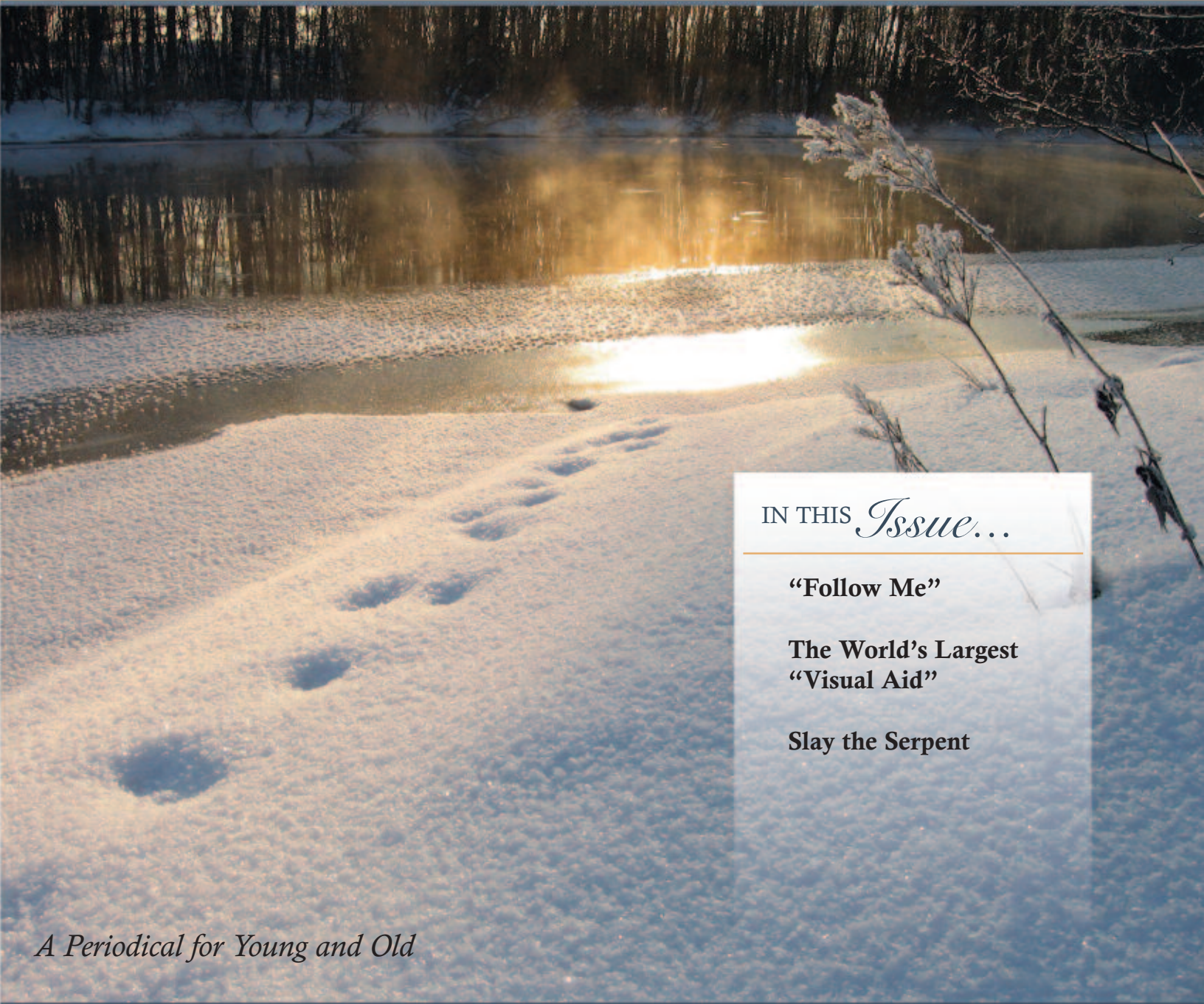


The *Banner* of Sovereign Grace Truth



IN THIS *Issue...*

“Follow Me”

**The World’s Largest
“Visual Aid”**

Slay the Serpent

A Periodical for Young and Old

**THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH**

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"If we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is not because the Lord's hand is shortened or His ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work."

—Matthew Henry

“Follow Me”

LUKE 5:27

How will you respond to this command of Jesus in the year 2008? As you may know, these words of Jesus were originally addressed to Matthew. How did Matthew respond? He forsook all and followed Jesus.

True conversion, worked inwardly by the Holy Spirit, will always result in forsaking everything for Jesus. But every soul that heeds the call to follow Jesus will find Him to be their all in all. Will you forsake everything for Him in 2008?

If you would follow Jesus, be willing to bear cheerfully whatever cross Jesus lays on you. Bearing our crosses cheerfully and looking to Jesus for ongoing grace to bear them will not only glorify Him, but also allow us to experience the all-sufficiency of His grace. Bearing our cross, we will not only be following and honoring Christ; we will also be more like Christ. This will produce a rich, worthwhile life in the midst of every trial.

As we follow Jesus, we must lean upon Him as our Shepherd and Guide, knowing with inward assurance that He will guide us even to and through death. This comfort produces joy in our Christianity, an essential component of living Christianity. It makes our countenances beam, proving that we are “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2) and daily communing with Him as the life and joy of our souls.

In following Jesus, we must recognize that we will have to fight with our three-headed enemy—sin, Satan, and self. But we can cheerfully fight the good fight of faith when we realize that, through the ongoing, internal influence of the Spirit, “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37). We will forsake sin and fight against its influence in our lives. We will renounce our own righteousness in exchange for the perfect, everlasting righteousness of Jesus. We will look to Him for pardon and peace that surpasses all understanding.

Let us follow Jesus with energized faith, resting wholly and solely upon Jesus’ perfect work at the right hand of the Father. He is praying for us, dear people of the Lord, and will continue to do so, that our faith fails not. As He has made it well for us through His own perfect merit, He will keep it well with us. And, following Him, we will experience that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

Will you forsake everything for Jesus and follow Him in 2008? Will you follow Him for the grace you need every day of this new year? Follow Him with self-denial, humility, and patience. Pray for and be ready to do every good work. Didn’t Jesus say, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16)?

May Jesus be our all in all; may we ourselves be nothing at all. Only then will Jesus lead us to glory where faith shall be turned into sight, hope turned into fulfillment, and love shall never end.

Rev. James Greendyk is a pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregations.

DEFEATING SATAN: OUR CHALLENGE AS CITIZENS (2)

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

Resolve to speak out on scriptural and moral issues. Many Christians avoid getting involved in politics because their efforts seem so ineffective. Yet, perhaps one reason that political life has degenerated is that God's people are often no longer getting involved.

We need to seriously consider two things: first, God has established civil authorities to execute justice, to establish order and righteousness in society, and to provide for the common good. He does this in order to provide a peaceable context in which the gospel, godliness, and honesty may prosper (Rom. 13:1–7; Ps. 106:3; Isa. 1:17; 1 Tim. 2:1–2).


Second, we have a responsibility to support our government. We must pay what we owe to the government (Mark 12:13–17) and pray for those in authority over us (1 Tim. 2:1–4). We must respect and obey the state, but our obedience to the state is not blind obedience. The apostles said that Christians should not obey civil authorities if their mandates contradict God's laws (Acts 5:29). Paul used his Roman citizenship to object to injustice (Acts 16:35–39; 22:24–29). Other biblical characters influenced the secular government that ruled over them. Consider the examples of Joseph (Gen. 41) and Daniel (Dan. 6).

We should carefully consider whom to vote for in local and national elections. As John Jay, the first chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, said in 1816: "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty...of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers" (*Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay* [New York: G.P. Putnam, 1893], 4:393).

Christians are to be salt and light in the world, and that world includes the government level. J.I. Packer writes, "The more profoundly one is concerned about heaven, the more deeply one cares about God's will being done on earth."

How far should a Christian go in supporting state and political affairs? Here are four principles to guide us:

- Study Scripture for guidance. Understand what the Bible has to say on moral issues like abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, and Sabbath desecration. Read appropriate materials that will give you a working vocabulary and knowledge of these issues, then speak to your family, friends, work associates, and neighbors about them.

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

1. *Resolve to speak out on scriptural and moral issues.*
2. *Resolve to live for Christ.*

• Pray daily for civil authorities. Pray for the conversion of those who are unsaved and for the strengthening of those who are Christians (1 Tim. 2:1–2). Pray for revival in the land. Cry to God, “Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Ps. 28:9; 80:19). Could one reason why we see so little of God’s movement in society be related to our shallow prayers, our minimal expectation of God, and our neglect to view ourselves as personally involved in the sins of our land? When King Edward died suddenly in England, John Bradford confessed, “He died because of my sin.” Bradford, as a Christian citizen, viewed himself as part of the corporate nation, and thus confessed guilt for his lack of prayer for his God-fearing king. This inclusion of ourselves in prayer for the nation is biblical—for example, notice how Daniel includes himself repeatedly when confessing corporate, national guilt in his well-known prayer of Daniel 9.

• Learn how your government operates. Political institutions are imperfect in this fallen world, but remember that God has ordained them. Governments do legislate morality; the question is, whose morality will be legislated? If Christians ignore what is happening in government and put their heads in the sand, their country will deteriorate even faster.

Note, however, that the church is not to be a political institution. The church helps to bring people to Christ and then molds them to be like Him. Believers who are motivated by Christ’s love and compassion then may enter the political arena well-equipped to stand firm for justice.

• Get involved. Write letters to government leaders and editors of newspapers and other media that influence political processes. Join organizations and support movements that uphold Christian morality. Run for public office, if God calls you to do that. Otherwise, support other Christians who sustain biblical views and do run for office.

When you contemplate raising your voice on moral issues of the day, remember Luther’s famous statement:

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Neither give place to the devil” (4:27). Leave no opening for the devil. Be too busy for Satan. Do not allow empty spaces in your life, for the devil will surely fill them. Do not serve Satan; he is a squatter without rights in this world. As a believer, you have no business sinning or living like an unbeliever.

“If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved.”

Live for Christ

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Neither give place to the devil” (4:27). Leave no opening for the devil. Be too busy for Satan. Do not allow empty spaces in your life, for the devil will surely fill them. Do not serve Satan; he is a squatter without rights in this world. As a believer, you have no business sinning or living like an unbeliever.

