, adhering to a theological system which teaches that salvation is wholly God’s work, firmly believes those truths commonly called “the doctrines of grace.” In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Reformed churches were troubled by the errors of Arminianism. James Arminius (1560–1609), who had studied at Geneva under Theodore Beza (Calvin’s colleague and successor), became a preacher at Amsterdam and eventually a professor at the University of Leyden. Through his sermons and lectures,



he made it increasingly clear that he had adopted new views which were at variance with Scripture and the Reformed faith. Disputes arose during his lifetime, but it was after his death in 1610 that his followers drew up a petition called a Remonstrance which set forth their teachings in five articles. These were finally presented to the National Synod of Dort (which included delegates from other countries). The Synod condemned the doctrines of Arminius and set forth the true Reformed theology in several articles, which have been summarized as “The Five Points of Calvinism.” In brief, these are as follows:

- (1) *Total Depravity*. This doctrine asserts that, as a result of the Fall, men are alienated from God, subject to the corrupting power of sin, and in a totally helpless and hopeless condition (Ps. 14:2, 3; Mark 7:21–22; John 6:64–66; Rom 9:16).
- (2) *Unconditional Election*. By this is meant that God, from all eternity, has sovereignly elected some sinners to be saved through Jesus Christ; and this election was not in foresight of belief or holiness in sinners, but solely on account of His free and distinguishing grace (Ps. 65:4; Matt. 22:13; Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:10–13; Eph. 1:4–5; 2 Thess. 2:13).
- (3) *Limited Atonement*. Sometimes referred to as Particular Redemption, this point simply affirms that Christ died for God’s elect, and for them only (Luke 1:68; John 10:11; Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:33–34; Rev. 5:9).
- (4) *Irresistible Grace*. When God calls elect sinners to faith through the gospel, the Holy Spirit effects such a change in them that, contrary to all expectations, they are brought to the reception of the truth and participation in Christ’s salvation (Ezek. 36:26–27; Matt. 11:25–27; John 6:44,45; Acts 18:27; Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9).
- (5) *Perseverance of the Saints*. God so preserves true believers by His grace and power that they can never totally or finally fall away, but they persevere to the end and obtain everlasting life and glory (John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:38–39; 1 Cor. 1:6–8; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:5).

Reformed ministers will regularly preach on these themes. They will also expose and refute the errors of insurgent Arminianism. As a result, their people will be grounded in the faith of the Reformation.

Sixthly, a Reformed church understands that a *covenant is at the heart of God’s relationship with man*, and therefore it lays emphasis upon the way Scripture unfolds and develops God’s covenant of grace. Federal or covenant theology was, in the words of Professor John Murray, “a distinguishing feature of the Reformed tradition.” The earliest of the Reformers rediscovered this biblical teaching and began to explore its spiritual riches. As early as 1561, Zacharius Ursinus, a professor at Heidelberg, referred to a covenant made with Adam before the Fall, while, in

1576, Caspar Olevianus, a colleague of Ursinus's, taught that there was another covenant, fulfilled in Christ. This covenant effectually secured the everlasting salvation of God's elect people. Thereafter, covenantal teaching spread throughout the Reformed world.

God did indeed enter into a covenant with Adam and, through him, with all whom he represented—that is, with all mankind. In that covenant, life was promised upon condition of pure obedience (hence its name: the covenant of works); but Adam broke that covenant, incurring for himself and all men the penalty of physical, spiritual, and eternal death (Gen. 2:16–17; cf. Hos. 6:7 margin; Rom. 5:12).

However, in anticipation of Adam's sin, God was pleased to establish an eternal covenant with His Son, the Head and Representative of the elect (Gal. 3:17; Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 12:24). In this covenant of grace, the Father promised to give elect sinners everlasting life, providing His Son voluntarily engaged to become man, subject Himself to the law, and fulfil the necessary condition, which consisted in holiness of nature, obedience of life, and suffering of death (Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 7:26. Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11). This was agreed upon by the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit concurring (Zech. 6:13; Heb. 13:20). What a wonderful arrangement it was! All covenant blessings are now at Christ's disposal. When faith is imparted and Christ is received, these blessings are immediately enjoyed. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36).

The administration of this covenant produces the church, which is God's covenant society. Its members are the objects of His loving care and they are distinguished from others by high privileges—not least among them, the possession of sacred ordinances and the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As the people of the covenant, the church (and this applies to each particular church) must show itself *separated* from false doctrine and practice and *united* in the blessed fellowship of faithful men and women. This should be true of any church which calls itself Reformed. It should heed the apostle's exhortation: "Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16–18; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Seventhly, a Reformed church is committed to the work of *bringing the gospel of salvation to the unconverted, not only in its own vicinity but also in other areas of the country and in other parts of the world*. Historically, reformation and evangelism have gone hand in hand. In the year 1556, fourteen missionaries were sent by the church of Geneva to spread the Christian faith in the newly discovered regions of South America. In 1559, Protestants in Sweden took the gospel to the people of Lapland; and in 1562, French Protestants evangelized Florida and, afterwards, the Carolinas. Among the first

Puritan missionaries were the Pilgrim Fathers. Arriving at New Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620, they organized a mission as early as 1621 "to promote the conversion of the Indians." Contrary to what some have suggested, the spirit of the Reformers and Puritans was intensely evangelistic.

It is the *duty* of the church to evangelize. Christ has commanded His church through the eleven disciples to tell people everywhere the way of God's salvation. "Go ye therefore, and teach [or, make disciples of] all nations" (Matt. 28:18–20; cf. Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–49; John 20:21–22; Acts 1:8–10). This matter is no side issue. It should be our main work: to tell out the glories of God as they are displayed in the grand scheme of our redemption. Why? Because that is the only way that the divine purpose will be accomplished and "the earth...be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14; cf. Isa. 11:9). As Martin Bucer (1491–1551) once observed, "The Church is the City of God where God will rule by his Word and Spirit more than anywhere else in the world, and from whence he will spread his saving knowledge in all the earth."

Will this come to pass if ministers confine their preaching to the faithful gathered in various chapel-buildings? No, it certainly will not! That is why Christ told His disciples to pray that God would "send forth labourers" (Matt. 9:38; cf. John 15:16—"ye should go and bring forth fruit"). "The word of the Lord" must therefore have "free course," speeding its way throughout the whole world, if it is to be glorified in the revelation of glorious truths and in the production of glorious effects (2 Thess. 3:1).

Judged by this standard, some churches are unworthy of the name *Reformed*.

Eighthly, a Reformed church stresses the need for an *inward, spiritual experience of God's saving grace, which creates such gratitude that the law is readily followed as the holy rule of all conduct*. Luther tells us in his own words of his conversion to Christ. In search of forgiveness and peace, he began to study the Scriptures and more especially the Epistle to the Romans. There, the gospel was revealed to him and he discovered salvation in Christ. "Straightway," he says, "I felt as if I were born anew. It was as if I had found the door of Paradise thrown wide open." Calvin had a similar story to tell. His account of the way God dealt with him is quite brief, but he says, "What happened first was that by an unexpected conversion he tamed to teachableness a mind too stubborn for its years—for I was so strongly devoted to the superstitions of the Papacy that nothing less could draw me from such depths of mire. And so this mere taste of true godliness that I received set me on fire."

The spiritual autobiographies of the seventeenth century show how important "experience" was to the Puritans. Space only allows me to give one example here,

but it is typical of many others. Thomas Goodwin was at Cambridge when he heard a sermon that changed his heart and life. "God was pleased," he wrote, "on the sudden, and as it were in an instant, to alter the whole course of his former dispensation towards me, and said of and to my soul, 'Yea live, yea live I say'...so he created and put new life and spirit into my soul, and so great an alteration was strange to me."

The Puritans believed that this kind of personal experience would produce a life of obedience. Richard Sibbes comments, "The sense of the love of Christ in pardoning of sins will constrain one to a holy violence in the performing of all duties."

