

the **Banner** *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

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In Thy Presence is
Fullness of Joy

The Glorified Savior
Serves Still

The Riddle Resolved



A Periodical for Young and Old

THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

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CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

"The resurrection of Christ is the commencement of His reign [and] the most important article of our faith."
— *John Calvin*

"Everything antecedent in the incarnate life of our Lord moves towards the resurrection and everything subsequent rests upon it and is conditioned by it."
— *John Murray*

"The resurrection of Jesus demands not our applause but our allegiance, not our compliments but our capitulation."
— *John Blanchard*

IT IS FINISHED

When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he gave up the ghost.

—John 19:30

How terribly have these blessed words of Christ been misunderstood, misappropriated, and misapplied! How many seem to think that on the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished a work which rendered it unnecessary for the beneficiaries of it to live holy lives on earth. So many have been deluded into thinking that, so far as reaching heaven is concerned, it matters not how they walk provided they are “resting on the finished work of Christ.” They may be unfruitful, untruthful, disobedient, yet (though they may possibly miss some millennial crown) so long as they repudiate all righteousness of their own and have faith in Christ, they imagine they are “eternally secure.”

All around us are people who are worldly minded, money-lovers, pleasure-seekers, breakers of the Lord’s Day, yet who think all is well with them because they have “accepted Christ as their personal Savior.” In their aspiration, conversation, and recreation, there is practically nothing to differentiate them from those who make no profession at all. Neither in their home life nor social life is there anything save empty pretensions to distinguish them from others. The fear of God is not upon them, the commands of God have no authority over them, the holiness of God has no attraction for them.

“It is finished.” How solemn to realize that these words of Christ must have been used to lull thousands into a false peace. Yet such is the case. We have come into close contact with many who have no private prayer life, who are selfish, covetous, and dishonest, but who suppose that a merciful God will overlook all such things provided they once put their trust in the Lord Jesus. What a horrible perversion of the truth! What a turning of God’s grace “into lasciviousness” (Jude 4)! Yes, those who now live the most self-seeking and flesh-pleasing lives talk about their faith in the blood of the Lamb and suppose they are safe. How the devil has deceived them!

“It is finished.” Do those blessed words signify that Christ so satisfied the requirement of God’s holiness that holiness no longer has any real and pressing claims upon us? Perish the thought! Even to the redeemed God says, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Did Christ “magnify the law and make it honorable” (Isa. 42:21) that we might be lawless? Did He “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15) to purchase for us an immunity from loving God with all our hearts and serving Him with all our faculties? Did Christ die in order to secure a divine indulgence that we might live to please self? Many

seem to think so. No, the Lord Jesus has left His people an example that they should “follow [not ignore] His steps.”

“It is finished.” What was “finished?” The need for sinners to repent? No indeed! The need for turning to God from idols? No indeed! The need for mortifying my members which are upon earth? No indeed! The need for being sanctified wholly, in spirit, soul, and body? No indeed! Christ died not to make my sorrow for, hatred of, and striving against sin, useless. Christ died not to absolve me from the full discharge of my responsibilities unto God. Christ died not that I might go on retaining the friendship and fellowship of the world. How strange that any should think that He did. Yet the actions of many show that this is their idea.

“It is finished.” What was “finished?” The sacrificial types were accomplished, the prophecies of His sufferings were fulfilled, the work given Him by the Father had been perfectly done, and a sure foundation had been laid on which a righteous God could pardon the vilest transgressor of the law who threw down the weapons of his warfare against Him. Christ had now performed all that was necessary in order for the Holy Spirit to come and work in the hearts of His people, convincing them of their rebellion, slaying their enmity against God, and producing in them a loving and obedient heart.

O, dear reader, make no mistake on this point. The “finished work of Christ” avails you nothing if your heart has never been broken through an agonizing consciousness of your sinfulness. The “finished work of Christ” avails you nothing unless you have been saved from the power and pollution of sin (Matt. 1:21). It avails you nothing if you still love the world (1 John 2:15). It avails you nothing unless you are a “new creature” in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). If you value your soul, search the Scriptures to see for yourself; take no man’s word for it.

A.W. Pink (1886–1952), well known for his Calvinist and Puritan-like teachings, authored numerous articles and books.



The Riddle Resolved

Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. —Mark 16:3–4

Life is full of riddles. There are issues in life you try to resolve, but with no success. For God's dear people, our spiritual lives also have riddles. When they arise, we are often filled with questions—questions heard by our Father in heaven at His throne of grace. How often God's people rejoice in the truth of God's Word of how He resolves riddles, for we find out that God doesn't need us, and yet He will hear our pleas for Christ's sake. We can be so burdened, troubled, and perplexed, but, for God, there is no riddle He cannot resolve. In fact, He often resolves our riddles before we realize they exist! Isaiah 65:24 records, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." This was certainly the case with the women on the way to Jesus' grave on Easter morning.

"Who shall roll us away the stone?" How weak was their faith in the Word of their crucified and risen Lord! Had He not said, "Destroy this body and in three days I will raise it up again"? Shouldn't they have been saying, "The stone will be gone from the grave because it's the third day, and He said He would rise on the third day"? But no, a riddle plagued them. Yet He who knows all things does not put His seeking children to shame. "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

What does the resolved riddle teach us, dear children of God? First, our Lord's death on the cross and the empty tomb is the grand proof that He has paid our debt which He undertook to pay on our behalf, dear people of the Lord. Romans 4:25 states, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Rejoice!

Secondly, our Lord's resurrection is the seal and headstone of the great work of redemption, and therefore we are redeemed. Rejoice!

Thirdly, our Lord has won the battle fought to deliver us from hell. We are no longer hell-bound,

but heaven-bound. He has shut the doors of hell and opened for us the doors of heaven. Hosea 13:14 declares, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Rejoice!

Fourth, our precious Lord's resurrection confirms and assures us that He is our accepted Surety and Substitute in the presence of His Father. As a result, His Father is now our Father. We are His children by adoption and thus accepted by the Father in the beloved. Ephesians 1:5–7 says, "Having predestinated us unto adoption by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Rejoice!

Finally, beloved children of God, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:3–5). May we rejoice in the fact that, because our Lord lives, we shall live also. He says, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev 1:17–18).

Thanks be to God, we are heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. The riddle is resolved! He is our resurrection and our life!

Rev. James Greendyk is a minister in the Heritage Reformed Congregations.

The Risen Savior Serves Still

John 21:1–14



As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. —John 21:9

Rev. Johnny Serafini

The passage about Jesus' appearance to seven of the disciples in the Sea of Galilee is greatly useful to teach many important truths. Besides having one more precious confirmation of the resurrection of Christ, we learn about the keen perception of the beloved apostle who first noticed that the man on the shore was Jesus, the loving eagerness of Peter to dive immediately to swim to shore, as well as the official reaffirming of Peter as an apostle. There is, however, one detail that should ring in our hearts with great admiration and wonder: the truth that the risen Savior serves still.

We have before us, as did the disciples rowing ashore, the resurrected Lord—He who had recently, victoriously come out of the dark grave. As life gloriously returned to Jesus' once dead body, He was unquestionably ushered into the state of glorification for which He had earnestly asked His Father: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). This visible glory was beginning to be more pronounced and perceptible and would culminate as "He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). However, despite His days of humiliation having ended, this did not mean His days of loving, humble service were over.

We marvel at the fact that Christ Jesus, in His state of humiliation, served with such amazing "earthiness." We see in the pages of Scripture the Lord of Glory healing the sick, feeding the hungry, touching the untouchables, eating with sinners, walking on dusty desert trails, and as a final demonstration of slave-like service, He washes the feet of each of His disciples—only to tie in with the greatest and most humiliating service ever done to mankind, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). All of this is meant to be breathtaking to us—that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, actually "took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men" (2:7).

As His glorified state is ushered in, we are tempted to think that His days of service are ended and relegated

to us as His servants on earth. Yet, in this appearance by the shore of Galilee's sea, as the disciples approach land, a little line of smoke must have been perceptible. As they jump off the boat and walk toward Him, the unmistakable smell of fish cooking and bread toasting met them as they "saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread" (John 21:9).

Do we ever stop to consider with great awe what this means? The resurrected Lord...prepared a meal. He arranged wood and coals together, produced fish and bread, possibly miraculously, but still, with the elements of cooking present. Although the resurrection of Christ inaugurated Jesus' exalted state, the Holy Spirit would have us know that baking some food, as well as serving it—none of them dared serve themselves due to being momentarily stunned—was part of what the glorified Christ did.