By God’s grace, suppress all lust, bitterness, and anger. Live for Christ.

“Who is sufficient for these things?” 2 Cor. 2:16 asks. For years, I thought that was a rhetorical question to be answered with, “Certainly not me and no one else, either.” But Paul answers the question six verses later: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5). In the power of Christ, we can live a life to God’s glory that triumphs over Satan’s defeat—personally, in the church, and in the nation. Live for your Savior who holds the world, the nations, the church, and yourself—including the smallest detail—in His almighty, gracious hands.

Let me close with a prayer of John Calvin: “Grant, Almighty God, that as Thou art graciously pleased daily to set before us Thy sure and certain will, we may open our eyes and ears, and raise all our thoughts to that which not only reveals to us what is right, but also confirms us in a sound mind, so that we may go on in the course of true religion, and never turn aside, whatever Satan and his demons may devise against us, but that we may stand firm and persevere, until having finished our warfare, we shall at length come unto that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.”

Dr. Joel R. Beeke is president and professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan. These articles have been published as *Striving Against Satan* by Bryntirion Press in Wales, which is available for \$6.50 plus postage from Reformation Heritage Books.

The World's Largest "Visual Aid"

With this issue, Dr. David Murray, professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, begins a series of Bible Study articles with accompanying questions on the Tabernacle.

If you went to a primitive people with little or no education and with little or no knowledge of God, how would you begin to teach them the way of salvation? What lessons would you begin with? What teaching methods would you use? To make things even more difficult, imagine there was no Bible available—not even one book of Scripture. What would you do in that situation? Then, as if you were not facing enough problems, you are informed that there are over two million people to teach, they live in a desert, and they are constantly on the move. "That's impossible!" you exclaim. Well, as Jesus said in another situation, "With men *it is impossible*, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

God faced this exact situation when the children of Israel came out of Egypt and were encamped in the desert at the base of Mount Sinai. Two million displaced Israelites, mostly uneducated, spiritually Egyptianized, and not one book of Scripture between them! Genesis had not even been written yet. What was the Lord's solution to this seeming impossibility? It was, "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). God started a building project. He ordered the construction of the Tabernacle and its furniture to serve as a huge "visual aid." Paul described these "holy places made with hands" as "figures of the true" (Heb. 9:24), or "pictures of truth." God pictured the truth to preach the truth. This divine method of teaching is sometimes called "typology." In this article, we will look at four characteristics of typology, and in subsequent articles, we will look at the "types," or the pictures themselves.

Simple Pictures

If your young child asked you, "Daddy, what is a rocket?" you wouldn't contact NASA and ask them to send you the technical specifications of a rocket. No, you would sit down and draw a simple picture. You show rather than tell. Your drawing does not say everything there is to say about a rocket, but it does say something—something that is true, understandable, and memorable. By

putting it in simple picture form, you communicate truth in a far more effective way than all of NASA's volumes would in this situation.

When a young Israelite girl asked, "Daddy, what is God?" her father couldn't pull out a catechism or a systematic theology. They didn't exist. No, her father would say something like, "Hannah, hold my hand and I'll take you through the camp to God's tent, and I will show you what God is like." There, he would show rather than tell. God's tent, the Tabernacle, did not say everything there was to say about God, but it said something—something that was true, understandable, and memorable. It was Israel's first "Bible" and it showed them God and His way of salvation in a series of simple, steppingstone pictures.



Important Pictures

When you pick up your newspaper, what do you read first? The most important stories are those with major headlines and significant space is devoted to them throughout the newspaper. There are other stories summarized in digest form on the sidebars. They too are important enough to

be included in the paper, but not as important as the main headline stories. Usually you read the main headline stories, the ones with most space devoted to them. You trust the editor's judgment on what is the most important news.

When we pick up our Bibles, while acknowledging that all its contents are important, we may also ask what is especially important. One way of deciding this is by looking at how much space is allocated to the various stories. For example, the creation of the world has about two chapters. That's clearly important. But, how many chapters are given to the Tabernacle? Half of Exodus and all of Leviticus are devoted to it. And then, when the Tabernacle becomes more permanent in the form of the Temple, even more chapters are given to it. What is the "Editor" saying to us? He is saying, "This is very, very, very important. This is one of the chief ways I reveal Myself." Indeed, God reveals far more of Himself through the Tabernacle than through the creation. And,

if we trust the “Editor,” our preaching and witnessing would reflect that far more.

Theological Pictures

The main question the Israelite asked when looking at the Tabernacle was, “What does this teach me about God?” The Tabernacle, its furniture, and rituals painted theological pictures (Heb. 8:5; 9:11). These “figures of the true” or “pictures of truth” were God-centered. If your only Bible was the Tabernacle, and you yearned to know about God, would you not have spent many hours in and around it? Would you not have asked the priests who served there to instruct you and share with you the light God had given them? Would you not have sought out the fellowship of like-minded seekers—and “finders”—that they might do you good? Would you not have prayed to the Lord to open the eyes of your understanding?

God recognized that theological truth in *sentence* form would be very difficult for the Israelites to grasp. So, He gave them theological truth in *sensory* form. Every touch, sight, sound, smell, and even taste conveyed truth about God’s character and, as we shall see in later articles, especially about the truth of His mercy and grace. This is the most vital truth to grasp about the Tabernacle. It set forth in picture form the only way of salvation. No Israelite was ever saved by making the Tabernacle, serving in the Tabernacle, or trusting in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle never saved anyone. What it pictured did.

Prophetic Pictures

While the Tabernacle revealed much about God and His way of salvation, there was also an inbuilt inadequacy. There was a divinely intended insufficiency in the Tabernacle and its service (Heb. 9:8). God designed it in such a way that, while it taught much, it also taught that there was much more to learn. The author of Hebrews highlights how the Tabernacle not only revealed God to the Israelites but also created a longing and a hope for an even greater future revelation of God and His way of salvation. Thus, the Tabernacle served the present but also pointed to the future. It pictured truth for the present but also predicted more truth for the future. Wherever the Israelite looked in the Tabernacle, his response would be, “That’s true, but there is a fuller revelation of that truth to come. God has shown the way of salvation, but there is a more glorious manifestation of salvation to come.” The psalmists and the prophets give insight into the thoughts and desires of the spiritual Israelites as they meditate on the Tabernacle. Time and again, they take Tabernacle vocabulary on their lips and use it to express hope that an even greater Tabernacle of God would yet appear. In this way, Messiah-centered faith, hope, and expectation were cultivated. Eventually it was satisfied

when “The Word was made flesh and dwelt (literally, “tabernacled” or “tented”) among us...full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Study Questions

1. How did Christ explain the Tabernacle as a prophetic picture of Himself (Matt. 12:6; John 2:19–21; Luke 24:27)?
2. Study 1 Peter 1:10–12 and answer the following questions:
 - (a) Moses was the “model” prophet (Deut. 18:15). Was he a prophet of legalism and condemnation or of grace and salvation (v.10)? Why?
 - (b) What spirit was in the prophets (v.11)?
 - (c) What two aspects of Christ’s person and work did they predict (v.11)?
 - (d) Why didn’t the prophets understand everything they preached (v.12)?
 - (e) How can we see more in the Old Testament than the Old Testament prophets did (v.12)?
3. What Psalms use Tabernacle vocabulary to predict Christ’s person and work?
4. How did Old Testament characters get to heaven (Matt. 8:11)? Was it by works, by faith, or by a mixture of the two? If faith was involved, was it in God in general, or in the Messiah in particular? Consult John 8:56, 14:6, 17:3; Acts 4:12; Heb. 11; 1 Tim. 2:5; Eph. 2:9; Rom. 3:2.
5. Read Hebrews 7–9. What verses highlight,
 - (a) The spiritual usefulness of the Tabernacle and its services,
 - (b) The spiritual “deficiencies” of the Tabernacle and its services.
6. Do you think mission work to primitive peoples should start with the building of a model Tabernacle? Why or why not?
7. Does the balance of your spiritual diet reflect the balance of Scripture?
8. Memorize the following definition of a type: “A type is a prophetic picture of Christ’s person and work. It is a real person, place, object, event, etc., which God ordained to act as a predictive pattern or resemblance of Christ’s person and work.”
9. How can Christians use the Tabernacle in their own devotional lives?

Dr. David Murray is Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.



introduction to james

Having completed a study of Nehemiah, Dr. Bilkes now hopes to walk us through the Epistle of James.

The Author

The James who authored this epistle was almost certainly the half-brother of Jesus. His name occurs in the gospels as one of Jesus' brothers (Mark 6:3). Being a popular name, there were other people named James; from the circle of the twelve apostles, there were already two men with that name (Mark 1:19; Mark 15:40). Yet, it is generally accepted that James the brother of Jesus wrote this short epistle. This James was prominent in the early church, known as one of the pillars (Gal. 2:9). We also meet this James in the book of Acts, where he clearly has a place of prominence and authority. Scholars who have studied the speech of James in Acts 15:13–21 see a remarkable similarity between its language and style and the epistle from his hand. Early Christians would have understood the simple reference to "James" in the first verse to mean this James, the apostle.

Although he was privileged to have grown up in the same home as Jesus, we are told that, during Jesus' public ministry, James did not believe in Him (John 7:5). However, after He rose again, Jesus made a special appearance to his brother James (1 Cor. 15:7). This appearance is usually understood to have been the turning point in James's life, leading to his conversion. It is sobering to think that while Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52), James saw no beauty in Him. But then the day came when he would echo Paul: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. 5:16). After that glorious appearance of Christ to him, James united with the company of believers who waited for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:14). Christ's appearance brought him to prayer, just as it later would Paul (Acts 9:11), and it raised him up to be a leader in the early church as well as a penman of part of the New Testament Scriptures.

The Date

Though we can't be certain about the exact date, most scholars believe that the book of James is a very early

writing, perhaps the earliest book of the New Testament. Their two main reasons for this are the following: first, the situation depicted in the book seems to fit the earliest stage of apostolic Christianity, the early days of persecution, poverty, and oppression. Secondly, there are no references or allusions to matters pertaining to the Synod of Jerusalem (AD 48 or 49) as described in Acts 15. The Gentile mission had raised many issues for the early Jewish Christians, but there is no trace of these things in this letter. Though we can't be certain, James's letter seems to belong to the first 10–15 years of the early church, and probably the early 40s.