This, of course, is sound biblical teaching. God's undeserved love to sinners, revealed in the gospel of salvation, is something to be known not merely intellectually, but experimentally. The apostle distinguishes between the two when he recalls how some "heard" and then "knew the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:6; cf. Eph. 1:13). Felt grace, however, does not destroy a believer's obligation to keep the law: rather, it strengthens that obligation, by supplying new motives, abilities, and encouragements. The believer has received mercy and he has the assistance of the Holy Spirit; furthermore, he has the promise of a very gracious spiritual reward (Ps. 19:11; Ezek. 11:16; 1 Pet. 2:10). It is, in fact, his whole new relationship with Christ which binds him—"being not without law to God, but *under the law to Christ* [i.e., as one of the Lord's people, desirous of pleasing Him]" (1 Cor. 9:21; see also Matt. 5:17–19; Rom. 3:31, 7:22; James 2:8, 10–11).

Reformation religion is essentially experimental. The Reformed should have an all-consuming desire to know God. They should also desire to be like Him in holiness and, since this is so clearly expressed in the moral law, they should love that law and always follow it as the rule of life.

Ninthly, a Reformed church longs to see the visible church restored to its *scriptural pattern in government, worship, and practice, and therefore it prays, strives, and works for the greater purity of itself and the whole church of Christ*. This all the Reformers did. John Knox did not hesitate to do all within his power to promote the work of reformation, "that the reverent face of the primitive and apostolic Church should be reduced again to the eyes and knowledge of men." All those who claim to be successors to the Reformers ought to be manifesting the same concern for the church in these days so that, pure worship, sound preaching, and the faithful exercise of discipline being restored to her, the church may stand once again in her original beauty and strength.

God, who anciently was pleased to make known His pattern for the Tabernacle and the Temple (Ex. 25:40; 1 Chr. 28:11–12), has in these new covenant days revealed His pattern for the church of our Lord Jesus

Christ (Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:2–3; 1 Cor. 4:17, 11:1–2). The enemy, over many years, may have marred and spoiled this outward form, but a Reformed church is resolved "to build the old waste places" and to "raise up the foundations of many generations," fervently praying as it does so, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Ps. 51:18; Isa. 58:12).

In the opinion of some, increasing numbers are all-important. But there is something more important than church growth: it is to build up such a church on earth as may be described as "the house of the Lord's glory." In 1851, J. H. Thornwell wrote to his wife, sharing with her the burden of his heart: "I am anxious to have an eye single to God's glory. If it were my purpose to *please* the people, I could soon gather a large congregation; but I want to build up a *spiritual church*, and that cannot be done without the special agency of the Holy Ghost. I could soon draw around me those who have itching ears; but I wish to attract people, not to myself, but to the cross of my divine Redeemer.... Such a work requires patience, watchfulness, and prayer."

The church of Christ today is beset by many strong assailants, and insidious forces are undermining her strength. Corruptions have already dreadfully marred her. Reformation is the crying need of the time. The call to every true believer must be to return wholeheartedly to the true Reformed religion. That done, though superstition be leagued with unbelief against her, the church shall stand unmoved, to the praise of the God of our fathers and our God.

Tenthly, and lastly, a Reformed church, recognizing the reason for its existence, has a supreme and profound regard to *the glory of God*. Calvin's most prominent thought was God in His transcendent majesty. The entire world has been created as a place for the display of His glory, but in His church, where that glory is perceived and admired, is the highest manifestation of His glory as chosen, redeemed, and called sinners own their complete dependence on His free mercy and grace, and serve Him in such a way as to bring to Him all due honor and praise (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). This is man's "chief end": "to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

A Reformed church, therefore, seeks to be faithful to God. In its worship and witness, it maintains the highest standards and employs its noblest powers, resolutely refusing to accommodate itself to an increasingly wicked world. May the church in these latter days appear as "the throne of his glory" (Jer. 14:21); and "unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21)!

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NEW RHB BOOKS

Obadiah and Micah: Prophets of God's Faithfulness — Jacob Westerink



Few Bible expositors bring to Scripture the spiritual sensitivity, practical perspectives, and experiential warmth for which Jacob Westerink is known. In every chapter of this book, the difficult becomes clear and the unfamiliar, relevant. Conveniently organized to facilitate personal

or group study, this book will help eager students of the Scriptures mine treasures new and old. (140 pages, PB) \$10.00/7.50

Church and Caesar: A Legal Primer for Church Office-bearers — Ray Pennings



This manual provides a simple overview of some of the key biblical and legal principles that office-bearers should consider as they work in the church. Ministers, elders, and deacons will benefit from this “big picture” framework presented here as it enables them to have more informed discussions when specific legal

issues arise in their congregation. This book is fruit of an *ad hoc* Committee on Legal Affairs, organized by the Free Reformed Churches of North America, but will be a resource beneficial to sessions and consistories of various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations. (75 pages, PB) \$8.00/5.00

2008–2009 Yearbook: Heritage Reformed Congregations, Church and School Directory

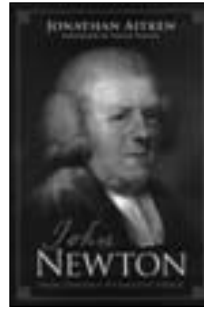


Michael Fintelman provides an opening meditation on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and a review of the ministry of the church. The directory provides up-to-date information on the various congregations and ministries involved in the HRC. The *Yearbook* ends with an article by the editor, Joel R. Beeke. (100 pages, PB) \$8.00/5.00

OTHER NEW BOOKS

John Newton: From Disgrace to Amazing Grace

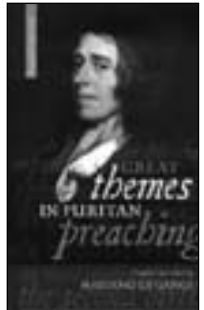
Jonathan Aitken



Most Christians are familiar with the basics of John Newton's story: he captained a slave ship, was dramatically converted to Christ on the high seas, and later penned one of the greatest hymns of the faith, “Amazing Grace.” But Newton also had an enormous impact on his times as a leader of the evangelical movement, as a great preacher and theologian, and as a seminal influence on abolitionist William Wilberforce. Jonathan Aitken's new biography explores these deeper facets of Newton's life and character.

It is the first biography to draw on Newton's unpublished diaries and correspondence, providing fresh insight into the life of this complex and memorable Christian. (Crossway, 400 pages, HC) \$21.99/16.00

Great Themes in Puritan Preaching — Mariono Di Gangi

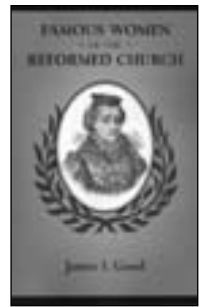


This primer on Puritan teaching expounds a variety of topics by some of the best Puritans, including John Owen on the infallibility of Scripture and justification, William Gouge on pastoral and spiritual conflict, Arthur Hildersham on confession of sin, Richard Sibbes on repentance, Thomas Horton on assurance, and David Dickson on the final judgment. Dr. Di Gangi writes simply, accurately, and winsomely—here is savory provision for both beginner and the scholar of Puritan studies. Every believer will find in these pages great assistance for Christian faith and living. (Joshua Press, 138 pages, PB) \$19.00/14.00

Sermons on the Lord's Supper — Jonathan Edwards

Here are nine sermons on the Lord's Supper, most of which have never been published before. Edwards deals with the meaning of “communion,” the sacredness of this ordinance, its nature as a gospel feast, and the necessity of self-examination for those who would worthily partake of it. Appended are six additional sermons, most of which were unpublished until now. (Northampton Press, 272 pages, HC) \$30.00/19.00