This event, together with Christ's atoning work on Calvary's cross, sanctifies every meal a Christian mother or father bakes. Every mundane, day-to-day service to our family that seems so insignificant and unpopular today more than any other day in history, is transformed through the example of the resurrected Christ, as Christ-like, heavenly, and holy. How can any of us see any service to others as undignified, if the risen Savior did not? Children, when you serve others, with faith in Christ, you are not only being like Jesus; you are also like the resurrected Jesus. Mothers, as you prepare each meal, day by day, and lovingly serve your family, looking to Christ as your Savior and Lord, you are following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, before *and* after He entered His state of glorification! Fathers, as you work to provide for your families, take heart that the glorified Savior continued serving after He arose from the dead and serves His own even today as He intercedes in behalf of His dear people before God the Father. The sweat of our brows is sanctified if all our efforts are done through faith in this blessed serving, risen Savior!

Rev. Johnny Serafini is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.



WILLIAM BATES

(1625–1699)

A Forgotten Puritan

JOEL R. BEEKE

William Bates was one of the most popular and esteemed preachers among the Nonconformists; a master of the Puritan plain style of preaching, his stress on piety earned him the name “silver-tongued.” Born in November 1625, he was the son of William Bates, gentleman of St. Mary Magdalene parish, Bermondsey, Surrey. He graduated from Queen’s College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1645 and a Master of Arts degree in 1648. The following year he became vicar of Tottenham, Middlesex, and a few years later succeeded William Strong as vicar of St. Dunstan-in-the-West. Like other Puritans, Bates often lectured at the famous morning exercises at Cripplegate Church.

According to Richard Baxter, Bates played a major role in negotiating for the restoration of Charles II. As a reward, he was appointed royal chaplain in 1660. That same year, he was appointed as a commissioner for the approbation of ministers by the Rump Parliament and was given a doctorate in divinity from Cambridge University by royal mandate. The following year, he represented the Presbyterians as a commissioner at the Savoy Conference, of which one purpose was to review public liturgy. That included pointing out weaknesses in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Bates’s first wife died young, as did his first daughter. At age thirty-six, he married Margaret, 21-year-old daughter of Edward Gravenor, gentleman of St. Giles Cripplegate. She outlived him by a generation.

In 1662, Bates was one of two thousand ministers ejected by the Act of Uniformity. Yet he did not take offense. In his farewell sermon to the St. Dunstan’s church, he made no mention of the coming ejections, other than to say rather mildly in his conclusion that his Nonconformity was motivated only by his fear of offending God. He then added, “If it be my unhappiness to be in an error, surely men will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope God will pardon me in the next” (*Oxford DNB*, 4:327).

Bates labored for the next ten years in a variety of ways, often with men like Thomas Manton, Edmund Calamy, and Richard Baxter, for the inclusion of Nonconformists within the Anglican Church and for toleration of other churches. On two occasions, he addressed William III and Mary on behalf of his fellow Nonconformists. All of these efforts remained largely fruitless, however, for Charles never fulfilled his promises to work toward Nonconformist inclusion.

After his ejection, Bates often preached in the vicinity of St. Dunstan’s, most commonly at the house of the countess of Exeter and in a room over Temple Bar Gate, beside his old church. From 1669 onward, he apparently served as one of the lecturers at a dissenting congregation at Hackney. In 1672, he was licensed as a Presbyterian teacher and was appointed to lecture at Pinner’s Hall (later called the Ancient Merchants lecture). When Daniel Williams was expelled from this lectureship in 1694, Bates surrendered his lectureship as well and founded the Salters Hall lecture, where he drew large crowds.

Throughout the last decades of his life, Bates had several brushes with the authorities, including at least three fines for holding conventicles, notwithstanding his irenic character, mild manner of preaching, growing reputation as a respectable scholar, and friendships with leading Anglican authorities, such as Archbishop Tillotson. Bates remained a leading Puritan until the end of his life, often being invited to preach at the funerals of close Puritan friends, including Richard Baxter, Thomas Manton, Thomas Jacomb, and David Clarkson.

the structure of genesis



“In the beginning God....” — Genesis 1:1a

✠ SUGGESTED READING: GENESIS 1:1–5 ✠

The Greek word *genesis* means origin or beginning. This term is appropriate because Genesis traces history from the very beginning of time. All great biblical themes begin here. The truths about God, the world, man’s creation in God’s image, the Sabbath, marriage, the devices of Satan, man’s fall into sin, judgment, election, salvation, justification by faith, Christ and His priesthood, prayer, God’s covenant people, and blessing and cursing are all grounded in Genesis. Man’s complete ruin in sin and God’s perfect remedy in Christ are strikingly presented.

Meditate on this amazing book packed with ancient truth that is still relevant today. Can you think of other major truths that Genesis shows us?

The structure of Genesis clearly shows it is a book of origins. Genesis includes eleven distinct sections, each starting with the word *beginning* or *generations*. The opening words of each section are usually something like “These are the generations” or “The book of the generations.” These sections include the history of creation (1:1–2:3), heaven and earth (2:4–4:26), Adam (5:1–6:8), Noah (6:9–9:29), Noah’s sons (10:1–11:9), Shem (11:10–26), Terah and Abraham (11:27–25:11), Ishmael (25:12–18), Isaac and his sons (25:19–35:29), Esau (36:1–37:1), and Jacob and Joseph (37:2–50:26).

Genesis takes us through various stages of history to trace God’s design of redemption through the line of His chosen people. Chapters 1–11 provide us with a wide-angle view of the history of mankind, while chapters 12–50 offer a telescopic view of the history of God’s chosen people in Abraham and his family.

Without Genesis, the Bible would be seriously impoverished, for Genesis covers at least one-third of human history. Ultimately, it is God’s story—*His-story*—in Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of history. In Genesis we find special revelation in three-dimensional color and in profound doctrinal, practical, and experiential truth, all directing us to Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.

Thank God for His Word, and particularly for the book of Genesis.

—Joel R. Beeke

Bates died in Hackney on July 21, 1699. His funeral sermon, preached by John Howe, a close friend of more than forty years, was a rich testimony to his godly life and diligent study. His excellent library, purchased by Daniel Williams, helped establish the Dr. Williams’s Library, now situated at Gordon Square, London.

Bates’s writings were first collected in a 1700 folio edition; in 1815, they were printed in four volumes as *The Complete Works of William Bates*. Sprinkle Publications reprinted them in 1990.

All of Bates’s writings convey good scholarship, wide reading, and careful writing. John Howe called Bates a “devourer of books,” and one who yearned to study about God and set forth His love and mercy: “Into what transports of admiration and love of God, have I seen him break forth,” Howe said (*Works of Bates*, 1:xviii). That comes to the fore in Bates’s most frequently reprinted book, *The Harmony of the Attributes of God* (1674), which has just been reprinted again by Solid Ground Christian Books. His chapters on the mercy of God are some of the finest ever written on this precious subject. Here are four practical inferences Bates draws from reveling in the infinity of divine love: “(1) Redeeming love deserves our highest admiration and most humble acknowledgments. (2) The love of God discovered in our redemption, is the most powerful persuasive to repentance. (3) The transcendent love that God hath expressed in our redemption by Christ, should kindle in us a reciprocal affection to him. (4) What an high provocation is it to despise redeeming mercy, and to defeat that infinite goodness which hath been at such expense for our recovery?” (1:329–40).

Some consider Bates’s greatest work to be *The Four Last Things* (1691), a short, poignant treatment on death, judgment, heaven, and hell. His 50-page treatise *On Divine Meditation* is typically Puritan and one of the best in its field, covering the basics of its nature, necessity, time, advantages, rules, and applications—no word wastage here! His other major publications include *The Select Lives of Illustrious and Pious Persons*, *Discourses on the Existence of God*, *The Immortality of the Soul*, *The Great Duty of Resignation*, *The Danger of Prosperity*, *Sermons on the Forgiveness of Sins*, and *The Sure Trial of Uprightness*. *Complete Works* includes numerous sermons and several treatises on Christian living, all of which are succinctly written and packed with edifying material. If you are looking for a Puritan who always writes well, is both practical and heavenly, and is never tedious, read William Bates.