The Background

James would have been writing from Jerusalem and addresses his epistle to the "twelve tribes that are scattered abroad" (1:1). This probably means he is writing to Jewish Christians scattered throughout Palestine and beyond. Of course, the exile long ago had already scattered the Jewish people far and wide; even when some had returned, most continued living in what we call the Diaspora, as it continues today. The Diaspora literally means the scattering or "sowing" of the Jewish people throughout the world. But we read of a more immediate scattering in Acts 8:1. Because of the persecution of the early church by the Sanhedrin and other authorities, Christians had to flee for their lives. To them James writes: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (1:2).

When you read the epistle closely, you find another important factor in the situation of the earliest readers of this epistle. James frequently mentions the division and oppression within the community itself. Rich and poor are at odds (2:6–7); the rich are oppressing the poor (5:4–6); there is partiality for the rich and disdain for the poor (2:1–4); there were dissensions (4:1–3) produced by selfish ambition and stoked by the weapon of the tongue (3:1–12).

How the early church was a ready prey for Satan, the furious serpent (Rev. 12:15)! It is miraculous that the church survived the onslaught of persecution and the sin within her own ranks. We can ascribe this survival only to the fact that Christ obtained all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). From heaven,

Christ wielded His scepter to protect His church and fortify her. One of the ways He did this was through the epistle of His brother James to the twelve scattered tribes.

The Theme

When you ask people what the book of James is about, many think of suffering or faith and works. Some might say it's about Christian living, since it deals with many practical issues including temptation, the tongue, prayer, etc. All these things are true; however, the basic theme of this short epistle is the difference between pure religion and vain or carnal religion. James writes: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (1:26-27). James contrasts "vain religion" with "pure religion." This is the theme that governs the whole book. All other topics serve to shed light on this basic theme — what true religion is and what it is not. Let me list in summary form what James says about true and false religion:

TRUE RELIGION

CARNAL RELIGION

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True religion comes down from God and is established in the heart by spiritual regeneration (1:17). • True religion arises from the engrafted Word, which saves the soul (1:21). • True religion, when tested, is patient, constant, and God-glorifying (1:2-18). • True religion is faith working by love (2:14-26), keeps itself unspotted from the world (1:27), respects not persons (2:1-3), bridles the tongue (3:5-12), humbles itself before God (4:8-10), relies on God (4:13-17), and is fervent in prayer (5:13-20). • True religion has its perfect work (1:4) and leads to peace (3:18) and precious fruits unto the coming again of the Lord (5:7). • True religion saves from death (5:19) and will be lifted up (4:10). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carnal religion springs from the heart, which "bringeth forth sin," and sin "bringeth forth death" (1:15). • Carnal religion proceeds from the wrath of man (1:20). • Vain religion wavers, is unstable in everything, and fades away (1:2-18). • Vain religion does not work (2:4-26), promotes envy (3:13-18), promotes lusts (4:1-12), and is wanton (5:5). • Carnal religion will be judged without mercy (2:13) and will fall into condemnation (5:12). • Carnal religion will lead to death (5:20) with the devil and his hosts (4:7).
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The Structure

Some see the book of James as a loose collection of teaching on practical topics. But when we read the book closely, we find a unity and progression of the argument. The book alternates between a *test* and a *trait* of genuine faith. This is true to life. When a student takes a test, he reveals what he possesses. When a product is tested, it shows whether it has what it needs. Likewise, spiritually speaking, there are a series of *tests*, each of which reveals whether a person's religion is true or false and his faith genuine or not. And after each test, James emphasizes a *trait* that faith manifests in this test. Consider the following sequence as we begin our study of this helpful book:

The Test of Trials (1:1-18)

The Trait of Word-centered Obedience (1:19-27)

The Test of Preferences (2:1-13)

The Trait of Lively Faith (2:14-26)

The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

The Trait of Heavenly Wisdom (3:13-18)

The Test of the World (4:1-10)

The Trait of Providential Trust (4:11-17)

The Test of Pleasure (5:1-6)

The Trait of Prayerful Patience (5:7-20)

Questions:

1. What can you reconstruct about God's work in James's life from the following passages: Mark 6:3; John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 15:13-21; Acts 21:18-25?
2. Does the fact that this book was written to Jews (1:1) change how it applies to us?
3. What are the two main ways that Satan tries to assault the church in every age, including ours?
4. Why should we be keen to tell the difference between true and false religion?
5. "Without tests you don't reveal the traits of something." Reflect on how that applies to faith.

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Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock... (1)



The fourteenth chapter of Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus told a parable in connection with someone's remark that "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (v. 15).

The Lord Jesus' parable is of great significance for those who are exercised with the Lord's Supper:

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper (Luke 14:16–24).

I believe that the Lord Jesus used this parable to make clear that it is not sufficient for us merely to say, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." It is true that such people are blessed, but what about you? Do you belong to those who eat bread in the kingdom of God? This is a matter of personal significance for each of us. How do we respond to the invitation from Him who is supreme wisdom Himself: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding" (Prov. 9:4–6)?

In this parable, the Lord Jesus also made very clear what the task of His servants is: they are to invite—even compel—sinners in His Name to partake of the meal that He has prepared and offers to them. The command "Compel them to come in" obviously does not mean that the invitees should be forced to come against their will; when they adamantly refuse to come and resist the sweetest and most urgent invitations, the responsibility rests with them rather than with the servants. Those who neither eat the Lord's bread nor drink of the wine will have to deal with the consequences.

The phrase "compel them to come in" can only refer to *verbal* compulsion. It means that with the greatest earnestness and utmost urgency (using appropriate words), the Lord's servants admonish sinners to partake of the Lord's invitation and accept His offer. If, however, they are neglectful of this compelling, then the responsibility for sinners not heeding this invitation rests with them.

So far, I have tried to make clear from Scripture why and for whom the Lord instituted His Supper. But I cannot and will not conclude these articles without compelling you to partake of this meal which the Lord in His love and unfathomable goodness has prepared for the poor, contrite spirits who tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). For "when the needy seek Him, He will mercy show; yea, the weak and helpless shall His pity know; He will surely save them from oppression's might, for their lives are precious in His holy sight" (Psalter 200:2)!

The authors of the Heidelberg Catechism correctly concluded that the use of the sacraments belongs to the duties imposed by the fourth commandment. In response to the question, "What does God command

in the fourth commandment?" they taught: "First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God, to hear His word, *to use the sacraments* [italics mine]...and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me: and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath" (Heid. Cat., Q. 103, emphasis mine).

We are not absolved from all responsibility by simply saying that the blessed are those who, as God's children, sit at the Lord's Table to eat His bread and drink His wine as signs and seals of His grace, love, and faithfulness. Serving God according to His precepts does not only include going to church to hear His Word, calling upon Him publicly, singing psalms to His honor, contributing financially to the maintenance of the church and the ministry of mercy, and receiving the sacrament of baptism; it also includes participation in the Lord's Supper according to the norms prescribed by Him in His Word. No one should be able to find any rest until he or she belongs to the multitude that keeps holyday (Ps. 42:4), showing forth the death of the Lord until He comes.

Practice confirms time and again that obedience to this command of love is contingent upon feeling a need for partaking of the Lord's Supper. This is not good! It is not our desire, but rather, His precept that should be our starting point for doing all that God commands us to do. Whoever challenges that, challenges God's precept, and this will yield spiritual barrenness.

My task, and that of all of God's servants, is to do what Jeremiah did (Jer. 17:16): as a shepherd moves his flock onward, we are likewise to insist upon obedience to the Lord's commands and "drive" sinners to the Lord—even when this is not appreciated. We cannot lead anyone to the Lord; only God's Spirit can accomplish this. We cannot move anyone to obey God's precepts; only the Lord can do so. But our responsibility is to "compel them to go in." The responsibility for not going in, and for not using what the Lord offers to us, rests with those who are invited. The responsibility of both the Lord's servants as well as the hearers of His Word is so great! May this, by the grace of God, lead us to humbly pray, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Upon such a supplication God shall be gracious indeed.

Just as the praying publican went to his home justified, so shall all be justified by God who penitently supplicate for grace, pleading on nothing else but His promise of forgiveness for Jesus' sake. God views such sinners as justified; the divine declaration of this truth is visibly signified and sealed by the Lord in the sacraments. By the administration of the sacraments, the God who cannot lie declares that all who penitently take refuge to the Savior shall find grace in His eyes—the Savior who said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." They shall find rest for their troubled and restless souls when and how He appoints.

The Lord Jesus Christ once directed His apostle John

to write a letter to the congregation of Laodicea. He testified to the Christians of Laodicea that He is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God," and He had something very searching to say regarding the spiritual condition of these Christians. The One who knows our hearts and the secrets within, and before whom nothing in our heart and walk can be concealed, says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

After the Savior had counseled these Christians "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see," He proceeded to say to them, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:14–19).

The nature of such zeal and repentance was communicated to these backslidden Christians in what Jesus already said, as well as by what followed the exhortation to be zealous and to repent: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

In this passage, the Lord Jesus uses a metaphor. As is true for all His parables, we must keep in mind that not every detail can be used as textual material to expound all the truths of the Holy Scriptures. If we fail to keep this in mind, we may end up making applications that are contradictory to the comprehensive context of the Lord's message in His Word.

Interpreting the words "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," in such a way that the Lord does not do anything unless we give Him the opportunity to do so is a wrong interpretation. If the works of the Lord were contingent upon our cooperation, not a single component of His counsel and redemptive plan would have been accomplished. No one of his own volition can cooperate with what is pleasing to the Lord. On the contrary, our natural tendency is to do nothing else but resist. If we read Scripture in its totality, we will find plainly that the Lord, in the accomplishment of His counsel and redemptive plan, works "in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). He is and always will be the One who takes the initiative. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

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Identifying Beloved Lusts

“And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

— Matthew 5:29–30

In the verse before, our Savior tells us that “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This was spoken in opposition to the scribes and Pharisees and may be urged against many carnal Protestants that have gross conceits concerning the Law of God, and in particular, that only the *outward* act of uncleanness is the breach of the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Now, our Savior corrects this mistake: that “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”—not *will* do it, but he *hath* done it already. There is a speedy passage from the eye to the heart. And because the eye and the hand are many times used as principal incitements to this sin, our Savior gives His disciples and us this serious and holy advice in the words above: “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee....”