Famous Women of the Reformed Church — James I. Good



The wives of the Reformers are an interesting study and an important element in the history of the Reformed church. They received greatness from their husbands and imparted gentleness and beauty in return. Just as Deborah, Esther, and the Marys of the New Testament aided the make up of Bible history, so the women of the Reformation helped make its history great. Some of the women considered are Anna Reinhard, Zwingli's wife; Idelette d'Bures, Calvin's wife; Anna Bullinger, Henry's wife; Queen Margaret of Navarre, and many others. We hope that the lives of these Reformed saints will stimulate women today to greater


interest in church history and to greater activity in missions and the practical work of the church. (Solid Ground, 295 pages, PB) \$21.99/14.00

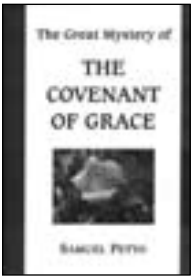
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David R. Jackson


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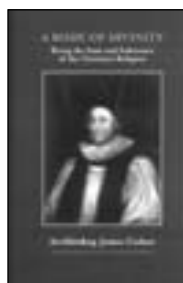
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 A battle rages within everyone every day—the clash between our stubborn self-sufficiency and God's call to recognize that we are nothing without Him. It is pride versus humility, and it is a fight we cannot win without looking repeatedly to Christ and the cross. C.J. Mahaney raises a battle cry to daily, diligently, and deliberately weaken our greatest enemy (pride) and cultivate our greatest friend (humility). He thoroughly examines misconceptions, revealing the truth about why God detests pride and turns His active attention to the humble. Because pride is never passive, defeating it demands an intentional attack. The blessing that follows is God's abundant favor. (Multnomah, 174 pages, HC) \$12.99/10.00

The Great Mystery of the Covenant of Grace — *Samuel Petto*

 Over the past several years, there has been a revival of interest in Reformed covenantal thought. This reprint of *The Great Mystery of the Covenant of Grace*, by Samuel Petto (1624-1711), presents an expression of covenantal theology from the Puritan era. The prominent Puritan theologian John Owen (1616-1683) prefaced Petto's book with a letter to the reader. This edition also carries an introductory essay by Mark Jones. (Tentmaker, 251 pages, HC) \$28.00/23.00

Jesus the Evangelist: Learning to Share the Gospel from the Book of John — *Richard D. Phillips*
 Dr. Richard D. Phillips digs into the early chapters of John's gospel to discover principles for evangelism modeled by witnesses for Jesus and by Jesus Himself. He first examines the ministry of John the Baptist and the calling of the first of Jesus' disciples. Then, through a brief study of the Lord's encounter with the Pharisee Nicodemus, he presents us with a theology of the gospel. Finally, Phillips focuses on Jesus' stirring encounter with the Samaritan woman to show exactly how Christ shared the good news. His clear and concise handling of these key stories will both motivate and instruct believers in their witness on behalf of Christ. (Reformation Trust, 195 pages, HC) \$19.00/14.50

The Truth of the Cross — *R. C. Sproul*

 In this book, Dr. R.C. Sproul surveys the great work accomplished by Jesus Christ through His crucifixion—the redemption of God's people. Opening the Scriptures, Dr. Sproul shows that God Himself provided salvation by sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross, and the cross was always God's intended method by which to bring salvation. *The Truth of the Cross* is an uncompro-

missing reminder that the atonement of Christ is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith, one to be studied and understood by all believers. (Reformation Trust, 167 pages, HC) \$15.00/11.00



A Body of Divinity: The Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion
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 Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) was a leader *par excellence* among the Irish Puritans. Though he is best known for his biblical chronology, *A Body of Divinity* may well be his most valuable legacy. Long overdue to be reprinted, this volume was once considered a classic in the field of Reformed systematic theology and deserves to be so regarded again. Here is pristine Irish Puritan theology, presented to us in a captivating question and answer format. (Solid Ground, 467 pages, HC) \$50.00/25.00

Missions: The Biblical Motive and Aim
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 John Young defines missions as "the work of the triune God, moving His church in love, to send Christ's ambassadors to proclaim to the world the gospel of His covenant of life (grace) that men from all nations might be made disciples, build His church and fulfill their covenant task, seeking to bring all things into subjection to God for the true restoration and advancement of men and the glory of God." This definition is unpacked in this volume, making it an important book for anyone who is mission-minded. (Crown and Covenant, 156 pages, PB) \$10.00

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Four Sorts of Conscience

The Bible has a lot to say about our conscience and so, first of all, we had better remind ourselves what it is. Whether we are converted or not, there is within each one of us a sense of right and wrong. It tells us that we “ought” to do right and “ought not” to do wrong. If we obey it, we have a feeling of innocence; if we disobey it, we feel guilty. It is this moral judge, which is part and parcel of our make-up as humans, that we call “conscience” (Rom. 2:15).

Conscience can be silenced. If a person constantly does the opposite of what his conscience tells him, its accusing voice will eventually stop speaking (1 Tim. 4:2). But conscience cannot be destroyed. This is why the most hard-hearted and wicked people, like Judas Iscariot, sometimes suffer agonies of remorse. And, in hell, what is the worm that does not die (Mark 9:48)? It is the accusing conscience that eternally torments lost souls.

Fallen

Before the Fall, what God said about right and wrong, and what Adam and Eve’s consciences said, were exactly the same. The human conscience and the revealed will of God were perfectly in line with each other. When our first parents listened to their consciences, they knew that they were hearing the truth. But that is no longer the case. We are no longer in Eden. Our conscience, like every other part of our human nature, is now polluted by sin.

What does that mean for us today? It means that my conscience is no longer an infallible guide. It may tell me that a certain thought or action is all right, even though God’s law condemns it. On the other hand, it may tell me that something is wrong even though God’s law does not condemn it at all. I still have a sense of right and wrong. But I must not assume that what it tells me is correct.

Christians, however, do not always take this to heart. That is one of the reasons there were problems in the early churches, and especially in those of Corinth and Rome. Christians were making their own consciences the standard by which they judged whether other believers were doing right or wrong, and they were being bitter, resentful, and unkind towards those who did not agree with them. In helping these churches through their difficulties, Paul underlined that there are four sorts of Christian conscience:

Four Sorts

Some of the Lord’s people have a strong conscience. They know that Christ alone is the Lord of conscience. What He says is right, is right; what He says is wrong, is wrong. This is true whatever individual consciences may say. They also know that there are whole areas of personal behavior where His Word does not give any

clear directives, and that here they are entirely free to do what they please, without any qualms whatever.

Some Christians have a weak conscience. For various reasons, they do not feel free to do what they please in those areas where there are no directives. They impose on themselves more rules than the Bible does. If they break one of their self-made rules, they feel that they have done wrong. Their conscience is offended. They feel defiled, dirty, and ashamed.

It is plain, then, that some believers have a bad conscience. This can be true of both the strong and the weak. The strong have a bad conscience when they are conscious of having broken God’s law. The weak have a bad conscience when they become aware of either breaking God’s law, or one of their self-imposed restrictions. For both strong and weak, God’s Word makes it clear that it is never safe to have a bad conscience (Rom. 14:23). By defiling and rejecting their conscience, some professing believers have ended up in spiritual ruin (1 Tim. 1:19, Titus 1:15).

The ideal, and the only safe path for both strong and weak, is to constantly keep a good conscience. Our conscience may not necessarily be telling us the truth, but it is always to be obeyed. Yes, it is to be obeyed without question, even when other people put pressure on us to behave differently. As we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, our conscience will increasingly come into line with the revealed will of God. We will become more free in some areas and stricter in others. But Scripture and our conscience will not be perfectly in tune with each other until we are glorified in heaven.

Handling Differences

Until then, how are we to handle the differences of conscience that so often threaten to sour our fellowship with other believers? It is on this question that Paul’s teaching focuses in Romans 14:1–15:13 and 1 Corinthe-

ans 8 and 9. These passages are extraordinarily relevant to today's churches and call for serious study. The essential points, however, are easy to list:

(1) It is wrong to keep my distance from a brother or sister in Christ on the basis that we don't see eye-to-eye in an area of conscience. I am to unhesitatingly embrace everyone that Christ has received.