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.



the TEN VIRGINS

Read: *Matthew 25:1–13*

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY ♦ PROFITING FROM THE PARABLES (15) ♦ DR. GERALD BILKES

Wedding

Who does not look forward to a wedding? Surely those who heard Jesus preach this parable could easily have imagined its setting. In ancient Palestine, a marriage normally had three stages: engagement, betrothal (which made the engagement legal and binding), and the wedding ceremony itself. These ten virgins in our parable would have gathered as attendants of the bride at her home shortly before the wedding ceremony, waiting for the procession to the groom's house, where the ceremony would take place. They are holding torches, long poles with oil-lamps tied to the top.

The bridegroom, however, stays away longer than anticipated. When he finally arrives, only five of the ten virgins enter the marriage supper with him. The central message of the parable is found in the separation that happens within this group of attendants.

Warning

Our parable pictures the visible church as ten virgins. All ten of them have been invited to the wedding. All ten of them have responded positively to the wedding invitation. All ten of them attend the bride on the way to the wedding feast. All ten of them have lamps with them, which at first all give light. Finally, all ten grow drowsy and fall asleep

when the bridegroom's coming is delayed. What happens to separate the group?

First of all, the delay of the bridegroom (v. 5) revealed that some had insufficient oil. Secondly, the cry announcing the imminent arrival of the bridegroom (v. 6) sent five virgins scrambling for oil, thus taking them away. Thirdly, the shutting of the door to the wedding (v. 10) makes a final separation between the two groups.

What, however, is the root cause of the separation? Early in the parable, we are told that five of the virgins are "wise" while the other five are "foolish" (v. 2). Those who were wise "took [extra] oil in their vessels with their lamps," while those who were foolish "took their lamps, and took no [extra] oil with them" (v. 3-4). Jesus highlights the "watchfulness" of the virgins with extra oil (v. 13). They anticipated a potential delay and saw the possible need for additional supplies of oil. In the end, those additional supplies made all the difference for them. Jesus applies the meaning of the parable as follows: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (v. 13).

Watchfulness

Watchfulness could be defined as that *grace of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer that sees things in the light of Christ's*

coming, and in anticipation of how things will then be made manifest. By nature, we lack this watchfulness. We might be careful to live a successful life in this world; that could be called an earthly, unsanctified kind of watchfulness. But the unbeliever cannot and does not pay the same kind of attention to the thought of life beyond death. He sees things in an earthly light. He does not see any need for spiritual watchfulness, nor would he know how to watch. But when God works His grace in our hearts and calls us out of darkness into His light, He gives us His Holy Spirit, and with this Spirit comes the grace of watchfulness.

Practically speaking, spiritual watchfulness has several aspects:

1 *A watchfulness against sin.* When looked at in the light of eternity, sin becomes a very serious thing. It is crucial that believers are careful and watchful against sin. Solomon reminds us to keep our hearts diligently (Prov. 4:23). Even after grace, we can be so misguided about our own hearts and actions. Regular self-examination is crucial. We need to see where sin has found inroads into our lives, where coldness has set in, where unbelief has found a foothold. We need to confess sin and seek to mortify it through the Spirit's grace.

2 *A watchfulness through the means of grace.* The means of grace strengthen and support a watchful spirit. The primary means of grace, of course, is Scripture. God's Word not only reminds us constantly to be watchful, but it also directs us to distrust the world and its thinking. By nurturing faith, Scripture also will take our focus from this world and fix it on the world to come. Prayer and attendance to family and public worship will help us to commune with Christ, and communion with Christ will help prepare us for communion with Christ at His coming. It's noteworthy that the Bridegroom says to the five foolish virgins: "I know you not" (v. 12). That means that they never had a true relationship with him. Use the means of grace faithfully, praying that a true and living communion with Christ would be established and strengthened through them.

3 *A watchfulness for the Savior's coming.* Christ repeatedly stressed that His coming, though certain, would be unexpected. It would happen when people did not expect it (Luke 12:40). True Christians should stir themselves up to be ready at any time, to have at all times what is needed should Christ return. Frequent reflection on Christ's beauty and heaven's happiness will help cultivate a readiness to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Actively striving against worldliness and a worldly mindset expresses a watchful spirit. Praying for Christ's com-

ing, like the Bride of Revelation (22:17), will excite such a spirit, and evangelism in our families and communities will help increase a readiness for Christ's coming.

It is not too late to begin being watchful. Let us confess our lack of watchfulness, our preoccupation with this world and with the things of time and sense. Let us pray for grace to live in the light of eternity. Let us pray to be made ready to meet Christ at any time. The parable is clear about the consequences of a lack of watchfulness: those who foolishly neglect their duty to watch for Christ's coming will be unprepared to meet Him, and will ultimately be sent away from the marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ's words, "I know you not" (v. 11) will be terrible indeed.

Study Questions

1. Prove from the parable that the five foolish virgins do not represent people from the world, but rather professing Christians.
2. Some think they can be Christians without it affecting their lives very much. What does the fact that the foolish virgins only had a minimal amount of oil with them say to this?
3. How is the delay of Christ's coming a mercy from one angle and from another, a test of our watchfulness?
4. Why is it more difficult for those of us in relatively free and rich societies to be watchful? How should we fight against this?
5. Think of someone whom you know, from your family or circle of friends, or someone you have read about, who you think lives a life of watchfulness. How does this watchfulness show itself in practical ways?
6. After being shut out of the wedding feast, the foolish virgins cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." In answer, the bridegroom says that He does not know them. Jesus had earlier warned that not every one that says to Him, "Lord, Lord" will enter into the kingdom of heaven. What does Matthew 7 say is needed?

JOHN BRADFORD

The martyr who dared to die for doctrine

NIGEL T. FAITHFULL



This year marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Bradford. The reading of *Five English Reformers* by J.C. Ryle about forty-five years ago created in me saving conviction of sin and repentance. The fourth martyr described in that book was John Bradford.

John Bradford was born in 1510 at Manchester and attended Manchester Grammar School. Little other information is available about him until he was about thirty-four years of age, when he undertook administrative duties for Sir John Harington, vice-treasurer of King Henry VIII's army in France, and was appointed paymaster at the siege of Montreuil.

REPENTANCE

Henry VIII died in January of 1547, and, in April, Bradford left Boulogne and commenced legal studies at the Inner Temple. This was a momentous period in his life. His friend and fellow-student, Thomas Sampson (c. 1517–1589), was a means of leading him to Christ.

Bradford experienced conviction of sin following the fiery preaching of Hugh Latimer, and evidenced repentance by selling his valuables (he loved rings, chains, and jewelry) to relieve the poor and sick. John Foxe records that from then on “he gave himself wholly to the study of the Holy Scriptures.” To further this aim, Bradford applied to St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, gaining admission in 1548. Sampson also became a Fellow of Pembroke College that year, the Dean of Chichester (1522), and later, Dean of Christchurch, Oxford (1561).

Remarkably, Bradford was awarded an

MA a year later in 1549, and, the next month, became a Fellow of Pembroke College and tutor to John Whitgift, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583. During this period, Bradford kept a journal, daily recording sins noted in others and mourning the same faults in himself. Seeing any good in others which he personally lacked, he would crave God's mercy to amend.

Bradford thought he needed further study, but Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London, ordained him deacon on August 10, 1550, also making him one of his own chaplains.

PREACHER

The following August, Bradford was made prebend in St. Paul's Cathedral, and, in December, became one of six chaplains to the Protestant King Edward VI. The chaplains were to itinerate, preaching in the remotest parts of the kingdom for the instruction of the ignorant in right religion to God and obedience to the king. Two chaplains remained with the king while the other four itinerated.

Bradford covered Lancashire and Cheshire, where crowds flocked to hear him. He preached against sin and proclaimed the imminent judgment of God. Sampson records: “He used in the morning to go to the common prayer in the college where he was, and after that he used to make some prayer with his pupils in his chamber... He then repaired to his own exercise in prayer by himself, as one that had not yet prayed to his own mind.” When in company, he “used to fall often into a sudden and deep meditation, in which he would sit with fixed countenance and spirit moved, yet speaking nothing a good space. And sometimes in this silent sitting, plenty of tears would trickle down his cheeks. Sometimes he would sit in it, and come out of it, with a smiling countenance.”

Thus he communed with his God, either repenting of some perceived inward sin, or rejoicing in some grace.

REPROOF

This holy walk gave Bradford boldness in rebuking blatant sin in others. Sampson notes: “For, in all companies where he did come, he would freely reprove any sin and misbehavior which appeared in any person, especially swearers, filthy talkers, and popish praters.