Some by the “right eye” and the “right hand” understand our beloved lusts. It is the usage of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures in a figurative way to express corruption by the parts and members of our bodies.... Although all sins are our own, yet there are some sins that especially may be called ours, namely, our right-eye sins and our right-hand sins. Or, if you will, every man hath his proper, particular iniquity, his *beloved* sin.... And the handling of this doctrine will suit the case that is my task...namely, “How may beloved lusts be discovered and mortified?...”

1. It may be known by the loved and tender respects the sinner bears unto this sin. Strong love, for the most part, hath but one single object. Affections are like the sunbeams in a burning-glass: the more united they are in one point, the more fervent. A wicked man hath a particular affection for his particular lust. As Abraham cried, “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” so a wicked man, “O that this sin may be spared!” This is his Benjamin. The soul is ready to say, “Here is one sin [that] must

be plucked out, and here is another sin [that] must be cut off; must this beloved lust die *also*? All these things are against me.” The sinner seems to repent of sin and to condemn sin and himself for sin. But when the time of execution comes, the man is very tenderhearted: here is a reprieve for this sin and there is a pardon for another sin. It goes against him to cut the throat of his darling lust!... And if it fall out that his beloved sin die a natural death—if the adulterer, for instance, cannot actually engage in bodily uncleanness as formerly—he follows it to the grave, as we do our dear friends, and heartily mourns that he and his dear lust must part.

2. It may be known thus: that sin that distracts us most in holy duties is our beloved sin. You may know that cold is natural to water, and it likes that quality best: let it be made never so hot, it will be still working itself to its own proper temper. Souls possibly may sometimes be warmed at an ordinance; but they quickly cool again and are still working towards their proper lust, the sin they like best.... The people of God themselves are tainted with this. Pride was the disciples’ master-sin. While they were healing diseases and casting devils out of other men’s bodies, the proud devil was stirring in their own souls. Our Savior gives them a rebuke for that: “In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).
3. It may be known by its domination, its commanding power over all other sins. As there is a kind of government in hell (...Beelzebub is called “the prince of devils”), so, in a wicked man’s soul, one sin or other is still uppermost and keeps the throne. All other sins do, as it were, bow the knee to this sin, hold up the train of this sin, are obedient servants to this sin. It says to one, “Go,” and it goes, and to another, “Come,” and it comes. For instance, if *covetousness* be the beloved sin, lying, deceiving, and injurious dealing will serve that. If *ambition*, sinful compliance will serve that. If *adultery*, sinful wasting of time, estate, and body will serve that. If *vainglory* be the Pharisees’ great sin, devouring widows’ houses under pretence of long prayers will serve that.... In a word, the sinner hath the curse of Ham, as it were, pronounced upon him: “A servant

of servants" is he. His other sins are servants to his beloved sin, and he himself is a slave to them all.

4. That sin that conscience in a particular manner doth chide a man for is likely his particular sin. The Greek word for *conscience*...signifies "a joint knowledge" or "knowledge with another." It takes notice of things together with God. Conscience is God's deputy, God's spy, God's intelligencer (pardon the word) in our hearts, an exact notary of whatever we think or do, a co-witness with God, as Paul is bold to call it (Rom. 9:1). Now, wouldst thou know thy beloved sin? Harken to the voice of conscience. Doth that condemn thee for pride, for passion, for worldliness, for persecuting the ways of God? Remember, it is God's viceroy. Honor it so far as to weigh and consider thoroughly what it saith....
5. It may be known by being impatient of reproof. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly until he preached against his Herodias. This is a "touch me not"... the sinner shrinks when he is touched in the sore place. The eye is a tender part and apt to be offended if you meddle with it. This is the reason why people are enraged against a powerful, soul-searching, soul-saving ministry. Most men are for quick healers and easy remedies...; but as for your faithful surgeons, that, according to art, will probe, search, and cleanse the wound, they cannot away with them! "I hate him," saith Ahab of Micaiah, "he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (1 Kings 22:8). Only I shall add this: that man, especially that minister, that reproves another for his sins had need to be blameless as much as may be himself.... That man that hath a beam in his own eye is not likely to pull out the mote that is in his brother's.
6. It may be known by this: it makes a man notoriously partial in his own case. David could allow himself another man's wife and could condemn one to death for taking away another man's lamb.
7. It may be known by the covers, cloaks, and fair pretences that the sinner hath for this sin. Uncleanliness and intemperance are "but tricks of youth and sowing his wild oats." Luxury is "magnificence." Covetousness is "good [stewardship]." Pride is "a piece of nobleness and grandeur of spirit," yea, (which is more), it is "humility." You have some that disparage themselves in company, and they call this "humility" when, in truth, it is the height of their spirits....
8. If there be any one sin more than another that the soul doth readily close with, that is its beloved sin, its right-eye sin or its right-hand sin. Samson, when

all the world could not take away his strength, was easily persuaded by Delilah. See how Solomon expresses the harlot's dealing with the young man: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him" (Prov. 7:21). The most she could do was to flatter him; and yet, notwithstanding, it is said, "She forced him." Sin works altogether by enticement: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Yet it is so powerful, that it amounts to a force, as the request of a king amounts to a command.

9. That sin which a man wishes were not sin is likely to be his beloved sin. The case of the young man in the gospel is considerable to this purpose. Saith our Savior, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful" (Matt. 19:21-22), that is, he was very much troubled that there was such a truth as this: The world for Christ's sake was to be parted with.
10. That sin which most infests us and troubles us in our solitudes and retirements is our beloved sin. My meaning is, when a man is alone, in his closet, or in the fields, and his thoughts run adrift, that sin which of themselves they move towards and close with, that may be his beloved sin.... O Christian! Mark the workings of thy heart in private, and thou mayest possibly make some discoveries. When a man retires himself into some solitary place, it is usually absurd to trouble him. It is a friend, indeed, that falls in with him and offers his company in that case. That sin is more than ordinarily beloved by us that interposes in our privacies.
11. And, lastly, that sin that we are willing to endure greatest hardships and sufferings for is our beloved sin. For instance, suppose covetousness be the darling sin: What base, absurd, unreasonable offices will it put a man upon! How scraping and dung-hill-like will that man live in his town or in his parish and expose himself to scorn and contempt from every one that knows him! Suppose ambition be the beloved sin: how will a man in that case swear and forswear and temporize and, like the boatmen, look one way and row another; almost anything for preferment!

Benjamin Needler (1620-1682) was a non-conformist minister in England. This article was abridged from "How May Beloved Lusts Be Discovered and Mortified?" in *Puritan Sermons 1659-1689, Being the Morning Exercises at Cripplegate*, Vol. 1, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Steve Gallagher

Slay the Serpent

Solomon intimately understood how powerful sexual temptation can be for a young man. It was with that man in mind that he wrote the fifth chapter of Proverbs. "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thy ear to my understanding.... For the lips of a strange woman [adulteress] drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil" (Prov. 5:1-3).

Those two sentences perfectly describe both the power of sexual temptation and its antidote. The wise king understood that, if a young man is to successfully withstand the charms of the temptress, he must be prepared ahead of time. Time spent in the Word every day builds up a man's immune system against the poison of pornography. The Scriptures are simply the thinking and perspectives of the Lord. As a man continually immerses himself in the Bible, he will gradually take on God's mindset toward life, people, and, yes, even sexuality. A man who devotes daily time to the Word is given spiritual insight into the power of temptation and how it works.

Notice again what Solomon says about sexual sin. He personifies it as an adulteress whose lips of honey represent promised fulfillment. The temptation seems irresistible because it is laced with deception—namely, that the act of sin will bring about tremendous pleasure and satisfaction. The tantalizing thought is presented and all thoughts of resistance are forgotten. The act of sexual sin looks absolutely intoxicating and therefore irresistible.

The smooth oil represents the craftiness of the enemy. Fully camouflaged and extremely calculating, he presents the perfect illusion, timing each consecutive attack "to steal, and kill, and destroy" God's property.

Power of the Word

The wise man, whose heart has been fortified with the Word of God, sees the devil behind that intoxicating temptation. In the Garden, Satan exposed himself as the crafty serpent he is. I imagine him being very much like a

cobra. Known for the hideous hood it extends when preparing to attack, it actually spits into the eyes of its victim before striking. With its target blinded and helpless, the serpent could easily squirm away into the brush. But this viper is not content with escape; it enjoys killing. With bared fangs, it lunges, injecting its deadly poison into its victim's body.

This is a fitting picture of the man lured into viewing pornography. The temptation usually begins when he comes across a glimpse of flesh and/or a sexually suggestive hyperlink. It is just enough venom to temporarily blind him to the impending danger. The initial presentation is stimulating, creating a sensual atmosphere which spiritually incapacitates him.

Now the serpent moves in for the kill. That one glimpse of porn unleashes a poison that rockets into the man's soul and instantly spreads throughout his being. Just like a snakebite victim, he enters a catatonic state of mind: a sexual trance where all reason seems to abandon him. Lust rushes through his body; his face flushes with excitement; his palms get sweaty. Solomon described this spiritual stupor this way: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an



ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life" (Prov. 7:21–23).

Conversely, the man who receives "with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21) discerns the source of temptation that comes his way. He understands that, behind the beautiful illusion of pleasure, there is a snake coiled and ready to strike. He has been bitten by it before and has learned the hard way the price that is paid for every indulgence. He has the heart knowledge (much different from head knowledge) to "be a doer of the Word" and turn away from the temptation.

Continuing in Proverbs 5, Solomon went on to speak of the *aharit*—the end—of sexual sin: "But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of hell." This Hebraic term describes the inevitable consequences of all sin. He would later write, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end [*aharit*] thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

Potential of porn

Once a snake bites, its victim then becomes vulnerable to other predators. Some time ago, a National Geographic special showed a lioness who had been bitten by a cobra. For days, she suffered under the effects of its venom. Weakened to the point of collapse, she faced great danger from a roving pack of ravenous hyenas. She was helpless to defend herself from their savage attacks.