(2) I am not to despise or judge my fellow-believers for any scruples, or lack of scruples, that they may hold in areas where Scripture has not spoken clearly. At the end of the world we shall not answer to each other, but to Christ. I must act on the assumption that my fellow-believers want to please Him as much as I do.

(3) I am to be sure in my own mind that my only ambition is to please the Lord, and that my behavior is not being decided by what others are thinking or saying. This said, I must be very careful not to put my brother or sister in any situation where they are in danger of violating their conscience, even if this means putting some self-imposed limits on my Christian liberty.

Church Discipline

It is essential that we get this teaching embedded in our minds. If we do not, our churches may become centers of tyranny. In areas of conscience, no believer is answerable to another. Should they break God's clear and unambiguous moral law and refuse to repent, however, their local church has a responsibility to implement the restorative discipline of admonition, suspension, and excommunication which the New Testament lays down. But the authority that churches have to act in this way cannot, and must not, be carried over into areas of conscience.

The most we can do here is to remind each other that we are each personally responsible to our Master, and that we will be called to account at last. We need such reminders to keep our consciences clear, and to help us to prepare to meet Him. But in no circumstances is my conscience to be imposed upon another person. Nor is his to be imposed on me. To our own Master each of us stands or falls.

Christian liberty is to be both valued and preserved. Ignorance or neglect of the New Testament's teaching has meant that far too many believers have had their liberty trodden on by others. There are no restrictions on Christian liberty, except those that are self-imposed. If I truly love my fellow-Christian, it will not be a burden to me to seek his welfare and happiness, even if it ties me down more than is biblically necessary.

The Ideal

What is clear from Scripture is that each of us should take steps to have a conscience which is both good and strong. To have a good conscience I need to regularly confess to the Lord every single violation of His law and of my conscience which I know about, and to trust His

undertaking that because of Christ's cross, He will forgive me (1 John 1:5–2:2). To have a strong conscience I need to get a thorough knowledge of God's Word—all of it!—so that I will understand what pleases Him, what does not please Him, and what are those areas about which He has not spoken and where, therefore, He has left us free.

As we follow our Lord Jesus Christ in this world we may have to lose many things—our friends, our reputations, our jobs, our security, our health, our liberty, and even our life. But a good conscience is not something we need ever lose. Oh, to arrive at the judgment seat with such a conscience as that!

Stuart Olyott is the pastoral director of the Evangelical Movement of Wales, worldwide conference speaker, and author of several books. This article is reprinted from *The Evangelical Magazine*.

The Authorized Version (continued from page 91)

still as one, with very few exceptions, when the Authorized Version was produced.

Another important point to remember is this. The Authorized Version was produced some time after that great climactic event which we call the Protestant Reformation. There had been time by then to see some of the terrible horrors of Rome and all she stood for. The early Reformers had too much on their plate, as it were; Luther may have left many gaps; but when this translation was produced, there had been time for men to be able to see Rome for what she really was. These translators were all men who were orthodox in the faith. They believed that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and they submitted to it as the final authority, as against the spurious claims of Rome, as against the appeals to the Church Fathers, and traditions.

Here were fifty-four men, scholars and saintly, who were utterly submitted to the Book. You have never had that in any other version. Here, and here alone, you have a body of men who were absolutely committed to it, who gave themselves to it, who did not want to correct or sit in judgment on it, whose only concern and desire was to translate and interpret it for the masses.

In view of all this, my argument is that the answer does not lie in producing new translations. They are coming out almost every year, but are they truly aiding the situation? No, and for this reason: men no longer read the Bible not because they cannot understand its language, but because they do not believe in it. They do not believe in God; they do not want it. Their problem is not one of language and of terminology; it is the state of the heart. Therefore, what do we do about it? It seems to me there is only one thing to do, the thing that has always been done in the past: we must preach it and our preaching must be wholly based upon its authority.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1900-1981), one of the greatest preachers in the twentieth-century English-speaking world, ministered at Westminster Chapel, London from 1938 to 1968.



John Newton's Legacy

The initial anonymity shows that his aim was not to draw attention to himself, but to honor the work of God. The reference in his epitaph to Galatians 1:23 tells us that he considered that his experience was in line with that of Paul and others, and was therefore of value in exemplifying the essentials of true conversion. At the same time he pointed out those elements which were not typical of all. He wrote, "We must not therefore make the experience of others, in all respects, a rule to ourselves, nor our own a rule to others" (see D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, Eerdmans, 1996, p. 39). This is typical of the great pastoral wisdom which he manifested in even greater measure in his letters.

Omicron and Cardiphonia

The essence of *An Authentic Narrative* was communicated by Newton to an enquiring friend in the form of personal letters before taking its final form. Two years later, the *Gospel Magazine* began publication and Newton contributed various letters, some originally written to friends and some written in response to other correspondents of the magazine. He signed these *Omicron*, under which title twenty-six of them were published in 1774. This was followed in 1780 by a volume of collections of familiar letters to a variety of friends, entitled *Cardiphonia, or the Utterance of the Heart*. "With the publication of this volume, Newton's place as the gentle casuist of the Revival, spiritual director of souls through the post, was secure" (Hindmarsh, p. 249).

Many of these letters have been republished for his bicentenary (e.g. Josiah Bull's selection, *Letters of John Newton*, Banner of Truth Trust, 2007) though sadly, not *Cardiphonia* as a whole. Newton covered a vast array of topics, almost entirely to do with spiritual experience and growth. One mini-series on Christian maturity contained letters on, "Grace in the Blade," "Grace in the Ear" and "The Full Corn in the Ear." (When a correspondent wrote that he was in the third category, Newton replied that he had forgotten to mention that those in that category did not know it!) Four letters chosen at random are entitled, "How trials are to be estimated," "The lessons of Christian experience," "Self-complaints," and "Divine sovereignty in the sufferings of believers—Christian friendship." He did not use his letters to engage in doctrinal arguments with his colleagues in the ministry. Significantly, when the *Gospel Magazine* was engaged in an acrimonious exchange of views over John Wesley, Newton's first contribution not actually based on a previous personal letter was, "On Controversy"! He wrote, "Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation." Newton's letters are "easy to read." The earnest Christian will find them full of wisdom in an easily digestible form.

(continued on page 109)

John Newton's name was familiar to British Christians even before the two-hundredth anniversary of his death on December 21, 1807. Last year's celebration of the abolition of the Slave Trade brought his name to the attention even of the general public. Not only had he himself been a slave-trader, but after his conversion and entry into the Christian ministry, he also played an important part in William Wilberforce's taking up the cause of the slaves. With many Christian ministers it is their preaching that draws our attention. In Newton's case that is not so. We are told that the crowds who attended his ministry were drawn more by their love for the man than by the eloquence of the preaching. His great legacy lies elsewhere.

An Authentic Narrative

The words inscribed at his direction on his monument are: "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long laboured to destroy." One aspect of his legacy is the account he published of this great change.

*An Authentic Narrative of Some Remarkable and Interesting Particulars in the Life of ****** was published in 1764 at the insistence of some of his friends, including the evangelical Anglican minister, Thomas Haweis.

Sowing the Seed

For those of us who have experienced snow, ice, and cold this winter, spring cannot arrive too early! Certainly, the snow and ice are beautiful, and we marvel at God's artistry when we examine a snowflake, admire icicles sparkling in the sunlight, or study the frosty swirls on the windows. We marvel at the power of God's creation when we see how quickly snow can make driving dangerous or when the cold wind takes our breath away and we must stay inside to avoid frostbite. We certainly enjoy sledding, building a snowman or a snow fort, or making tracks in the snow until our fingers and toes tingle with cold and our noses and cheeks are rosy. But spring will come, just as God promised to Noah in Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Spring is a time of new life. It's the time of year when many animals give birth to young ones, flowers begin to bloom, grass and trees become green again, and farmers plant their crops, hoping for a rich harvest. Jesus spoke about springtime when He was on earth. The parable of the sower is perhaps the best known of Jesus' parables (Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:5-8). The sower is a farmer who is planting his spring crop. In Bible times, the sower carried a pouch filled with seed. He would walk up and down the length of the field scattering the seed as he went. Today, a farmer uses a tractor with a planting machine hooked up behind it so that he can plant several neat rows of seeds at once.