“Such never departed out of his company unreprieved. And this he did with such a divine grace and Christian majesty, that he even stopped the mouths of the gainsayers. For he spake with power, and yet so sweetly, that they might see their evil to be evil, and hurtful to them, and understand that it was good indeed to the which he labored to draw them in God.”

On July 19, 1553, the Roman Catholic half-sister of Edward VI became Queen Mary I, and soon was earning her later sobriquet of “Bloody Mary,” sending almost three hundred Protestants to be burned at the stake. She

reigned until November 17, 1558, when she was replaced by her half-sister, Elizabeth. Sampson fled for his life to Strasbourg in 1554, but Bradford chose to remain in England.

On August 13, 1553, the Roman Catholic Gilbert Bourne was preaching at London's St. Paul's Cross against the late Edward VI's reformations, when the crowd became angry at his attack on the dead king. He had no sooner called for Bradford to protect him when a man threw a dagger at Bourne, grazing Bradford's sleeve.

One man called out, "You save him that will help to burn you!" Bradford later risked his life preaching to the people against seditious uprisings. But instead of being thanked by the authorities, he was accused of preaching without authority!

ARREST

Even though Bradford saved Bourne's life, Bourne did not support Bradford after the latter's arrest. Bradford appeared before the Council in the Tower of London charged with preaching seditious sermons.

While there, he shared a cell with Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley (there was overcrowding due to Wyatt's rebellion). They prayed and read Scripture together, but found no evidence of more than a spiritual presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, nor that the mass was a sacrifice for sins.

In March 1554, Bradford was moved for ten months to the King's Bench prison at Southwark. Inmates there included Robert Ferrar (Bishop of St. David's), Rowland Taylor (Vicar of Hadleigh, who considered the mass "spiritual whoredom"), and John Philpot (Archdeacon of Winchester, who denied the "real presence" in the mass). Bradford's testimony on arrival at the King's Bench caused Ferrar to retract a recent capitulation to taking the mass.

Like Paul at Rome, Bradford was allowed some freedom, writing many letters and articles. He sought to unite Calvinistic theologians against the Arminians. He commented, "The effects of salvation they so mingle and confound with the cause... more hurt will come by them, than ever came by the papists, inasmuch as their life commendeth them to the world more than the papists."

Bradford stressed sound scriptural doctrine, which could refute the claims of papal supremacy and the mass—"the horriblest and most detestable device that ever the devil brought out by man."

"I trust you... will see that our doctrine is true, and therefore dare and desire to abide the light and all men's looking on.

"Us... they may burn... but our cause, religion and doctrine, which we confess, they shall never be able to vanquish, and put away."

FINAL PRAYER

Bradford wrote in support of the persecuted, *A very godly prayer of one standing at the stake ready to be burnt for Christ's gospel's sake*. Most of his time was spent praying and studying on his knees, visiting and exhorting the common thieves, and distributing alms. He was allowed out to visit the sick.

Refusing to recant, Bradford was committed to Newgate on June 30, 1555, for execution by burning at Smithfield the following day. He divided his remaining clothes between a friend and a servant, and asked his brother-in-law to commend him to his mother.

Shortly before his burning, he wrote to his mother: "Never so merry and glad was I, as I now should be, if I could get you to be merry with me...." His final prayer was: "O England, England, repent thee of thy sins! Beware of idolatry, beware of the false antichrists, take heed they do not deceive you."

Turning to John Leaf, a young man who suffered with him, Bradford said: "Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night." Then, embracing the

reeds used for burning, he quoted: "Strait is the way, and narrow is the gate that leads to eternal salvation, and few there be that find it."

This tall, slender man with an auburn beard left the world a far poorer place than when he ministered in it, yet he bequeathed a memorable legacy. We earnestly need to give the same bold witness to God's truth as John Bradford did in his day.

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Turning to John Leaf, a young man who suffered with him, Bradford said: "Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night."



“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” —Matthew 3:12

Viewed with the eye of man, the earth contains many different sorts of inhabitants. Viewed with the eye of God, it only contains two. Man’s eye looks at the outward appearance: this is all he thinks of. The eye of God looks at the heart: this is the only part of which He takes any account. And tried by the state of their hearts, there are but two classes into which people can be divided: either they are wheat or they are chaff.

Who are the wheat in the world? This is a point that demands special consideration. The wheat means all men and women who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; all who are led by the Holy Spirit; all who have felt themselves sinners and fled for refuge to the salvation preached in the gospel; all who love the Lord Jesus, live to the Lord Jesus, and serve the Lord Jesus; all who have taken Christ for their only confidence and the Bible for their only guide; all who regard sin as their deadliest enemy and look to heaven as their only home. All such—of every church, name, nation, people, and tongue; of every rank, station, condition, and degree—all such are God’s “wheat.”

Show me people of this kind anywhere and I know what they are. I know not that they and I may agree in all particulars, but I see in them the handiwork of the King of kings, and I ask no more. I know not whence they came and where they found their religion. But I know where they are going, and that is enough for me. They are the children of my Father in heaven. They are part of His “wheat.”

All such, though sinful, vile, and unworthy in their own eyes, are the precious part of mankind.

They are the sons and daughters of God the Father. They are the delight of God the Son. They are the habitation of God the Spirit. The Father beholds no iniquity in them. They are the members of His dear Son’s mystical body: in Him He sees them and is well pleased. The Lord Jesus discerns in them the fruit of His own travail and work upon the cross and is well satisfied. The Holy Ghost regards them as spiritual temples that He Himself has reared and rejoices over them. In a word, they are the “wheat” of the earth.

Who are the chaff in the world? This again is a point that demands special attention. The chaff means all men and women who have no saving faith in Christ and no sanctification of the Spirit, whoever they may be. Some of them perhaps are infidels, and some are formal Christians. Some are sneering Sadducees, and some self-righteous Pharisees. Some of them make a point of keeping up a kind of Sunday religion, and others are utterly careless of everything except their own pleasure and the world. But all alike, who have the two great marks already mentioned—no faith and no sanctification—all such are “chaff.” They bring no glory to God the Father. They honor not the Son, and so do not honor the Father that sent Him (John 5:23). They neglect that mighty salvation that countless millions of angels admire. They disobey that Word that was graciously written for their learning. They listen not to the voice of Him who condescended to leave heaven and die for sinners. They pay no tribute of service and affection to Him who gave them “life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25).

Therefore, God takes no pleasure in them. He pities them, but He reckons them no better than “chaff.” Yes, you may have rare intellectual gifts and high men-

wheat or chaff

tal attainments. You may sway kingdoms by your counsel and move millions by your pen or keep crowds in breathless attention by your tongue; but if you have never submitted yourself to the yoke of Christ and never honored His gospel by heartfelt reception of it, you are nothing in His sight. The smallest insect that crawls is a nobler being than you are: it fills its place in creation and glorifies its Maker with all its power—you *do not*. You do not honor God with heart, will, intellect, and members, which are all His. You invert His order and arrangement and live as if time was of more importance than eternity and body better than soul. You dare to neglect God's greatest gift—His own incarnate Son. You are cold about that subject that fills all heaven with hallelujahs. And so long as this is the case, you belong to the worthless part of mankind. You are the "chaff" of the earth.

Let this thought be graven deeply in the mind of every reader of this article, whatever else he forgets. Remember there are only two sorts of people in the world. There is wheat, and there is chaff.

There are many nations in the world. Each differs from the rest. Each has its own language, its own laws, its own peculiar customs. But God's eye divides them into two great parties—the wheat and the chaff. There are many classes in the world. There are peers and commoners, farmers and shopkeepers, masters and servants, rich and poor. But God's eye only takes account of two orders—the wheat and the chaff. There are many and various minds in every congregation that meets for religious worship. There are some who attend for a mere form, and some who really desire to meet Christ; some who come there to please others, and some who come to please God; some who bring their hearts with them and are not soon tired, and some who leave their hearts behind them and reckon the whole service weary work. But the eye of the Lord Jesus only sees two divisions in the congregation—the wheat and the chaff.

I know well the world dislikes this way of dividing professing Christians. The world tries hard to fancy there are three sorts of people and not two. To be very good and very strict does not suit the world: they cannot, *will* not be saints. To have no religion at all does not suit the world: it would not be respectable. "Thank God," they will say, "we are not as bad as that." But to have religion enough to be saved, and yet not go into extremes; to be sufficiently good, and yet not be peculiar; to have a quiet, easy-going, moderate kind of Christianity and go comfortably to heaven after all—this is the world's favorite idea. There is a third class, the world fancies—a safe middle class—and in this middle class, the majority of men persuade themselves they will be found.