This is certainly true of the man who views pornography. Its poison, rather than dissipating after he has completed his act of lust, continues to contaminate his heart over the coming days. Its toxin remains in his system, altering his perspectives, polluting his mind, and spreading darkness over his soul. The lust it initially appealed to is now inflamed into burning desire. Rather than satisfying the man's sexual passion, it only serves to further ignite it.

Not only must the infected man deal with the after-effects of the bite, but now he is even more weakened spiritually against the enemies of his soul. He attempts to go about his daily routines, but lascivious memories continue to haunt him. These images are like third-world beggars crowding around him, clamoring for another handout. No matter how much you give them, they're never satisfied. Indeed, every gift only emboldens them to demand more.

No wonder Solomon warned: "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh unto the door of her house: lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel" (Prov. 5:8–9). The house of the adulteress—much like an X-rated Web site—is nothing more

than a den of writhing vipers. It would be wise to avoid such a place!

The poisoned victim's only hope for freedom is to go "cold turkey." Just as a heroin addict must lock himself up until the drug gradually works its way out of his body, so too it takes time for the venom of pornography to lose its power. Every tick of the clock could be harboring a voluptuous temptress, ready to lure him back into sin. And yet, every minute that passes without failure delivers the man that much further out of her reach. When it comes to porn addiction, the longer he stays away, the better his chances of escaping her evil clutches for good.

The man who receives "with meekness the engrafted word" (James 1:21) discerns the source of temptation that comes his way. He understands that, behind the beautiful illusion of pleasure, there is a snake coiled and ready to strike.

Just as the Word of God prepares a man to face temptation, it is also the only antidote for the man once he has been bitten by the serpent of lust. Regular doses of Scripture are the very thing he needs to be built up spiritually and thus counteract the effects of the poison of pornography. "...Precept upon precept; line upon line;... here a little, and there a little..." (Isa. 28:10). Every word, verse, and chapter he meditates upon serves to strengthen him.

Christian men must do everything within their power to avoid the house of the adulteress. Two practical measures a man should take include an Internet filter on his computer and controlling his television viewing. However, the fact remains that we live in a snake-infested world. In our day, it is almost inevitable that men will face this temptation at some point. The wise believer will prepare himself for that day with the Word of God. It is only "the sword of the Spirit" that can sever the head of the serpent of porn.

Steve Gallagher is founder of Pure Life Ministries (website: www.purelifeministries.org). Reprinted with permission from *The AFA Journal*, October 2007. Other ministries that provide porn addiction help include Eternal Perspective Ministries (www.epm.org), Focus on the Family (www.pureintimacy.org), and New Life Ministries (www.newlife.com).

NEW RHB BOOKS

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Horatius Bonar

Horatius Bonar, a well-known nineteenth-century minister called “the prince of Scottish hymn-writers,” was also a prolific writer of scriptural, practical, and experiential Christian literature. Two of his books that bore considerable fruit and have often been reprinted were *The Night of Weeping* and *The Morning of Joy*, here reprinted under one cover. *The Night of Weeping*

expounds compassionately and beautifully a biblical view of suffering, showing how it is an integral part of belonging to God’s family, how to cope with it, and how it benefits the believer. The chapters on the purifying and solemnizing fruits of suffering are themselves worth the price of the book. *The Morning of Joy* shows how God leads believers to rejoice in the present and future joys of the living church, particularly through fellowshiping with the resurrected Christ. The chapters on the majestic kingdom of Christ and the superlative joys of glory are most uplifting. By the Spirit’s grace, both books can be life-changing; they present us with a clear, powerful, profound, and balanced view of the Christian life and of God’s dealings with His people. (256 pages) \$12.00/9.00p

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Michael Haykin and Darrin R. Brooker

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Daniel R. Hyde

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Rev. G. H. Kersten — M. Golverdingen

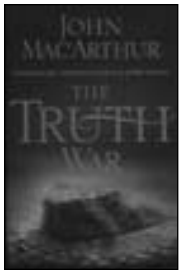
Translated by Bartel Elshout

G. H. Kersten was a noted theologian, instructor, politician, author, a beloved pastor, and played a significant role in the formation of the Gereformeerde Gemeenten in the Netherlands. This book delves into all these facets of his life, presenting a lively picture of this talented man. Also included is a sketch of the spiritual climate of Ledeboerian churches and Churches Under the Cross around 1900, the union of these churches in 1907, and the further development of church life. The struggles Kersten encountered in establishing a theological school and promoting Christian education make for fascinating reading. Many illustrations are included. (302 pages) \$18.00/14.00p



Famine in the Land: A Passionate Call for Expository Preaching — Steven J. Lawson

Steven J. Lawson writes with the conviction that too many churches have abandoned sound expository preaching. In *A Famine in the Land*, he discusses the priority, power, pattern, and passion of true biblical preaching. This is a challenging book written by a gifted preacher to all preachers, and for the cause of soul-sustaining preaching. The church should settle for nothing less. (Moody, 134 pages) \$15.00/11.00



The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception — *John MacArthur*

There is no middle ground—no safe zone for the uncommitted in the war for truth. In this call to arms, John MacArthur reveals the pitfalls of postmodern thinking and why the Emerging Church Movement is inherently flawed. He shows the effect past skirmishes in the truth war have had on the church, and clarifies the importance of truth and certainty

in a postmodern society. Reading this book will help identify and address the errors that have been smuggled into the church. (Thomas Nelson, 224 pages) \$23.00/17.00



Faith in the Furnace: Understanding God's Purpose in the Trials of Life

Ian Rees

In an engaging and readable style, Ian Rees shows us that from believers in the Old Testament era right up to the present day, suffering is a normal part of the Christian experience. God's people often experience their faith being put through the furnace, yet there is a plan

and a purpose in all our trials, even when we feel like God has forgotten us. This book is full of sound biblical teaching and is richly illustrated from church history, missionary work, church life, and contemporary culture. (DayOne, 205 pages) \$14.00/10.00p

Calvin's Theology of the Psalms — *Herman J. Selderhuis*
Calvin's Theology of the Psalms begins with an investigation of the relation between Calvin's life and theology according to his commentary on the Psalms. It then explores this commentary thematically according to various attributes of God. Selderhuis considers Calvin's commentary on the Psalms as a pastoral variation of the *Institutes* and seeks to prove that Calvin expressed the heart of his theology when he offered the programmatic statement that God is at the center. This book demonstrates this pattern of Calvin's thought from Calvin's commentary on the Psalms. (Baker, 304 pages) \$30.00/21.00

The Design and Origin of Birds — *Philip Snow*



Birds are among the world's most beautiful and beloved parts of creation, so it is not surprising that they have been so widely studied. They have been carved and painted since antiquity. Here is a close examination of their wonderful aerial lifestyle and unique, warm-blooded design — so different from the cold-blooded reptiles that they are claimed to have accidentally "evolved" from! This beautifully

produced book brings glory to the Creator as it sheds light on important facts from the world of science and is illustrated throughout by the author. A beautiful gift for bird lovers of all ages. (DayOne, 256 pages) \$13.00/10.00p



The Slaves' Companion: The Life, Deeds, and Historical Days of William Wilberforce — *Henry Wheeler*

Originally published in the 19th century in honor of the centenary of his birthday, *The Slaves' Companion* depicts William Wilberforce as a man of conscience, morals, and action. Wheeler's biographical treatment gives a thorough, spiritual perspective on Wilberforce and his historic efforts to end the slave

trade in England. It also demonstrates the impact Wilberforce had on American abolitionists. (New Leaf Press, 230 pages) \$12.00/8.00p



Early New England — *David Weir*

David Weir explores the origins and development of covenant thought in America by analyzing the town and church documents written and signed by seventeenth-century New Englanders. This comprehensive survey of civil and church covenants leads to a more complex picture of early New England than what we have upon considering only a few famous civil covenants like the Mayflower Compact. Weir argues that early New Englanders held a covenantal vision for all of society. (Eerdmans, 460 pages) \$34.00/24.00p

Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church — *Timothy J. Wengert (ed.)*



Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections highlights Luther's concern for practical instruction for daily Christian life. Gathering noteworthy contributions by well-known Luther scholars, this book ranges broadly over theological questions about baptism and righteousness, ethical issues like poverty and greed, and pastoral concerns like worship and spirituality. There are even rare discussions of Luther's perspective on marriage and Islam.

As a result, this book is both an up-to-date discussion on Lutheran themes and an excellent introduction to Luther's works. (Eerdmans, 260 pages) \$30.00/22.00p

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

James W. Beeke

THE NEW YEAR'S PREPARED PARENT AND TEACHER

"And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."
—Exodus 33:15

This is a prayer of Moses, offered after the nation of Israel sinned greatly, after they worshipped, sacrificed, and danced before the golden calf. Israel did not deserve God's presence. They had sinned away any right or expectation of His favor.

Maybe this is your situation as you face a new year. Your children have seriously sinned. Your students are not walking in the ways of the Lord. How are you to begin this new year as a parent? What hope is there for you as a sinful teacher of sinful students?

What should you do as you start a new year? Pray the same prayer as Moses did. Moses certainly faced serious challenges. Israel had grievously sinned; many of the people had sinned, not just a few. The Lord had told Moses that they were a stiff-necked people (Exod. 32:9) and He would allow His wrath to wax hot against them and consume them (Exod. 32:10). Then the Lord had said that He would only send an angel to go with Israel. What could Moses do? He prayed: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

What was at the heart of Moses' request? Moses did not trust himself to lead these people. He needed God. He must have God's presence. Moses required God Himself; not even an angel would suffice. He could not think of going one step further without the Lord's presence going with them. Moses would rather die in the wilderness with the Lord than go forward to conquer Canaan without Him.

At the beginning of a new year, Moses' prayer instructs and encourages parents and teachers—everyone in leadership positions. We are instructed to recognize our total dependency upon the Lord. Without Him, we cannot lead or guide others correctly. Let us pray Moses' prayer: "Lord, if thy presence does not go with me into the classroom or the home, I have no hope or expectation. I would rather die here than go into the future without Thy presence." But be encouraged also. The same God who graciously heard and answered Moses' request still lives today. Despite our sins, He delights to graciously hear and answer our prayers. What hope this offers! With this in view, parents and teachers can step forward into a new year with confidence and trust—not in their own abilities, but in a gracious Lord who delights to save and commune with sinners.