In the parable, Jesus explains what happened to the seeds sown by the sower. Not all the seeds bore fruit. Some fell on the road and never grew at all because the birds ate them. Some fell on rocky soil and quickly withered. Some seeds were overwhelmed by thorns and died. Some seeds, however, fell on good soil and grew to produce a good harvest. Farmers plant seed without knowing what will

happen. Will there be too much rain? Not enough rain? Will there be enough sunshine? Will there be a sickness or a pest invasion in the crop? The farmer cannot control the growth of the seed: that is God's work.

Jesus told this parable to illustrate the effect the preaching of the Word of God has on those who hear it. Not everyone who hears the Word is saved. The preacher cannot produce salvation in his hearers, just as the sower cannot make the seeds grow. The preacher brings God's Word to the ears, but it is the Holy Spirit who applies the Word of God to the hearts. Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Are ministers and missionaries the only people who are commanded to bring the Word of God to others? What about those of us who are "lay people," that is, ordinary people? What about children? Must they wait until they are grownups? In one of His many messages to His disciples, Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). The apostle John wrote, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). Solomon writes, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). After David fell into sin, he longed for forgiveness so that he could once again tell others about the Lord. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psalm 51:12-13). It is the duty and the joy of every believer to tell others about the God they serve. Not everyone is a preacher, but every child of God must be a witness for the truth.

Just as not every person is a preacher, so not everyone is a farmer. The farmer has large fields planted with thousands of seeds. Some people, however, plant only a few seeds. Do you have a garden at home? Maybe you help your parents plant the seeds in the springtime. A garden is not as large as a whole field. Perhaps you planted just one or two seeds in a flowerpot. You placed the pot in the sunlight and carefully watered the seeds. Whether there is just one seed or a whole field full of seeds, whoever sowed the seed watches every day to see if there is any growth. Nei-



ther you nor the farmer can make the seed grow; that is God's work. So it is in spiritual life. The preacher brings the Word every Sunday on the pulpit, but every child of God must scatter the seed of the Word as he goes about his daily life.

This does not mean every child of God "preaches" like a minister or a missionary does. It means that you drop little seeds as you go. A seed can be an action, or a few words, or simply your example. Jesus instructed His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13); and, "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:50). To be a witness to others, you must "have salt in yourselves," which means, the Holy Spirit must live in your heart. When the Lord lives in your heart, you have the same desires that He does. Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). It is not only a command; the true Christian cannot help but talk about the Lord because he or she loves the Lord. David exclaimed, "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psalm 71:15-16). When Jesus healed the man possessed by devils, the man wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus had a task for him: "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him" (Luke 8:39). Peter and John were told by the Jewish authorities that they must no longer speak about their Savior. Their answer was, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

Sometimes being a witness for the Lord is done through example. "If by any means I may provoke to emulation¹ them which are my flesh, and might save some of them" (Romans 11:14). Paul writes, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). He advises Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Even children can witness of their Lord by their quiet example.

Notice, children, that being a witness for the Lord does not mean talking about yourself. It means tell-

ing others about the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you notice that in the texts I have quoted? Paul clearly states that the sower, "he that planteth," is nothing, and "he that watereth" is nothing (1 Corinthians 3:7). Witnesses are messengers; they are servants of God. Their joy is not to talk about themselves, but about their Savior. What good is a messenger who talks only about himself and does not bring the message his master has sent him to deliver? What good would it do to tell another sinner only about yourself and not about Jesus? A faithful witness tells about salvation in Christ Jesus. They want others to be saved. Is that your wish? Do you pray for the salvation of others? Do you ask the Lord to save you so that you can be a witness for Him? Do you ask the Lord for opportunities to tell others about Him?

Sowing seed is hard work. When you tell others about the Lord, you will be shunned and mocked. Many times it will seem as though there is no fruit. Maybe it seems like no one wants to listen. We must remember, however, that it is our duty to sow the seed; the Lord blesses it and creates the harvest. Joy comes later: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:5-6).

Do you belong to the Lord? Does the Holy Spirit live in your heart? Have you, perhaps, laughed at those who tried to warn you? Do you despise those who set a godly example? The Lord Himself has placed these people in your path. It is the Lord you are rejecting; it is your own soul you are destroying. Dear children, ask the Lord to open your eyes to your great danger! Ask Him to turn you to Him! How many seeds have already been scattered in your heart? Are any of them growing and bearing fruit? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3a)? "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25a). Are you one of Jesus' lambs? Do you set a godly example? Do you love to speak well of the Lord Jesus?

We fail so often. More often than not, we neglect our duties or even set a sinful example. Ask the Lord to forgive you and to make you a faithful witness of His love and grace. God has promised joy. "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together" (John 4:36). Ask the Lord to help you to cheerfully carry out your Christian duty, remembering the lost souls of those around you: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

1. To emulate means to copy or imitate. Paul hopes that other people ("them which are my flesh") will follow his godly example, so that some of them might be saved.

Bible Quiz

P F N Y I N A M O W N A T I R A M A S
 G E N O C H O X L M P L S T E P H E N
 T C T B E L D E B O R A H N R H J L O
 S U S E J D L N R S I M E O N E H A M
 J E Z A R C I S W E M R P A K Z V M O
 J O S E P H A G M S L H H S E G E L
 O A S D E T G N O E E I E T V K C M O
 S N L I I D I R U T R C R B R I N A S
 H O T G A V B M S U R T D M J A E N H
 U I V B B H A N N A H E S A A H M I T
 A R P A E S U D G T N I T H C M D S U
 A U R H L Q B G T O L N S A O L N A R
 N T N A V R E S S M A H A R B A I A H
 D N P R S B A R N A B A S B T N L C A
 C E I A D I S C I P L E S A O L B R I
 A C L N T S I T P A B E H T N H O J A
 L L I T T L E M A I D R E P E L W Z C
 E L H R S A L I S D N A L U A P T E I
 B K P U S A I R A H C A Z T L Y R A M

To find the words in this Wordsearch, look up the texts to help you unscramble the names of people who witnessed their love and praise to God. The words go backwards, forwards, across, down, and diagonally. Sometimes the letters overlap. You don't have to send me the Wordsearch—you can just write down the answers. It's a long list; just do as many as you can.

1. ELBA (Hebrews 11:4)
2. COHNE (Genesis 5:24)
3. HONA (Genesis 7:5)
4. RAHBAMA (Hebrews 11:8–10)
5. BASHARAM TRASVEN (Genesis 24:34–49)
6. SAIAAC (Genesis 28:1–4)
7. CABOJ (Genesis 48:3–22)
8. SPJEHO (Genesis 41:16)
9. SOSEM (Hebrews 11:24–26)
10. SUJAOH DAN ABLCE (Numbers 14:6–9)
11. ABRAH (Hebrews 11:31)
12. EOHBRAD (Judges 5)
13. INGEDO (Judges 7:15–18)
14. THUR (Ruth 1:16–17)
15. NAHAHN (1 Samuel 2:1–10)
16. MASLUE (1 Samuel 3:19–4:1a)
17. VAIDD (1 Samuel 17:45–47)
18. BALAIGI (1 Samuel 25:23–31)
19. OSLONOM (1 Kings 10:1–9)
20. AICHIMA (1 Kings 22:14–28)
21. TILELT ADIM (2 Kings 5:2–4)
22. EKAHIZEH (2 Kings 18:3–6)
23. SHAOJI (2 Chronicles 34:1–2)
24. SPHOTERP (Acts 10:43)
25. NOHJ HET SPIBTAT (Matthew 3:1–3)
26. OTECIRNUN (Mark 15:39)
27. WOT LDIBN NME (Matthew 9:27–31)

28. CEPILSIDS (Matthew 10:1–7)
29. ASCIZRAHA (Luke 1:67–79)
30. HPRESSEDH (Luke 2:17–20)
31. MINESO (Luke 2:25–35)
32. NANA (Luke 2:36–38)
33. YAMR (Luke 1:46–55)
34. PRELE (Luke 17:12–16)
35. DIBNL GREGAB (Luke 18:35–43)
36. ARTSMIANA AMOWN (John 4:28–29, 39)
37. TREPE (Acts 2:14–40)
38. MAEL NMA (Acts 3:1–8)
39. THEPENS (Acts 7:2–56)
40. PIPLHI (Acts 8:35)
41. ULAP NDA LISSA (Acts 16:25–32)
42. ANASBRAB (Acts 11:22–24)

Please send your puzzle answers to:

Banner Puzzles and Questions

Attn: Mrs. Diana Kleyn

540 Crescent St., NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

e-mail: ckleyn@comcast.net

Below are the answers to last month's quiz.