I denounce this notion of a middle class as an immense and soul-ruining delusion. It is a refuge of lies, a castle in the air, a vast unreality, an empty dream. This middle class is a class of Christians nowhere spoken of in the Bible.

There were two classes in the day of Noah's flood: those

who were inside the ark, and those who were without; two in the parable of the gospel net: those who are called the good fish, and those who are called the bad; two in the parable of the ten virgins: those who are described as wise, and those who are described as foolish; two in the account of the Judgment Day: the sheep and the goats; two sides of the throne: the right hand and the left; two abodes when the last sentence has been passed: heaven and hell.

And just so, there are only two classes in the churches on earth: those who are in the state of grace, and those who are in the state of nature; those who are in the narrow way, and those who are in the broad; those who have faith, and those who have not faith; those who have been converted, and those who have not been converted; those who are with Christ, and those who are against Him; those who gather with Him, and those who scatter abroad; those who are "wheat," and those who are "chaff." Beside these two classes, there is *none*.


See now what cause there is for self-inquiry. Are you among the wheat or among the chaff? Neutrality is impossible. Either you are in one class or in the other. Which is it of the two?

You attend church, perhaps. You go to the Lord's Table. You like good people. You can distinguish between good preaching and bad. You attend religious meetings. You sometimes read religious books. It is well; it is very well. It is good; it is all very good. It is more than can be said of many. Still, this is not a straightforward answer to my question. Are you wheat or are you chaff?

Have you been born again? Are you a new creature? Have you put off the old man and put on the new? Have you ever felt your sins and repented of them? Are you looking simply to Christ for pardon and life eternal? Do you love Christ? Do you serve Christ? Do you loathe heart-sins and fight against them? Do you long for perfect holiness and follow hard after it? Have you come out from the world? Do you delight in the Bible? Do you wrestle in prayer? Do you love Christ's people? Do you try to do good to the world? Are you vile in your own eyes and willing to take the lowest place? Are you a Christian in business, on weekdays, and in your own home? Oh, think, think, *think* on these things, and then perhaps you will be better able to tell the state of your soul.

I beseech you not to turn away from my question, however unpleasant it may be. Answer it, though it may prick your conscience and cut you to the heart. Answer it, though it may prove you in the wrong and expose your fearful danger. Rest not, rest not until you know how it is between you and God. Better a thousand times find out that you are in an evil case and repent betimes, than live on in uncertainty and be lost eternally.

Rev. J.C. Ryle (1816–1900) was Bishop of Liverpool and a prolific writer. This article is abridged from "The Great Separation" in *Practical Religion*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.



“I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, *provided the sense of our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionately clear*, and we feel the consolations of His love, notwithstanding all our transgressions.”

A letter to a friend on the question of whether the sins of believers shall be publicly declared at the great Day.

Judgment and the Sins of Believers

My dear sir, my heart congratulates you. Your pilgrimage is nearly finished. You stand upon the river's brink with the city full in view, waiting and wishing for the appointed hour. You need not be anxious concerning your passage, for every circumstance attending it is already adjusted by Infinite Wisdom and Love. The King Himself will be ready to receive you. While you continue here, I am glad to hear from you and glad to contribute in any way or degree to your satisfaction or even to show my willingness, if I can do no more. I can propose little more than the latter by offering my thoughts on the subject you propose from 2 Corinthians 5:10, and the apparent difficulty of understanding that passage in full harmony with the many texts that seem expressly to assert that the sins of believers are so forgiven as to be remembered no more.

There is doubtless (as you observe) a perfect consistency in every part of the Word of God. The difficulties we meet with are wholly owing to the narrowness of our faculties and the ignorance that in some degree is inseparable from our present state of imperfection. And we may, in general, rest satisfied with the thought that there is a bright moment approaching when the veil shall be wholly taken away. It is the part of faith to rest upon the plain declarations of Scripture without indulging a blamable curiosity of knowing more than is clearly revealed. Yet, while we humbly depend upon divine teaching, it is right to aim at as enlarged a sense of what is revealed as we can attain. Every acquisition of this kind is more valuable than gold,

especially respecting those points that have an immediate tendency to comfort and support us under the view of an approaching dissolution. The question you have proposed is undoubtedly of this nature.

May the Lord direct my thoughts and pen that I may not “darken counsel by words without knowledge” (Job 38:2)! I have been looking over the passage you refer to in Dr. Ridgely,¹ and think I might be well excused from saying anything further on the subject, as he hath briefly and fully stated all the arguments that have occurred to me on either side of the question. He closes with a proper caution not to be peremptory in determining, lest by attempting to be wise above what is written, I should betray my own folly. Yet as you desire to have my thoughts, I must say something. I wish I may not give you reason to think that this caution has been lost upon me.

I think all the great truths in which we are concerned are clearly and expressly laid down, not only in one, but also in many places of Scripture. But it sometimes happens that here and there we meet with a text, which, in the first and obvious sound of the words, seems to speak differently from what is asserted more largely elsewhere. These texts, singly taken, afford some men their only ground for the hypothesis they maintain. But their true interpretation is to be sought according to the analogy of faith. They are capable of a sense agreeable to the others, though the others are not intelligible in the sense they would fix upon these. In like manner I would say, whatever may be the precise meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:10, we are sure it cannot be designed to *weaken* what we are taught in almost every page of the free, absolute, and unalterable nature of a believer's *justification*. The benefit of this doctrine, as to the forgiveness of sin, is signified by the phrases of “blotting out,” “not remembering,” “casting behind the back,” and “into the depths of the sea.” The sins of a believer are so effectually removed that even when or if they are sought for, they cannot be found. For Jesus has borne them away. Believers are complete in Him and clothed in His righteousness. They shall stand before God without spot or wrinkle. Who shall lay anything to their charge?

But it is probable that those stray expressions, chiefly, if not entirely, respect the guilt, imputation, and deserved consequences of sin. None can suppose that the Lord will or *can* forget the sins of His people, or that they can be ever hid from His all-comprehending view. Neither can I think they themselves will forget them. Their song is founded upon a recollection of their sins and their circumstances in this life (Rev. 5:9). Their love, and consequently their happiness, seems inseparably connected with the consciousness of what they were and what they had done (Luke 7:47). And I think those are the sweetest moments in this life, when we have the clearest sense of our own sins, *provided the sense of our acceptance in the Beloved is proportionately clear*, and we feel the consolations of His love, notwithstanding all our transgressions. When we arrive in glory, unbelief and fear will cease forever: our nearness to God and communion with Him will be unspeakably beyond what we can now conceive. Therefore, the remembrance of our sins will be no abatement of our bliss, but rather the contrary. When Pharaoh and his host were alive and pursuing them, the Israelites were terrified: but afterwards, when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, their joy and triumph were not abated, but heightened by the consideration of their number.

With respect to our sins being made known to others, I acknowledge with you that I could not now bear to have any of my fellow creatures made acquainted with what passes in my heart for a single day. But I apprehend it is a part and a proof of my present depravity that I feel myself disposed to pay so great a regard to the judgment of *men*, while I am so little affected with what I am in the sight of the pure and holy *God*. But I believe that hereafter, when self shall be entirely rooted out and my will perfectly united to the Divine will, I should feel no reluctance — *supposing it for the manifestation of His glorious grace* — that men, angels, and devils should know the very worst of me.

Whether it will be so or no, I dare not determine. Perhaps the difficulty chiefly lies in the necessity of our being taught at present heavenly things by earthly. In the descriptions we have of the Great Day, allusion is made to what is most solemn in human transactions. The ideas of the Judgment Seat, the great trumpet, the books being opened, and the pleadings (Matt. 25:37–44) seem to be borrowed from the customs that obtain amongst men to help our weak conceptions, rather than justly and fully to describe what will be the real process. Now, when we attempt to look into the unseen world, we carry our ideas of time, place, and sensible objects along with us. We cannot divest ourselves of them or provide ourselves with better. Yet perhaps they have as little relation to the objects we aim at, as the ideas that a man born blind acquires from what he hears and feels have to the true nature of light and color.

In a word, my dear Sir, if I have not given you satisfaction — *I am sure I have not satisfied myself* — accept my apology

in the words of a much wiser and an inspired man: “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Ps. 139:6). Ere long, we shall know: in the meanwhile, our cause is in sure hands. We have a Shepherd who will guide us below, an Advocate who will receive and present us before the Throne above. I trust we meet daily before the throne of grace; hereafter we shall meet in glory.