Notice how Moses denied himself and identified with the Israelites that he led. He said to the Lord, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Moses includes himself with the sinful Israelites, "Carry us not up hence." In fact, the words "with me" are not included in the original: "If Thy presence go not, carry us not up hence." Moses could have distanced himself from Israel; after all, he was not present when they worshipped the golden calf. He did not participate in their sin; he was up on Mount Sinai. He could have blamed Aaron and others. God had even declared that He was willing to annihilate Israel and raise a new nation from Moses' lineage. But Moses pleaded for Israel, for the people he was called to lead. Let us do the same as we begin this new year. Let us not blame our children or condemn our students, but identify with them. Let us plead, "If Thy presence go not, carry us not up hence. I dare not enter this new year distanced from Thy presence."

Seek closeness with God. We need His presence, guidance, and blessing every hour. Without it, we can do nothing but sin; we cannot parent or teach rightly. But let us also establish closeness with our children and students. Identify with them as Moses did. Let our thoughts, prayers, and conversations in this new year reflect "us" more than "me."

How can we safely enter 2008? By praying and striving for closeness with God and with our children and students. The Lord is gracious, as He was with Israel, to hear and answer prayer. He delights to go with parents and teachers who confess their dependency upon Him and pray for His presence. Such parents and teachers are prepared for a new year of parenting and teaching.

Are you a parent or a teacher prepared for the new year, close to your God and students?

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



FOR OUR CHILDREN

Diana Kleyn



A New Year

Most people look forward to a new year, but some are afraid. What will the new year bring? Will it be better than this past year, or will it be filled with trials and disappointments? Most children wonder, too, what the new year will be like. You hope to have a birthday and become a year older. You hope to advance a grade in school; that makes you feel quite grownup! Maybe your mother expects a baby; perhaps your family has plans for a vacation in the summer; maybe your family plans to move to a new home, or even a new state or province. These can be exciting and yet cause concern. We never know what a new year will bring.

2007 will never return. There have been joys and sorrows; there have been happy times and difficult times. There has also been much sin. It is easiest to look at other people and remember the sins they have committed against us, but what about *our* sins? Have we gladly obeyed all God's commandments? It is not pleasant to think about this, but you must be honest with yourself.

One of Jesus' main themes in His teachings while on earth was love. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). In Jesus' day, this was unusual doctrine. The Pharisees and other teachers of the law emphasized *outward* obedience to God's laws. They thought that if they outwardly obeyed the law of God, God would be satisfied with them and think that they were better than others. Jesus brought a cutting message: outward obedience means nothing if the heart remains unchanged. Jesus said that if we do not love one another, it shows that we are not God's children. The apostle John remembered this lesson and later wrote, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14).

Samuel gave this message centuries earlier in the Old Testament. He had been sent to anoint David as king of Israel. One after another of David's brothers were rejected. They could not understand: they were strong and brave; why were they not chosen? "But the LORD

said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). There are people who seem to be Christians. They seem humble and they follow all God's commandments outwardly. But God does not judge people by what they seem to be; He looks at our hearts.

What about you, children? Do you feel satisfied with yourself? Do you think you are quite religious? Do you think that God is pleased with you simply because you go to church, read your Bible, and obey His commandments? What about your *heart*? Have you ever admitted how much sin fills your heart? Have you ever looked down on classmates whom you think are weird? Have you ever ignored or even teased other children who don't have the latest clothes or toys and games? Have you ever shunned children who have special needs, who may be difficult to understand, or have different ways of doing things? Whom do you invite to your birthday parties? Do you laugh at someone or gossip about someone? Do you think God is pleased with you? The child you laugh at might be crying out her pain before the Lord at night. Have you ever stopped to think that the child you ignore and refuse to include in your circle of friends sobs out his grief to God, who hears the cries of the needy? Have you ever thought that the family you think is weird may live closer to God than you do? The child you gossip about may know more about loving Jesus than you ever will. Are you the cause of other people's pain and suffering? Are you guilty of hurting others by your words or actions? Bow before God's throne and confess your sins honestly, without making excuses. Ask the Lord to give you a new heart, one that is tender toward those who are despised and rejected like Jesus was. Ask Him to take away your selfish heart and give you a new heart filled with compassion and love. Ask Him to take away your sinful heart and give you a clean heart that serves God fully and completely.

When you look back over 2007, do your sins trouble you? Does it seem you cannot do anything good? Flee with all your sin and guilt to the Lord Jesus Christ and confess everything to Him. You can even admit to Him

that you think you are better than many other people. He is ready to listen and to forgive you. The same God who commands us to love one another is love, and He fills His children with His love. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

What an amazing God! He loves to welcome children into His kingdom and richly bless them with His love. That is the way to face the new year with joy. Does that mean you will have no troubles or sorrows? No, but it does mean that you will have a place of refuge in times of grief and sorrow. What a privilege to know and trust God! He knows what is good for us and plans everything for our spiritual good. Do you serve this God? Then you have nothing to fear. You can face 2008 with confidence and joy in God. Are you still living outside of Jesus? Do you still think God is pleased with you simply because you are not as sinful as others? How sad, for then you have everything to fear! You are not safe—you are in great danger! Go at once to the only safe place, the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find forgiveness and safety in Him. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psalm 91:4).

———— Bible Quiz ————

Fill in the word that is missing in each text given. Write the answers in order and you will have another text.

1. _____ the LORD, and his strength: _____ his face evermore" (Psalm 105:4).
2. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain _____ whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).
3. "I said, _____, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee" (Psalm 41:4).
4. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, _____ then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).
5. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to _____ mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).
6. "With him is wisdom and _____, he hath counsel and understanding" (Job 12:13).
7. "That they should _____ the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

8. "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and _____ praise in the congregation of saints" (Psalm 149:1).
9. "The LORD make his _____ shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee" (Numbers 6:25).
10. "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God _____" (Hosea 12:6).

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

Allison Boerkoel (2)	Emily Post (2)
Leah Boerkoel (2)	Aaron TenElshof
Neal Boerkoel (2)	Colleen VanDalen
Madison Buys	Mark Vandenberg (2)
Colin Byl	Hannah VanderStel
Sarah Byl	Megan VanderStel
Corrie DeHaan	Olivia VanderStel
Josh DeHaan	Elizabeth Wolfe
Caleb DeVries (2)	Virginia Wolfe
Jonathan DeVries	
Nate DeVries	
Helena George	
Hannah Kelderman	

Here are the answers to last month's quiz.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. 1. Herod | D. 1. Elisabeth |
| 2. Holy | 2. East |
| 3. Hearts | 3. Emmanuel |
| 4. House | 4. Eyes |
| 5. Heavenly | 5. Ephratah |
| 6. Highest | 6. Espoused |
| 7. Handmaid | 7. Eight |
| 8. Horn | 8. Esaias |
| B. 1. People | E. 1. Birth |
| 2. Prophets | 2. Bethlehem |
| 3. Praising | 3. Barren |
| 4. Pondered | 4. Behold |
| 5. Peace | 5. Born |
| 6. Prophetess | 6. Brought |
| 7. Priest | 7. Babe |
| 8. Preferred | 8. Blessed |
| C. 1. Dayspring | |
| 2. David | |
| 3. Deserts | |
| 4. Decree | |
| 5. Days | |
| 6. Devout | |
| 7. Darkness | |
| 8. Dream | |

Please send your puzzle answers to:

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STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Diana Kleyn

The Turning Point

Two young men were passing the open door of a church. The sound of music caught their attention, and they paused a moment to listen. Soon they heard the words of a song by John Wigner (b. 1844):

*Come to the Savior now,
He gently calleth thee;
In true repentance bow,
Before Him bend the knee;
He waiteth to bestow
Salvation, peace, and love,
True joy on earth below,
A home in heaven above.*

They felt like they were being given a personal invitation by the voice of the blessed Spirit speaking to their hearts. The younger man said to the older man, "Let's go in and listen."

The older man hesitated a moment, made up an excuse, and left the younger man standing in the doorway. The younger man obeyed the Spirit's urging and took a seat among the congregation. The Holy Spirit blessed the words he heard that evening, and he was changed from a worldly minded, careless, young man to an earnest Christian.

The other man quickly found his friends and passed the evening drinking and partying. His conscience was soon subdued. From the moment that this man turned away from that place of prayer, by his words, thoughts, and actions he mocked God, the Bible, and Christians.

How different these two men were! How great was the impact of the decisions these two men made! One man's decision led to a life of blessed devotion to God and an ultimate home in heaven; the other man's decision led to a life of shame and sorrow and, in the end, a home in hell.

We often encounter times when we must also make choices. Is today such a time for you? No, we cannot make a choice for Jesus as Savior in our own strength, for it is by God's grace alone that anyone is saved. Still, we are responsible for the choices we make. We must ask God to give us a heart that will choose Him. Ask Him to help you flee to the Savior now, and to bow before Him in true repentance. Ask Him to have compassion upon you, to show you what your heart is really like, and, by the work of the Holy Spirit, to consecrate your life to the Lord Jesus. If you turn away, you are rejecting the only Savior. Will Jesus come again to call you? Will there be another opportunity for you to be saved? Do not let the day of grace slip past you! Come to the Savior *now*.

In the Woods

"Tom Jones is getting 'serious,'" remarked one boy to another as they wandered through the woods one day.

"What? Is his mother scaring him into religion? He doesn't need to worry about religion yet! He's young; he won't die for years."

"I think religion is as good for living as it is for dying," said the first boy after a pause.

"But if we're happy now, what's the use of being so serious and troubling ourselves about religion now? We can wait till we're older."

"Are we happy, though? I'm not. I don't feel satisfied in here," said the boy, pressing his hand to his chest. "I think religion would make me feel better, but I don't know how to get it."

"Well I can't help you there," his friend shrugged. They stopped, jumped over a stone wall, and their talk drifted to other subjects.