- | | |
|------------|------------------|
| 1. Third | 8. victory |
| 2. death | 9. witness |
| 3. risen | 10. right |
| 4. Jesus | 11. swallow |
| 5. Christ | 12. abundant |
| 6. destroy | 13. resurrection |
| 7. power | |

Thanks again to all who sent in their answers.

Emily Beeke	Alex Talbot
Marianna Beeke (2)	Amanda Talbot
Allison Boerkoel	Matthew Talbot
Leah Boerkoel	Calvin Van Brugge
Neal Boerkoel	Colleen VanDalen
Becky Boot	Hannah VanderStel
Shelly Boot	Megan VanderStel
Colin Byl	Olivia VanderStel
Sarah Byl	Amanda Van Grouw
Alexander De Haan	David Van Vugt
Nathan De Haan	Lauren Van Vugt
Aaron Kamp	Danique Veldhuizen (1)
Phillip Kamp	Erwin Veldhuizen (2)
Amanda Koppert	Wilena Veldhuizen (2)
Samuel Kranendonk (2)	John Zekveld
Rebecca Pols (2)	Paul Zekveld
Angel Roos	Kathleen Ziegler
Ashlyn Roos	Matthew Ziegler
Kimberly Roos	William Ziegler
Derrick Stubbe	

A Praying Mother

In a seaport town in New England lived a godly woman who had six daughters. She was ill and could not get out of her bed. To a Christian friend she once said, "For many years I have not been able to go to the house of the Lord with His people. But I have a source of grief far greater than this, one that weighs heavily on my heart. I have six daughters, but not one of them is God's child. How I long for their salvation, so that we could enjoy sweet fellowship together!"

This woman sought the Lord daily on behalf of her children. Some time later, a revival began in the neighborhood. Four of this woman's daughters were among the first to be saved. Then a fifth was added to the number, but the eldest daughter remained unmoved, her heart hardened. The mother and her five daughters earnestly prayed for this girl. Now the five daughters understood their mother's anguish! While they rejoiced in their salvation, they were very concerned for their sister's soul.

"Mother," said one of the girls, "let's choose a day for fasting and prayer for our sister."

They all agreed and the next day was set aside for prayer and fasting. The eldest daughter, who was married and lived nearby, had no idea that her mother and sisters were beseeching God for her salvation. She went about her duties at home as usual. Her mind, however, kept going back to her mother's warnings and her sisters' pleas to join them at the revival meetings. She tried to distract herself by working harder, but the Holy Spirit would not let her alone. That evening, she attended a service and the Lord answered the prayers of the family; He saved the eldest daughter. What joy there was when this daughter told her mother and sisters that their prayers had been answered by a gracious God! The mother's sighs and fears had turned to rejoicing and praise.

For several happy years, she enjoyed the fellowship of her beloved daughters. At last, they gathered around her bed as she left this earth and went to her eternal home. They received her last blessing and asked the Lord to give them faith and patience like their mother, who had faithfully, earnestly prayed for their salvation and taught them so much about the God they now also served. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b).

Adapted from *Anecdotes for the Family and the Social Circle*. New York: American Tract Society, n.d.



The Wind and Sea Obey Him

During a revival in Boston, Rev. Dr. Cleaveland was visited by a member of his church. She was a widow whose only son was a sailor. In a voice trembling with emotion, she said, "Dr. Cleaveland, I am here to ask you to join me in praying that the wind may change."

The minister looked at her in astonishment.

"Yes, that's right," continued the woman. "My son has boarded his ship. They sail tonight, unless the wind changes."

"Well, madam," answered the minister with some uncertainty, "I will pray that your son will be converted on his voyage, but to pray that God will change the laws of His universe because of your son, I think is asking too much."

"My heart tells me differently," countered the woman. "God's Spirit is at work here. Souls are being converted every day. You are leading a meeting this evening, and if the wind would change, John would be able to attend the meeting. I believe if he were to attend tonight's meeting, he will be converted. Now, if you cannot join me in this prayer, I will pray alone, for he must stay."

"And I will pray for his conversion," stated Dr. Cleaveland. The minister kept his promise, and prayed for John's salvation.

Later, on his way to the meeting, Dr. Cleaveland glanced at the weathervane, and, to his surprise, the wind had changed, and was blowing inland! When he arrived at the church, he saw John, sitting in the front pew. The young man seemed to drink in every word, and stayed for prayer afterward. By the time his ship sailed from the harbor, the mother's prayers had been answered: the Lord had converted John. The pastor had learned a lesson he never forgot. Nothing is too hard for God; He controls the wind and the sea. The Lord had said, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28). God answered that prayer because the mother was seeking to advance the kingdom of God. God loves to answer prayers that will in any way bring a soul to the Lord.

Adapted from *The Wonders of Prayer: A Record of Well Authenticated and Wonderful Answers to Prayer* by D.W. Whittle. New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1885.

Diana Kleyn, a member of the Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is the author of numerous children's books.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPRING WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

"Serving Others Selflessly" (Matthew 25:40) is the theme for the Women's Conference to be held, the Lord willing, on Thursday, April 17, 2008, at the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. Registration and coffee will be at 9:30 a.m. Our morning speakers will be Dr. Joel and Mary Beeke. We are planning afternoon panel discussions on how we are currently serving others in our various congregations. A luncheon will be provided. The cost will be \$23.00, in both U.S. and Canadian funds. Everyone is warmly invited to attend. Please register before April 3 with: Becky Dibbett (616) 719-3669, (email sdibbet@comcast.net) or Shirley Van Dalen (616) 975-4295.

TRIPS TO SOUTH AFRICA

As you may remember, some of our young people participated in a mission trip to South Africa in August of 2007. We trust that it was a blessing to both them and also those they were enabled to help. We again are considering planning a similar mission trip for 2008 and/or 2009, most likely during the months of July or August.

Please contact John-Mark Averink @ jmcaverink@execulink.com or 519-863-9917 if you are interested. Please state when you would prefer to go.

— The Miskin Missionary Liaison Committee

2008 HNRC YOUTH CONFERENCE

The theme for the 2008 Youth Conference will be: "The Battle is the Lord's – Are You on His Side?" The Bible text for the week will be "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12a). Speakers at this camp will include Rev. J.R. Beeke, Rev. M. Fintelman, Rev. W. Koenen, Rev. J. Neels, and Rev. F. VanderZwaag. Topics will include:

- Fight the Good Fight of Faith
- Conversion or Diversion: Personal Battles of Young People
- A Key Battle: Peer Pressure
- The Armor
- Loyalty and Fratricide – Don't attack your own side!