1. Thomas Ridgeley (c. 1667–1734) writes: “But there is a difficult question proposed by some, namely, Whether the sins of God’s people shall be published in the Great Day; though it is certain they shall not be alleged against them to their condemnation? This is one of the secret things that belong to God, which He has not so fully or clearly revealed to us in His Word; so that we can say little more about it than what is matter of conjecture. Some have thought that the sins of the godly, though forgiven shall be made manifest, so that the glory of that grace that has pardoned them may appear more illustrious, and their obligation to God farther enhanced. They also think that the justice of the proceedings of that Day requires it; since it is presumed and known by the whole world that they were prone to sin as well as others — that, before conversion, they were as great sinners as any — and that after it their sins had a peculiar aggravation. Why, then, they ask, should not their sins be made public, as a glory due to the justice and holiness of God, as being infinitely opposite to all sin? This they farther suppose to be necessary: that the impartiality of divine justice may appear. Moreover, if God, by recording the sins of His saints in Scripture, has perpetuated the knowledge of them, and if it is to their honor that the sins there mentioned were repented of as well as forgiven, why may it not be supposed that the sins of believers shall be made known in the Great Day? Besides, that they shall be made known seems agreeable to those Scriptures that state that every word and every action shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be bad.

“On the other hand, it is supposed by others, that though the making known of sin which is subdued and forgiven, tends to the advancement of divine grace; yet it is sufficient to answer this end — as far as God designs it shall be answered — that the sins that have been subdued and forgiven should be known to those who committed them, who, in consequence of having received pardon, have matter of praise to God. Again, the expressions of Scripture whereby forgiveness of sin is set forth are such as seem to argue that those sins that were forgiven shall not be made manifest. Thus they are said to be ‘blotted out,’ ‘covered,’ ‘subdued,’ ‘cast into the depths of the sea,’ and ‘remembered no more,’ etc. Besides, Christ’s being a Judge does not divest Him of the character of an Advocate, whose part is rather to conceal the crimes of those whose cause He pleads than to divulge them. We may add, that the Law, which requires duty and forbids the contrary sins, is not the rule by which they who are in Christ are to be proceeded against, for if it were, they could not stand in Judgment; but they are dealt with according to the tenor of the Gospel, which forgives and covers all sins. Furthermore, it is argued that the public declaring of all their sins before the whole world, notwithstanding their interest in forgiving grace, would fill them with such shame as is hardly consistent with a state of perfect blessedness. Lastly, the principal argument insisted on is that our Savior, in Matthew 25, in which He gives a particular account of the proceedings of that day, makes no mention of the sins, but only commends the graces of His saints. Such arguments as these are alleged to prove that it is probable the sins of the saints shall not be exposed to public view in the Great Day. But after all that has been said, it is safest for us not to be too peremptory in determining this matter, lest, by pretending to be wise beyond what is clearly revealed in Scripture, we betray our own folly and too bold presumption or assert that which is not right of this glorious Judge. Thus concerning the method in which Christ shall proceed in judging the world.” (*Commentary on the Larger Catechism*)

Rev. John Newton (1725–1807) was an Anglican minister and well-known hymn-writer and author of letters. This article is taken from “Letter 3” in *The Works of John Newton*, Vol. 1, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

For Christ and the saints meeting at the Judgment Day

No sooner are the saints lifted up and set before the Judge, but these things follow:

1. *They look, gaze, dart their beams, and reflect their glories on each other.* Oh, the communications! Oh, the dartings of beams between Christ and His saints! When two admirable persons, two lovers meet together, their eyes sparkle! They look on as if they would look through one another. So Christ and His saints at first meeting: they look on as if they would look through one another. Such is the effect of these looks that they give a luster to each other. Did not Moses' face shine when he had been with God? And shall not the faces of the elect glitter and shine when Christ also looks on them? As they shine by Christ, so shall *their* shine reflect on Christ and give all glory to Christ! This I take to be the meaning of the Apostle Paul, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints" (2 Thess. 1:10). Not only in Himself, but in His saints also, whose glory, as it comes *from* Him, redounds also *to* Him. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36).

2. *They admire the infinite glory, beauty, dignity, and excellence that is in Christ.* The glory they reflect *on* Him is nothing to the glory that is *in* Him. When these stars—the saints—shall but look upon Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, they exceedingly admire Him. So the Apostle writes: "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10). All that believe shall break out into admiration of Jesus Christ. At the first sight,

they shall observe such excellence in Jesus Christ that they shall be infinitely taken with it. Here on earth we speak of Christ, and in speaking, we admire. But how they will admire Him when they shall not only speak or hear, but also *see* and *behold* Him, who is the express image of God, and the brightness of His Father's glory (Heb. 1:3)! Oh, the luster that He casts forth each way! Is not His very body more sparkling than the diamond before the sun? Yes, more than the sun itself now shining at noonday? How should the saints but wonder at this sight? *There is more beauty and glory in Jesus Christ than ever their thoughts or imaginations could possibly reach!* There is more weight of sweetness, joy, and delight in Jesus Christ than either the seeing eye, hearing ear, or the vast understanding heart (which can multiply and add still to any former thoughts) can possibly conceive (1 Cor. 2:9)! Every soul will cry out then, "I believed I would see much glory in Jesus Christ when I saw Him. I had some twilight or moonlight glances of Christ on earth: but—how blind and narrow am I!—I could never have faith, opinion, thought, or imagination to fathom the thousand thousandth part of the worth and incomparable excellence that I now see in Him!"

Why, when we see more than ever we could expect, this causes admiration. The saints shall then cry out and say, "I see more, ten thousand times more than ever I expected! I see all the beauty of God put forth in Christ, I see the substantial reflection of the Father's light and glory in Jesus Christ, I see thousands of excellencies in Jesus Christ that never were revealed to me before!" The glory of Christ will then exceed all former apprehension. Oh, they admire to see the King in such a beauty. They admire to see the Judge in such a glittering and glorious robe of majesty! They admire, and they cannot *but* admire.

3. *They adore and magnify the grace and glory of Jesus Christ.* It is said of the twenty-four elders that they fell down "before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:10–11). So all the saints who have now

advanced to come up to Christ and to stand before the throne fall down before Christ. They worship Him that lives forever, shouting and singing about Jesus Christ, setting out His glory, grace, and goodness!

Saints and angels will both give glory to Jesus Christ that day. Every elect man will then acknowledge, “Here is Christ that shed His blood for me! Here is the Savior that laid down His life for me! Here is the sacrifice that gave Himself as a propitiation for me! Here is the Person that mediated, interceded, and made peace for me! Here is the Redeemer that delivered and redeemed me from the wrath to come!” Then they begin those hallelujahs that shall never, never end: “Hallelujah!” And again, “Hallelujah! Amen, Hallelujah!”—“for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7).

4. *Christ welcomes them into His glorious presence.* If the father could receive his prodigal but repenting son with hugs and kisses, how will Christ now receive His saints, when they come as a bride to the solemnization of the marriage? His very heart springs (as I may say) at the sight of His Bride! No sooner does He see her and salute her, but He welcomes her with such words as these: “O my love, my dove, my fair one—come now and enjoy thy Husband! Many a thought I have had of thee: before I made the world, I spent My infinite eternal thoughts on thy salvation. When the world began, I gave thee a promise that I would betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, in judgment, in loving kindness, in mercy, and in faithfulness” (Hos. 2:19–20). “For thy sake I was incarnate, lived, died, rose again, and ascended. And since My ascension, I have been interceding for thee and making ready the bride-chamber, where thou and I must live forever and ever. Now I come into the clouds to meet thee more than half the way. My meaning is to take thee for My own—oh my spouse, thou art as dear to Me as My own dear heart! Come, see here love written in the golden letters of free grace. Come near, for I must have thee with Me.... Sometimes thy sins have made a wall of partition between Me and thee. Sometimes I withdrew and was gone; I hid Myself beyond the curtains. And for a time, thou hast lain hid in the closet of the grave. But now we will never part more: I will bring thee to My Father, and I will say to Him, ‘Father, behold! Here is My spouse that I have carried unto Myself.’ In the meantime, welcome to thy Jesus. I have purchased thee with My blood, I have paid dear for thee, and now I will wear thee as a crown and ornament forever.”