The boys were right: their friend, Tom Jones, was "serious." The Holy Spirit had worked in Tom's heart and shown him his secret faults; now he saw them clearer than he ever saw them before. He felt that he was very far from God. He was afraid of God. It seemed to him as if he had lost his way in the woods on a dark day. He was troubled; he could not find the way out. He felt very troubled. His minister told him about repenting and his mother told him about praying to God. He tried to follow their directions, but he did not find any comfort. He often went outside alone and sat down to think at the foot of an old oak tree behind the barn.

"Mom," he said one day, "doesn't the Bible talk about 'striving' and 'seeking'? It seems to me as if I am seeking and striving to find forgiveness for my sins, but I can't find it."

"The Bible never speaks of heartfelt and earnest seeking without finding, or striving without entering in," answered his mother. "We have no reason to believe that the one does not follow the other, sooner or later. Otherwise we would be saying that God is less willing to receive us than we are to go to Him."

"But Mom...," Tom stopped, for he did not know how to express his concerns.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," quoted Tom's mother from Matthew 11:28. "The Lord Himself gives us that invitation."

"But maybe He doesn't mean me!" burst out Tom. There—it was out! This was his great fear. Did the Lord really know and care about *him*?

"The Lord says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37b). That means you, my child. Can't you take the Lord at His Word? Try Him now, and see if He fails to keep His Word."

Taking the Lord at His Word—that made Tom think.

Could he take God at His Word? He knew he could trust his father's word and his mother's word; should he not trust God's Word as well? Tom went out into the barn, and there he fell on his knees and uttered a short prayer: "Lord, I am in the dark. I need light. I want comfort. I want to love Thee. I want a new heart." This was his prayer in the morning. When he came home from school, he offered the same prayer, but he did not feel like his prayer was answered. After supper, he sat down at the foot of the old oak tree and offered the same



prayer. The next day, it was the same. Instead of becoming discouraged, however, Tom prayed more earnestly than before. Would God answer him? If you had asked him that question at the end of the second day, he would have shaken his head, "No." He still felt himself in the dark woods of his sins.

The next morning, when Tom awoke, a little sunbeam shone into his bedroom. "What a beautiful, bright sunbeam," thought Tom. "It comes from the sun, shining brightly to make a new day for us. It is God's sun. I love the sunbeam!"

Then he heard a robin singing outside his window. "God made the robin. How happy the robin seems. It is singing for God."

When he got up, he saw the blue sky through the trees. "There is heaven," thought Tom. "How beautiful heaven must be, where Christ and the angels are." Tom was so glad, looking up to the sky and thinking of Jesus and the angels. Tom was as happy as he could be; he loved everything he saw.

Tom read his Bible. "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD,

O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Psalm 103:1-4). The little boy went down on his knees and praised God, his heart overflowing. God was no longer far off; He was very near. Tom was no longer afraid; his heart was full of love. He felt as if the Son of God held him by the hand and was leading him to His Father in heaven.

Tom believed that his prayer was answered. He was out of the dark woods. He felt how sweet it was to be forgiven and have God's peace in his heart. This was the beginning of Tom's Christian life. The Bible calls it being born again (John 3:3). Tom could not explain it; he only knew it was true. The wind blows wherever it wants to; you can hear its howling and see the leaves moving, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. "So is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Tom only knew it because of the joy in his heart in God and the certainty of God's own Word.

Salvation makes people truly, eternally happy because it brings forgiveness of sin and peace and love to the soul. Nothing else satisfies; nothing else lasts. Only the Lord and His Word are true and eternal. Do you know what Tom knew? Then you are also happy. Are you confused, or not interested at all like the boys at the beginning of this story? We do not know what happened to those boys. Did they shrug off their questions about religion? Or did they continue to seek for the answer? What about you? Which child do you resemble? Do you put off thinking about God because you are afraid of what your friends will say? Or are you like the boy who didn't want to think about religion at all because he thought he had many years of life ahead of him? Dear children, do not put off seeking the Lord! What does it matter what other people say, when it is the Lord who will be our Judge on the Last Day? How foolish to put off the most important question of our entire lives: are you born again? Ask the Lord to speak to you like He did to Tom Jones. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your sins and to lead you to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Ask Him to give you faith to take Him at His Word. Ask Him to wash all your sins away and to give you a new heart that loves God above all and your neighbor as yourself. Then you will know the happiness that Tom knew, and you will be eternally safe.

Adapted from *Sketches from Life; Illustrations of the Influence of Christianity, Second Series* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.).

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

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Lord willing, the Classis Prayer Service, Theological Seminary Committee, and Classis meeting will be held respectively on March 26-28 in Burgessville, Ontario. The Office-bearers' Conference will be held on March 26 at 3:00 p.m.

March 27, 8:00 a.m. Theological Seminary Committee Meeting

This committee will meet in the Burgessville church to assess progress of the seminary, discuss future plans, and interview applicants.

Men who believe they are being called to the ministry of the gospel and desire to be admitted into the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary should contact either the president (Rev. Mark Kelderman, 519-424-3324) or secretary (Mr. Peter Koppert, 519-424-3601) of the Theological Seminary Committee, or the president of their own consistory for further information on the procedures and requirements in order to obtain a consistory attest.

March 28, 8:00 a.m. Classis Meeting

The Classis meeting will be held in the Burgessville church. Consistories and Classis-appointed committees are reminded that all material for Classis should be forwarded to Mr. Bill Tanis, Sr. via e-mail (wjtanis@jungle.net) or on computer disk by February 12 for distribution to the consistories.

BRADENTON, FLORIDA SERVICES

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

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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),

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.

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. jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca

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

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

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

THE CALVIN QUINCENTENARY

ONCE IN A LONG WHILE, THERE REALLY IS A MUST CONFERENCE.

Join with many others for the 2009 Calvin Quincentenary at Geneva's St. Pierre Cathedral



The CALVIN QUINCENTENARY is an international and interdenominational commemoration of the work of John Calvin (b. 1509). Climaxing with 2009 conferences in multiple locations, this celebration combines history, spirituality, and culture to recall appropriately the life and work of the Reformer.

Esteemed scholars and ministers will serve as your guides to learning about this influential man, his vibrant city, and the cultural, religious, political, and economic impact flowing from a movement. This interdisciplinary approach seeks to introduce one of the most important thinkers in history to many.

~~ TWO CONFERENCES THE SAME HISTORIC WEEK, FEATURING: ~~

Joel Beeke, Henri Blocher, Bryan Chapell, Iain D. Campbell, R. Scott Clark, Ligon Duncan, William Edgar, Olivier Fatio, Sinclair Ferguson, Richard Gamble, W. Robert Godfrey, Darryl Hart, Hywel Jones, Douglas Kelly, Robert Kingdon, Anthony Lane, Steven Lawson, Peter Lillback, Bruce McCormack, Andrew McGowan, Phillip Ryken, Derek Thomas, Geoffrey Thomas, Carl Trueman, John Witte, David Wright

For more on the Tours, Conferences, or related Publications see www.calvin500.org

Quotables — Earnest Preaching

Thomas Adams . . .

Cold preachers make bold sinners.

James W. Alexander . . .

No man can be a great preacher without great feeling.

Richard Baxter . . .

Deal with sin as sin. And speak of heaven and hell as they are, and not as if you were in jest....

I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men....

I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent.

Thomas Brooks . . .

Preaching is a spending, painful work.

John Bunyan . . .

I preached what I did feel, what I smartingly did feel.

R. L. Dabney . . .

Preaching is the emission of the soul's energy through speech.

Jonathan Edwards . . .

I go out to preach with two propositions in mind. First, every person ought to give his life to Christ. Second, whether or not anyone else gives Him his life, I will give Him mine.

Henry C. Fish . . .

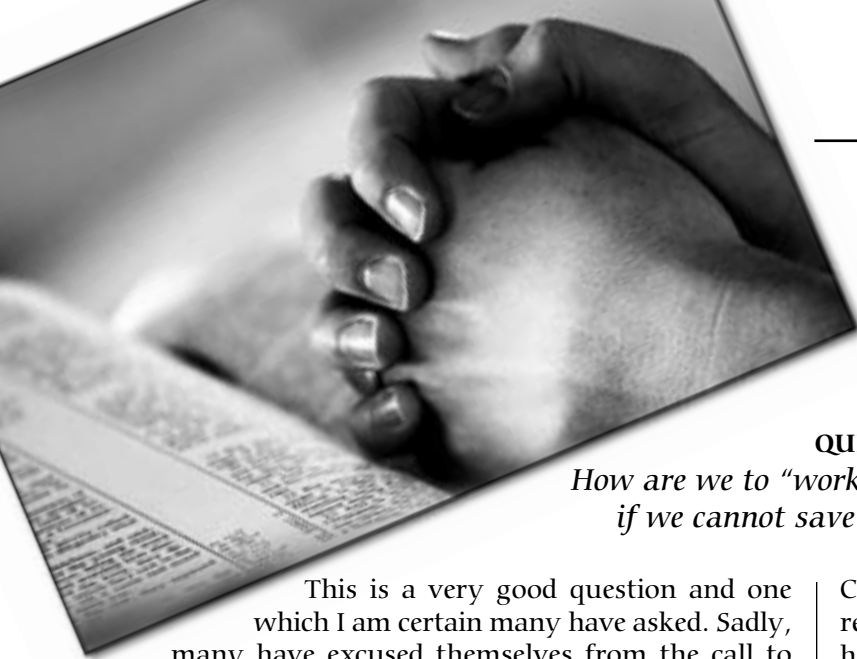
Sermons from burning hearts set others on fire.

Thomas Fuller . . .

The preaching that comes from the soul most works on the soul.

J. A. James . . .

If we are not intensely real we shall be but indifferent preachers.



Salvation: God's Work and Our Work?

QUESTION FROM A YOUNG READER

How are we to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" if we cannot save ourselves and even are unwilling to be saved?

This is a very good question and one which I am certain many have asked. Sadly, many have excused themselves from the call to repentance and faith precisely because they feel this question has never been answered.