The format will be similar to previous years with topics, workshops, discussion groups, and time for fellowship. Workshops will address the following topics:

- The Battle of Discerning Biblical Emphasis
- The Battle for the Soul
- The Battle against Satanic Thoughts
- The Battle for Men
- The Battle for Women

The conference will be held, the Lord willing, Tuesday, July 1, through Friday, July 4, at Camp Michawana in southwestern Michigan. All young people (grade 10 through age 25) are encouraged to attend. Mark your calendar! Registration forms are available through your local HRC churches.

The fee of \$150 (U.S. funds only) provides for a meal on Tues. evening (July 3), three meals each on Wed. and Thurs., and two meals on Fri. (July 1-4), and three nights of lodging. Full-time campers may deduct \$20 if registrations are postmarked by June 1. (Please note: If at all possible, submit your applications no later than June 1. Late registrations require a significant amount of extra last-minute work for all people involved with providing transportation, lodging, activity supplies, and food.)

If you have any questions or need a registration form, you may contact: Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Ash (616-364-8705) or Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kamp (616-242-0528) or email: kampjr@sbcglobal.net

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. 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-mail: 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. Jason Beeke (Board President), P.O. Box 68, Springford, ON, N0J 1X0. E-mail: oxfordreform@execulink.com

Jordan Christian School is inviting teacher applications for the 2008-2009 school year. JCS is a rural K-12 school with about 150 students, located in the scenic Niagara Peninsula. We are anticipating openings in the following areas: A secondary teacher with the possibility of curriculum coordinator responsibilities, an Intermediate home room teacher, and possibly a lower elementary position. If you are energetic, committed to children, qualified to teach from a Reformed perspective and you are interested in joining our teaching team, we would look forward to receiving your application. Please send your resume along with a Statement of Faith and your Philosophy of Education to the principal, Mark Fintelman, jcschool@talkwireless.ca, or the Education Committee secretary, John Berman, twsi@sympatico.ca. Jordan Christian School, 4171 15th Street, Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada, L0R 1S0.




Fraser Valley Bible Conference

The Christian & Affliction

Learning about affliction...
...from Job, Jeremiah & Paul

You are invited to hear
Dr. Derek Thomas
Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary
Conference Speaker



April 24, 25 & 26, 2008
Thurs. & Fri. 7:30 PM & Sat. 10-12:00 AM
Emmanuel Free Reformed Church
3386 Mt. Lehman Road
Abbotsford, B.C.

Conference Contact Info
(604) 794 3501
info@fraservalleybibleconference.com
www.FraserValleyBibleConference.com

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.

OBITUARIES

VANDEN TOORN, Naomi V., aged 87, passed away on Sunday, February 17, 2008, Kentwood, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her husband, Henry; daughter, Nancy VandenToorn; and granddaughter, Christine Bruxvoort. Surviving are her children—Robert (Sandra) VandenToorn, Carol (Tim) Plucinski; Sister—Dorothy Rose; Brothers-in-law—Bill (Joanne) VandenToorn, Marvin (Margie) VandenToorn; 12 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; 1 great-great granddaughter. (Rev. F. VanderZwaag, 2 Corinthians 5:1, 10).

GEIVETT, Gerald, aged 63, passed away on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his parents. Surviving are his children—David (Elizabeth) Geivett, Jennifer (Jason) Humrichous, Gwendolyn (Joshua) Wilhite, Julianne Geivett, Annamarie Geivett. Sisters—Mary Anne, Judy, & Darlene; 11 grandchildren. (Pastors J. Humrichous and D. McBride) *Note: Mr. Geivett was attending Grand Rapids HRC Confession of Faith Class and had planned to become a member of our church this month.

ANNIVERSARY

50th Anniversary

1958 April 5th 2008
*"God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble."*
— Psalm 46:1

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father we announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents

Dick and Verna Fintelman.

We pray that the Lord may continue to bless and guide them in the future.

Their thankful children and grandchildren:
Albert & Melanie Fintelman
Erica, Brent, Desiree, & Gerard
Rick & Diana Fintelman
Joel, Andrew, & Jessica
John & Georgie Lea Fintelman
Emily & Jacob
Debbie & David Hopkins
Timothy, Benjamin, & Lydia

Home address: 534 Regional Road 8,
R.R. #1, Uxbridge, Ontario L9P 1R1

John Newton's Legacy (continued from page 103)

Amazing Grace

To most ordinary British Christians, Newton means *Amazing Grace*. This hymn, which reflects Newton's conversion experience, is one of the *Olney Hymns*, a collection of about 350 hymns by Newton and his good friend, William Cowper, the greatest English poet of the day, which was published in 1779. These were originally intended to explain Newton's sermons and help his relatively uneducated people to remember the teaching. They were used at the mid-week meeting in Olney, where Newton explained the text on which the hymn was based, before it was sung. He was not a poet like Cowper, but he was a fine hymn-writer. Cowper himself subordinated his gifts to the need to provide spiritual food for his fellow-believers.

As in his letters, so here Newton displayed his remarkable pastoral gift. As well as "Amazing Grace," many of Newton's hymns are both familiar and much-loved. We may mention among others, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds," "Glorious things of Thee are spoken," "Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat," and "Begone, unbelief; my Savior is near." Less familiar, and less singable, but full of pastoral wisdom, is "I asked the Lord that I might grow." Newton explains how the Lord, instead of answering his prayer directly, made him "feel the hidden evils of (his) heart." The hymn closes with the Lord's explanation:

*These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy
That thou mayest seek thy all in Me.* (Christian Hymns 698)

A similar hymn, one of my favorites, but not found in modern hymn-books, says,

*'Tis my happiness below,
Not to live without the cross,
But the Savior's power to know
Sanctifying every loss.*

*Trials must and will befall
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me.*

— Olney Hymns No. 35

A Lump of Sugar

Newton is often described as "a moderate Calvinist," but this can be misleading. He was certainly not an extreme Calvinist, but his views of the doctrines of grace were clear and uncompromising. He asserted that he took the doctrines from the Scriptures, not from Calvin. He wrote on one occasion, "If you mean by a rigid Calvinist, one who is fierce, dogmatical, and censorious, and ready to deal out anathemas against all who differ from him, I hope I am no more such than I am a rigid papist. But as to the doctrines which are now stigmatized by the name Calvinism, I cannot well avoid the epithet rigid, while I believe them: for there seems to be no medium between holding them and not holding them; between ascribing salvation to the will of man, or the power of God; between grace and works."

On the other hand, we have his own description of his practice. Speaking to William Jay of Bath, a well-known fellow minister, he confessed, "I am more a Calvinist than anything else; but I use my Calvinism in my writings and my preaching as I use this sugar." Then, taking a lump, he put it into his teacup and stirred it, adding, "I do not give it alone and whole, but mixed and diluted" (see Todd Murray, *Beyond Amazing Grace*, Evangelical Press, 2007, pp. 50–51).

Perhaps Newton's greatest legacy, however, is the example of his enduring faith. Towards the end of his life he described himself "like a person going a journey on a coach, who expects its arrival every hour, and is frequently looking out at the window for it." On another occasion he said he was "packed and sealed, and waiting for the post." This sure and certain hope, however, would be empty without the basis to be found in his confession: "My memory is nearly gone; but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior" (see Brian H. Edwards, *Through Many Dangers*, Evangelical Press, 2001, pp. 347–48).

John Legg is a well-known author and a member of the editorial board of *The Evangelical Magazine*, from which this article is reprinted. He pastored for more than forty years before retiring to Cardiff, South Wales.