5. *Christ sets them on His right hand.* This is the sign of Christ’s love and respect to His saints: when He Himself ascended up into heaven, then said the Father to Him, “Son, sit Thou down at My right hand.” No sooner are the saints ascended up to Christ, but He speaks the same to them, “Sit thou down at My right hand.” Christ entertains them, as God the Father entertained Him—He at the right hand of God, and they at the right hand of Christ. And herein is set forth the great exaltation of the saints: Christ being set at God’s right hand, God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. So now are the saints highly exalted by Jesus Christ, now are they filled with unmatched perfection, now is the fullness of perfection, the fullness of honor

and glory conferred upon them. “Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir” (Ps. 45:9), i.e., in the best, richest, finest gold. The Lord now puts upon His saints heaven’s glory. He adorns them with all His ornaments fit for the marriage day. All the glory of this day is for nothing else but to set out the solemnity of the marriage. As the bridegroom on the day of nuptials comes forth in his glory; as the bride on the marriage day comes forth in her best array; and as the servants, parents, friends, and all appear on the marriage day in as much glory as they can, so Christ on this day comes forth in His glory with all His angels in their glory and the saints, the Lamb’s wife!

6. *Hereupon Christ fully and actually joys in them and they in Him.* He joys in them because now He sees of the travail of His soul (Isa. 53:11). He sees the issue of all His doings and sufferings here on earth. He sees now the great work He has brought about—the glory of His saints. He cannot but rejoice therein, like a man that makes a work that is very glorious, He takes abundance of delight to look upon it. When God made the world and looked upon what He had made, He saw it was good, and He delighted in it. So Christ looks on His saints, and when He sees what He has done in raising so poor a worm to so high an excellence, *He takes infinite delight therein.* Now He sees that He hath attained His end in the great design and deepest counsels that He had before the world! He was then resolved to save a number of sinners and to bring them at last to Himself that they might behold Him in His glory and manifest the riches of His grace. To that purpose, He has been carrying on the great work of souls’ salvation and now that He sees it accomplished and fulfilled in them, He must needs delight: “In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph. 3:16–17).

And as He joys in them, so they cannot but rejoice in Him; as He delights in their glory, so they cannot but delight in His glory. Are they not at Christ’s right hand? Is not that the place of pleasure, the Paradise of God? “In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps. 16:11). The very setting of them on Christ’s right hand is the beginning of heaven’s joy. The presence of Christ makes joy, “exceeding joy” (Jude 24). But what joy? What fullness of joy? What exceeding joy will it be to be set at Christ’s right hand? Now begins that joy that never, never shall have an end! Oh, the complacency that the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being loved of Jesus Christ! “Oh, my Christ! Let me have tribulation here, let me here spend my days in sorrow, and my breath in sighings; punish me here, cut me in pieces here, burn me here, so that I might there be placed at Thy right hand.” For then will joy come and sorrow will vanish; sorrow is but for a night, this night of life. But joy will come in this morning of the resurrection, and it never shall be night again.

Isaac Ambrose (1604–1664) was a Puritan minister who authored the classic, *Looking Unto Jesus* (reprinted by Sprinkle Publications), from which this article was drawn.



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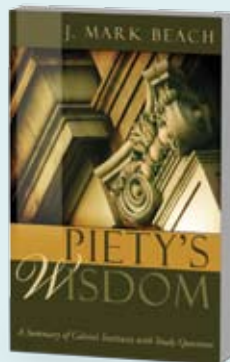
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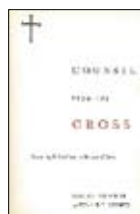


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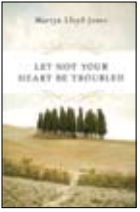
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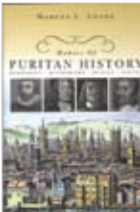
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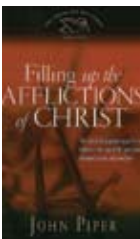
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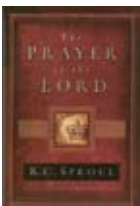
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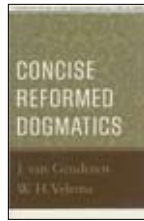
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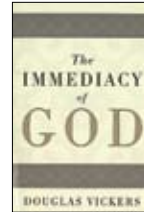
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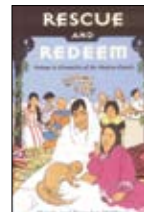
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DEPRESSION: THEN...AND NOW

Many have attempted to describe the indescribable pain of depression. Numerous similes and metaphors have been used to attempt to convey depression's deep, deep agonies. However, I don't think I've seen anything come so close to describing the indescribable as this deeply moving poem by Sue Lubbers.

Three things make this poem especially touching. First, it was written by a Christian, which actually adds another layer to the suffering. Christians with depression not only lose physical energy, intellectual ability, and emotional activity, but the most precious thing in their life feels lost—their spiritual relationship with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Second, the poem is breathtakingly honest. It does not attempt to gloss over or minimize the awful thoughts and feelings that stalk and haunt the soul in this desolate valley. It is so far removed from the shallow and artificial triumphalism of

so much of modern Christianity. It is much more reminiscent of the deep and genuine piety we find in many of the Psalms, in Job, and in Jeremiah.

Third, the poem holds out great hope for those still passing through these deep waters. To get maximum benefit, don't read across the two columns. Rather, read the whole of the first column; then start reading down the second column, comparing it as you go with the parallel line in the first column. What a transformation! The Lord has brought about a revolution in this dear believer's life. If you, or a loved one, are still in column one, then read column two and see what our almighty and gracious God can do in the most desperate of situations.

If the Lord has spared you this affliction, thank Him for His undeserved favor towards you, and use the poem to cultivate sympathy and understanding for sufferers.

—Dr. David Murray

I weep because I live in a deep, dark hole, with no bottom.
I weep because I am so tired and cannot sleep.
I weep because my mind cannot concentrate.
I weep because I want to, but I cannot.
I weep because I should, but I cannot.
I weep because I cannot find God.
I weep because, is there a God?
I weep because I am angry.
I weep because I am angry with God.
I weep because no one understands.
I weep because I feel guilty.
I weep because I feel nauseous.
I weep because my arms are so heavy.
I weep because my legs are so restless.
I weep because the Bible is black words on white pages.
I weep because the promises cannot be for me.
I weep because birds' singing hurts my mind and heart.
I weep because I am lonely.
I weep because I need to take medication.
I weep because I cannot make a cake from a box.
I weep because I am disappointing my loved ones.
I weep because I am crazy.
I weep because I cannot stop wringing my hands.
I weep because I will never be happy.
I weep because I cannot laugh.
I weep because I don't want to live.
I weep because I don't want to die.
I weep because I want to be a dog.
I weep because there are cobwebs in the corners.
I weep because you think I look normal.
I weep because I am not a Christian.
I weep because I am a Christian.
I weep because I cannot eat.
I weep because I have age spots.
I weep because I miss my mother.
I weep because it hurts so bad, will it ever go away?

I rejoice because the world is filled with sunshine.
I rejoice because I fall into a peaceful sleep.
I rejoice because my mind can think four good thoughts at once.
I rejoice because I want to and I can.
I rejoice because I don't have to.
I rejoice because God is everywhere.
I rejoice because God holds me every minute.
I rejoice because God removes and forgives anger.
I rejoice because God even forgives anger directed at Him.
I rejoice because people are so caring.
I rejoice because Christ carries my guilt.
I rejoice because I am hungry.
I rejoice because my arms love activity.
I rejoice because my legs can run with a grocery cart.
I rejoice because the words in the Bible jump off the page at me.
I rejoice because every promise is for me.
I rejoice because the birds sing.
I rejoice because of the communion of the saints.
I rejoice because God has provided medication for me.
I rejoice because I can make a cake from scratch and frosting too.
I rejoice because my loved ones love me.
I rejoice because I am who God made me to be.
I rejoice because God tenderly holds my hand.
I rejoice because I am happy.
I rejoice because I can laugh.
I rejoice because I want to live each day to God's glory.
I rejoice because I want to die so I can live eternally with God.
I rejoice that I am not a dog but a mortal with a soul.
I rejoice over the intricate lace of a cobweb before I sweep it away.
I rejoice because I am normal.
I rejoice because I am a Christian.
I rejoice because God's love made me a Christian.
I rejoice because I can eat.
I rejoice because my age spots are the blessing of age.
I rejoice because my mother is in glory.
I rejoice because by God's grace it did go away.