I will begin by saying that those who are unbelieving will never understand nor accept the teaching of the Word of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). First of all, there is no place in Scripture where unbelievers are told to do something which is not rightly required from them. We were created to love and serve God with all our hearts. Secondly, when unbelievers are confronted by the Word, the Word comes as a command: repent and believe the gospel. However, we know that just because we are commanded to do something does not at the same time make us able to obey. If you were to tell a drunken man to walk a straight line, he could not, no matter how hard he would try. In a way, it's the same with people. While God has created us upright, we have fallen into sin. We can no longer walk the straight line of the law. Furthermore, in this fallen state, when God comes to us and commands us to obey the gospel, we are not inclined or able to do this either. Unbelieving, we latch on to the fact that the Bible says we are unable and unwilling, rather than on the fact of the promises of God that whosoever comes to Him He will "in no wise cast out." Neither do fallen sinners really believe the depths of sin to which the Scriptures testify we have fallen; by nature, we doubt that God is ready to forgive and receive us in mercy.

Therefore, God uses the means of grace. Through the Word, He comes with the command, the message that we must comply with the invitation and the command to repent and believe the gospel. The sinner whose eyes are opened hears this Word, is convinced of its truth, and, by the mysterious work of the Spirit, obeys. The sinner accepts God's way of salvation with joy. "I was blind, but now I see!"

So what this means for you, dear friend, is that if you are still unconverted, your only hope is in God through

Christ. God is gracious and merciful, ready to receive returning prodigal sons and daughters, whatever they have done, however great a sinner they are, but only through Christ. The requirement remains: we must repent and believe; but the wonder of the gospel is that Christ gives repentance and remission of sins. We must receive it by faith.

This leads me to a second point. The verse you refer to from Philippians 2:12 was written to believers. Paul's point to them is that they must press on—they must work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Paul is not talking about initial conversion but about sanctification: living a life of holiness. Paul wants the Philippians to realize that, when God began His good work in them, He made them new creatures in Christ. When they came to faith in Christ and believed the gospel, their wills were made anew. (If you want to read more about the renewed will, read the Canons of Dort, Head 3/4, Articles 11-13.) Paul immediately follows up this command by telling them that God is the One who works in them "to will and to do." Paul mentions this lest they become discouraged in fighting against their old natures and remaining sin. Many people do not realize that we are called to work, and the reason is because God is at work in them. They think these two things are opposed to one another, but Paul says, "work out your salvation" because it is God who has and is working it in you.

The same power with which Christ was raised from the dead is the power given to His people to live holy lives unto His glory. Paul's greatest desire was that he would live more holy and that those at Philippi would live more holy, too. The point to be made, then, is that salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. When rightly understood and believed, this is no longer an obstacle, but a source of strength and comfort. We must then come to believe that God is a gracious Father in heaven ready to receive sinners like you and me unto Himself again in Christ. Therefore, I can say to you today, come; come trusting in Him. He will never cast you out.

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

NATIONAL NEWS

Michigan Debates “Money vs. Morality”

Seeing research funds going to other states, researchers in Michigan are seeking to overturn Michigan’s 1978 ban on using human embryos for research. Stating that such a ban is making Michigan an unattractive place to invest in research, opponents are looking to have the issue on the November 2008 ballot, using Michigan’s poor economy to convince voters to sacrifice their moral values for potential jobs. While the alternative stem cell research has a proven record of beneficial therapies, embryo research is yet to be linked with any proven human treatment. (*GR Press*)

Moments of Silence in Illinois Schools

Overriding the Governor’s veto, the Illinois Senate passed a new law for all Illinois public school students, mandating a moment “for (private) silent prayer or for reflection” at the beginning of every school day. The law is effective immediately. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Islamic Court removes children from Christian home in Nigeria

A Nigerian man lost his three daughters because he became a Christian. An Islamic court in Maiduguri has granted his deceased wife’s Muslim relatives custody of the children. The Borno Upper Sharia Court ruled that, under Islamic law, a non-Muslim father cannot be a custodian to his children if the mother of his children is Muslim—or, in this case, if the deceased mother’s relatives are Muslim. (*Compass Direct*)

Government Sweep in Laos Cripples Village Church

Following a brutal government sweep of suspected insurgents in July, a village church in Laos that once had nearly 2,000 members has shrunk to only a few dozen daring to attend. Most of its leaders are still either in prison or under house arrest. Christian sources said only about twenty to thirty members of the previously 1,900-member Laos Evangelical Church in Ban Sai Jarern, a village in northwestern Laos, are still meeting after authorities arrested 200 Hmong Chris-

tians falsely accused of being separatist rebels. Many of those arrested, including women and children, are still in prison. At the church, most of those still meeting are women and children. “The men are either still in hiding for fear of being arrested, or are still imprisoned or under house arrest, and many are still fearful to come out of their homes to worship in church,” a source said. Ban Sai Jarern church members reported that no one from their congregation has had any contact or communication whatsoever with separatist rebels. (*Compass Direct*)

Pastor Killed in Columbia. Pastor Diego Armando Bejarano, 27, was killed recently in the region west of Bogotá. Witnesses say hooded men took Bejarano by force and stabbed him. The motives for the killing are unknown; however, it is common knowledge guerrilla groups view Protestant pastors who encroach on territory under their control as military objectives. In the last 10 years, guerrillas have assassinated 133 pastors, Protestant missionaries, and Catholic priests, according to the Evangelical Council of Colombia. (AP)

PERSECUTION FOCUS: LIBYA

Located in Northern Africa, this country of 5 million people gained its independence from Italy in 1951. Since 1969, it has been ruled by a then 28-year-old army officer, Mu’ammarr Qadhafi. Although Libya is a dictatorship, the government is tolerant of other faiths with the exception of militant Islam, which it views as a threat to the regime. The country is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim (97 percent); there are small Christian communities, composed almost exclusively of foreigners, numbering about 50,000 Christians. There is no information on the number of foreign missionaries in the country. As in other Muslim countries, Christian churches are not allowed to proselytize, although, generally, this restriction is not observed. According to recent reports, individuals rarely are harassed because of their religious practices unless such practices are perceived as having a political dimension or motivation. Christian churches operate openly and are tolerated by the authorities. There are no reports of forced religious conversions. (US Dept. of State)

ITEMS FOR PRAYER

- ◆ Pray that the people of Michigan will not abandon their moral values for the sake of questionable and immoral economic gain.
- ◆ Thank the Lord for the courage of the Illinois Senate to bring private prayer back into their public schools.
- ◆ Pray for Christians in Nigeria, that the King of kings would adopt them and protect them from increasing persecution by Islamic courts.
- ◆ Pray for the persecuted Ban Sai Jarern Church in Laos, that

they would be protected in this time of severe trial, and once again restored to fellowship.

- ◆ Ask God to encourage and minister to deceased Pastor Bejarano’s family and church as they mourn. Pray that his testimony would draw his attackers and unbelievers to the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:4).
- ◆ Give thanks that Christians in Libya are not actively persecuted, and pray that doors would soon open for spreading the gospel message to the people of this Muslim nation.

From Our Mailbag



BANNER OF SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

From a pastor in Myanmar:

I am a faithful reader of your magazine, *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*. I just want to say thank you for regularly sending your magazine. I particularly learned much from a recent issue that was full of articles on the subject of prayer. Please keep on sending it regularly for my spiritual food and so that I may share it with others around me.

From a prison inmate:

Some time ago I wrote and asked for a free subscription to *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*. My request was granted. I want to thank you for your generosity.

I am a prison inmate serving a life sentence. Since coming to prison when I was eighteen years old (more than thirteen years ago), I was saved by the sovereign hand of God. Subsequently I became convinced of the truths of the Reformed faith. As you can imagine, the Reformed distinctives are not popular in prison. At times it seems that I am the only one who believes this way. However, my faith in God is such that I know He is always at work building His church as it pleases Him. Thus, I strive to remain obedient to Him.

Reformed literature is hard to come by in here. That is one reason I wrote and asked for your magazine. Every month I look forward to reading it. I am never disappointed by its content. I thoroughly enjoy reading the articles in your magazine. Also, the reprints of old writers are excellent. Among those I have read in your magazine are John Bunyan, Thomas Boston, and J.C. Ryle. Furthermore, it is encouraging to know that there are those alive today who cling to the truth of God's Word in its purity.

Thank you for your faithfulness to our Lord and your generosity to me. I pray for your ministry and lift up petitions for the items at the end of your magazine. "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way" (2 Thess. 3:16).

INHERITANCE PUBLISHERS

From a friend in New York:

I was recently blessed with the wonderful little booklet by James Alexander which gave me a whole new insight into the unfathomable love of our Lord Jesus. I would like to share it with others and desire several more copies and would like to offer a donation to help you continue publishing such wonderful works. Thank you and God bless you in this ministry.

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From a Katrina victim:

Two years ago you gave me \$2,000 in books to help me rebuild my library in the wake of hurricane Katrina. I just wanted you to know that they have been a tremendous blessing to me. I am in my second year of doctoral work at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and have used many of the books in my reading seminars and research. Just wanted you to know how grateful I am for your generosity.

From a prisoner set free:

I recently was released from a prison in Kansas. The material you have sent to us has had a profound impact on the faith and practice of the brethren there. Some of the leader types had decided to stage a strike by refusing to go to eat. Two of our brothers knew it was uncalled for and was direct rebellion against the God-constituted authority that they were under. When the noon meal was announced they dutifully went to eat under the threatening glare of the men in their cells. This brave obedience is a direct result of your ministry. I cannot thank you enough for the words of life sent to me and others each month. I am now attending a church in Washington. You can discontinue sending materials to my prison address, but I would still like to receive the Reformation Heritage Books catalog and updates on the Puritan Reformed Seminary. Thank you and God bless.

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

THANK AND PRAISE JEHOVAH'S NAME

Thank and praise Jehovah's name;
For His mercies, firm and sure,
From eternity the same
To eternity endure.

Let the ransomed thus rejoice,
Gathered out of every land,
As the people of His choice,
Plucked from the destroyer's hand.

Let the elders praise the Lord,
Him let all the people praise,
When they meet with one accord,
In His courts on holy days.

Praise Him, ye who know His love;
Praise Him from the depths beneath;
Praise Him in the heights above;
Praise your Maker all that breathe.

For His truth and mercy stand,
Past, and present, and to be,
Like the years of His right hand
Like His own eternity.

—JAMES MONTGOMERY

The *Banner* of Sovereign Grace Truth

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A Periodical for Young and Old