NATIONAL NEWS

Publicly taking the name of God in vain – The phrase “Oh my...” is one of the top expletives used in America. Due to such frequent and everyday usage, even the Federal Communications Commission has had to become tolerant of this sin against the third commandment. The FCC draws distinctions between profane language—traditionally defined as irreverence toward God—and obscene material—defined as material that describes sexual conduct in an offensive way. Since the 1960s, most profanities and vulgarities are allowed on the air at certain times of day, but obscenities are not allowed. (*Washington Post*)

Abortion in Focus – President Bush, in speaking to anti-abortion demonstrators attending this year’s “March for Life” rally, publicly stated that “each unborn child is a separate individual...the fingers and toes and beating hearts that we can see on an unborn child’s ultrasound come with something that we cannot see: a soul!” (AP)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Foster parents quit over homosexuality law – A Christian couple in the United Kingdom has decided to give up foster parenting rather than bow to legislation requiring them to treat homosexuality the same as heterosexuality. Since 2001, Vincent and Pauline Matherick have been foster parents, but they resigned after being told that if children in their care expressed an interest in homosexuality, they had no choice under the law but to take them to gay support group meetings. British government regulations, which came into effect earlier in 2007, forbid every supplier of goods or services to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. The Mathericks plan to challenge the law in court; however, their eleven-year-old foster son is being moved from their home to a children’s unit. (*Today’s Family News*)

Religion in the United Kingdom – A European commission poll reports that 38% of the UK citizens “believe there is a God” and a further 40% believe there is “some sort of spirit or life force.” Overall, 53% of the people in UK identify themselves as Christian (down from 66% in 1983), but only 7% as practicing Christians. 10% of all citizens attend church weekly, but two-thirds had not gone to church in the past year. Islam is the second largest religion in the UK, with a total of about 1.6 million people, or 2.8% of the total population. 13,626,000 (23.2%) of the UK population claims no religion or did not answer the question of religion in the 2001 census. Attendance at Anglican services has declined by 20% between 2000 and 2006, and attendance at Catholic services declined 13%. In Scotland, attendance at the Church of Scotland services declined by 19% and 25% at Catholic services. (*Wikipedia*)

ITEMS FOR PRAYER

- ◆ Pray with lamenting how our society can have such little regard for the holy name of our God, even allowing this sin against the third commandment to go out unfettered into the public domain.
- ◆ Give thanks to God for public officials who fight for the unborn and who directly address the heart of the abortion holocaust.
- ◆ Pray for the reversal of secular laws that are contrary to the Word of God. Pray that afflicted followers of Christ would be comforted and strengthened in their faith by the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Pray for revival in the UK, that the increasing secularization would be found to be empty, and that many would realize that full satisfaction can only be found in serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Give thanks to know and serve the Living God, and for God’s inspired Word, the Bible, that we may rely on its truths to point us to the Savior Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins, and not a reliance on one’s self for a (false) “final liberation.”

FOCUS ON WORLD RELIGIONS

BUDDHISM

With about 365 million followers—6% of the world’s population—Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world. It is exceeded in numbers only by Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Buddhism was founded in the sixth century in Northern India by the first known Buddha (one who has awakened), Siddhartha Gautama. Buddhism later died out in India, but was established in Sri Lanka. From there, it expanded across Asia. Buddhism claims to be an explanation of the origin of existence and has a specific set of rituals and behaviors, presenting a transformational goal for a desire to improve one’s situation and a distinct moral code. However, most definitions of religion require a belief in the existence of one or more deities. That would disqualify most branches of Buddhism from being considered as a religious group, as they do not believe in a deity, but instead rely on man’s inner spirit for their “faith.”

Buddha’s Teaching:

The four noble truths are:

1. There is suffering.
2. There is cause for suffering.
3. There is cessation of suffering.
4. There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering.

The Buddhist canon of scripture is known as the Tripitaka, written by Gautama, and is about ten times the length of the Christian Bible. Each chapter is a *sutra* (synopsis), which Buddha would have used to explain the same four noble truths to his audiences under different circumstances with the aim to attain “final liberation,” called Nibbana. (*Religious Tolerance & Wikipedia*)



Saving Faith or Hypocritical Fruits?

Question: *I've always been told that we can tell the genuineness of our faith by its fruits, but how do we know that those fruits are not hypocritical? For example, John Bunyan lived a life of rebellion and sin but then reformed almost to the point of being a Pharisee; yet, he said himself that he was not yet saved. Another example is the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18–23). So if you cannot always judge faith by its fruits, how can you tell if you have real, saving faith?*

This is a very important question—a question of eternal significance that therefore needs to be answered carefully and clearly. When we speak of faith, we mean something essential to salvation. No one enters heaven without it. But what is it? How do you know it is true and not false?

First of all, it must be made clear that the two examples you mention are of those who thought to please God by their works. They did not do the right out of thankfulness to God for what He had done. This is a common spiritual problem; Paul encountered it among the Galatians. After he had preached the gospel to them, some of them wanted to go back to earning favor with God by works—by what they did or did not do. Paul calls them fools for doing so. We will never be able to stand before God and be received because of what we do. Now, as a side note, that does not mean Christians may live any way they want. If we have come to faith in Christ, one of the things separating us from the unbeliever and hypocrite is that we desire holiness and we seek to walk in the law of love. However, we will also realize that we fall short over and over again, and therefore we will return time and again to Christ for cleansing and new strength every day. In both of the examples you mention, the issue was trying to please God through good works. But all those who come to faith in Christ are taught by the Spirit that they have nothing good to offer Him; they realize they are thoroughly wretched and sinful. It is out of this condition that they cry for mercy and, hearing in the gospel that there is mercy with God through Christ, believe His Word, cry to Him in prayer, and lay hold on Him by faith for eternal life.

Those who have a hypocritical faith often want to have Christ for what He gives, especially eternal life. The life they imagine is not a life conformed to His will and law, but a life in which they can continue just as they are in their selfish desires without crucifying their sinful flesh. The true believer wants Christ; he loves Christ, he sees in Christ everything, he cannot live without Christ! This has been taught him by the Spirit. The hypocrite is not changed in heart; he is not born again and therefore does not hunger after righteousness. The believer, on the other hand, although he laments his lack of holi-

ness, strives to be more like Jesus. Dr. John Brown said, “If we would prove to the world and to our own hearts that we are the called and elect of God, we must be and do what the called and elect of God are called to be and to do.”

While it is true that many professing to know Christ have an outwardly moral lifestyle, are very knowledgeable, and even very religious—they have felt conviction of sin and may have made a “decision for Christ”—yet these things are not necessarily marks of believers who are in Christ. The believer displays a humility before God and man.

We must ask God to show us these things, as our hearts are deeply deceitful. True faith brings a turning to Christ from sin. There will be prayer; there will be searching after more understanding and knowledge of Christ. There will be a measure of obedience to the commands of Christ, and that is precisely where believers are often troubled: because they find so much remaining sin, they conclude they must not be children of God. They grow weary of battling against the same sins day after day. They wonder how God can be ready to forgive the same sin again and again. Yet, in spite of these discouragements, they are encouraged to press on by the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit who witnesses with their spirits.

We must make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), which means it must be possible to be sure about the matter. It is not God’s will that His people remain in the dark concerning these things. Clearly, you are struggling with this topic and I want to encourage you to press on until you know with certainty that you are in Christ. This knowledge is possible by faith. God delights to give this assurance that you are in Christ to those who seek it from Him. This assurance does not make us more presentable to God; it is the comfort He gives to us as we remain in His Word, study His Word, and seek to walk in the way of His commandments, having found our life to be hid in Christ.

Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario.

From *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*
Publication Number (USPS 010584)
1875 Leonard Street, NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE PAID AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

JESUS CAST A LOOK ON ME

Jesus, cast a look on me,
Give me sweet simplicity;
Make me poor and keep me low,
Seeking only Thee to know.

All that feeds my busy pride,
Cast it evermore aside;
Bid my will to Thine submit,
Lay me humbly at Thy feet.

Make me like a little child,
Of my strength and wisdom spoiled,
Seeing only in Thy light,
Walking only in Thy might.

Leaning on Thy loving breast,
Where a weary soul can rest,
Feeling well the peace of God,
Flowing from His precious blood.

In this posture let me live,
And hosannas daily give,
In this temper let me die,
And hosannas ever cry!

— JOHN BERRIDGE

The *Banner*
of Sovereign Grace Truth

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

A Periodical for Young and Old