—Sue Lubbers

The *Sorrowful* Parent & Teacher



And Hannah answered and said, No my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.

—1 Samuel 1:15

*H*annah was deeply sorrowful. She experienced problems that she could not change; she had no child. She felt so helpless. In Israel at that time, childlessness was a sign of disgrace. It was even viewed as a sign of God's disfavor. To make matters worse, Hannah was cruelly mocked. And to add to her grief, the situation did not change. It continued year after year. Meanwhile, Peninnah "provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. And as... she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat" (1 Sam. 1:6–7).

Dear parent or teacher, are you deeply troubled? Are you also facing problems that you feel helpless to change? Are there students whose sinful attitudes so distress you, and nothing you do appears to make any impact? Is there a son or daughter or grandchild who openly lives in sin, and whatever you say or do seems to make no difference? To make matters worse, this condition continues year after year. Satan and your own heart taunt you and provoke you. At times you may break down and weep.

Is your sorrowful condition similar to Hannah's? If so, I encourage you to do as she did. First, she brought all her burdens to God in prayer. And second, she left her cares with Him.

Hannah brought her great needs, the problems she could not solve, to God in prayer. She confesses in our text, "but I have poured out my soul before the LORD." Perhaps there was never a time in Hannah's life that she experienced such closeness with God, felt His presence in such a real way, or released such intimate cries to her Savior. Her prayer was not simply custom or lip-service. She "poured out her soul" to her God.

Dear sorrowful parent or teacher, go and do likewise. Maybe you are plagued by "why" questions. "Why is there no change in my students' wrong attitudes?" "Why does my son refuse to turn to God?" "Why does my daughter continue to despise my advice and refuse to repent?" We do not know

the answers God has to these questions in His plan for the future. But one immediate answer may be to bring you to Jesus' feet—to draw you close to His heart, to make prayer real and intimate in your life, to enable you to come to Him with a broken heart and contrite spirit so that you, too, would pour out your soul to your God and Savior.

If this painful cross that you are called to carry brings you to the feet of Jesus to weep there, to pour out your soul to Him, is it all bad? Is God not using this trial to produce rich fruits of humbleness and dependency in your life?

Yes, pour out all your impossibilities at the Lord's feet. But also, leave your cares there with Him. Hannah did this. We read later in this chapter, "So the woman [Hannah] went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Sam. 1:18b). It is one thing to bring our burdens to the Lord; it is another to leave them with Him. This is the mistake that we frequently make. We bring our cares and concerns to God in prayer, but then we pick them up again and try to carry them ourselves. Could God be lovingly increasing the weight of your burden until it is too heavy for you to lift? Could His goal be that you surrender it to Him and learn to no longer attempt to carry it yourself but to place it by faith upon your Savior's almighty shoulders? Unbelief picks up the burden again, with all its sorrows and worries. Faith looks to the caring Great Shepherd and trusts Him. Faith feels the release and goes forward with hope.

When we read that Hannah went her way and ate and was no longer sad, she did not have any children yet. The burden was still there. But what a difference when I know and feel that my heavenly Father carries it! Then joy will replace despondency, and I will walk with much lighter steps.

Are you a sorrowful but joyful parent, a lamenting but believing teacher?

James W. Beeke is an elder in the Chiliwack, B.C. Heritage Reformed Congregation and an international educational consultant.



The Man of Sorrows

Dear children, you have often heard the story of how Jesus, though He was innocent, died a cruel death on the cross. Has that ever bothered you? The righteous Son of God became a man so that He could suffer and die to pay for sins He never committed. We have heard this truth so often that we become used to it. But have you ever *really* thought about it? If you were the only person who ever lived, for you to be saved, Jesus would still have had to suffer and die. That's hard to believe, isn't it? We don't like to think that we are truly that wicked. It's much easier to think that other people killed Him. We think, "Of course, God is angry with murderers, drug addicts, liars, and people who don't believe in God; but me? I'm not such a bad person. I go to church. I don't use God's name in vain. I give money for poor people in other countries so they can hear the gospel and receive food, clothing, and medicine. I pray every day and read my Bible. Jesus loves children, doesn't He? God smiles on me. He is patiently waiting for the right time to give me a new heart."

When we think like this, we are just like the Pharisee who prayed in the temple (Luke 18:9–14). He said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are..." (verse 11). We shake our heads at this Pharisee's ignorance and pride. But have you ever grieved and repented like the despised publican? Have you ever cried out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (verse 13)?

During times of revival among children in America during the mid to late 1800s, Rev. Edward Payson Hammond often preached sermons specifically to children. He would simply tell them the story of the suffering and death of Jesus as He took the place of sinners. Many children were brought under deep conviction of sin. Many felt that their greatest sin

was that they did not love such a Savior. They grieved that they had rejected Him who had suffered so much because of their sins. They wept because their hearts were so hard that the agonies of the Lord Jesus seemed to mean so little to them. One little boy sobbed, "I'm lost! I'm lost and I can't find Jesus! Oh, my wicked heart! How can I get a new heart? I have been so wicked! I have never loved Jesus at all! I thought I loved Him, but now I know I never did. Will He take me?"¹ This boy, along with many other children, confessed their sin to God and asked for forgiveness. Before long, they were rejoicing in Christ their Savior.

Dear children, you have often heard of the Savior, who gave His life so that guilty sinners could be washed in His blood and saved from hell; but what does He mean to *you*? Is He *your* Savior? Have you repented of your sin? Are you rejoicing because your sins have been washed away? Concluding one of his sermons, Rev. Payson said,

As we saw when I was reading the Bible, before Jesus could offer Himself as our Guide, He had to die in our stead that dreadful death on the cross; there He had to suffer for our sins that we might be forgiven. And yet there are some here today who, I fear, do not love Him at all. You hate Him; you speak lightly of Him; you profane His name; you are ashamed of Him. You have often heard how He loved [sinful children], and yet you have never loved Him in return. Does not this show that you have wicked hearts? Some of you, I see, are in tears. But weeping will not save you. All that you can do is to confess all this—confess that you have been very wicked in not loving Him at all, when He has loved you so much. Here is a precious promise for you in

1. Rev. E. P. Hammond. *The Conversion of Children* (London: Morgan and Scott, n.d.), 76.

1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Will you not say,

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Yes, the dear Jesus is here, full of love; He sees your tears; He sees you wandering in the dark labyrinth of sin; He hears all your sighs; His tender, loving words are, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). How can you reject Him when He so gently knocks at the door of your heart?"²

Ask the Lord to grant you repentance and faith today (Acts 5:31). Do not ignore the Savior or reject His gift of salvation. Flee to Him today and ask Him to make you one of His dear children. Then you will rejoice in His mercy, and Good Friday and Easter will be precious days for you.

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

2. Ibid, 89–90.

PRAY & WORK

Children's prayers are always short and to the point. They do not ask God, as grown people do sometimes, to grant what they can supply themselves. At the close of a long prayer by a father who had prayed for a poor family, his son said, "Father, if I had as much wheat in the barn as you have, I would answer that prayer myself."

Taken from *The Conversion of Children* by Rev. Edward Payson Hammond.

How Old Are You?



In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, many children and youths were led to Christ. Among them was a little boy, the son of a university professor. This professor was sitting by the fire in his study one afternoon, when his son came home from the Children's Meeting. He sat quietly looking at the fire for a while, as if something important was on his mind. He then began to sigh and fidget, as if he had something difficult to say. Then, looking up, he asked, "Papa, how old are you?"

"Fifty-six," replied the professor.

"How old was Grandpa when he died?"

"Sixty."

There was a pause. Then, looking straight into his father's eyes, the boy questioned, "Papa, are you a Christian?"

The professor was startled, but answered honestly. "No, I don't think I am, son."

"Don't you think you should become one now, my dear father? You don't have much time before you will be as old as Grandpa was when he died." The boy looked at his father, his eyes pleading with him. "The Lord Jesus Christ has saved me from all my sins and given me a new heart. He has made me so happy!"

The little boy took his father's hand in his little ones, and, with tears streaming down his cheeks, begged him to flee to the Savior before it was too late. Later, the professor told a friend, "I have heard sermons all my life, but never such a powerful one as from my little boy."

The Lord used that little boy to awaken the professor from his dangerous sleep of death. He fled for safety to the Lord Jesus Christ and found mercy in the blood of the Lamb. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Taken from *The Conversion of Children* by Rev. Edward Payson Hammond (London: Morgan and Scott, n.d.)

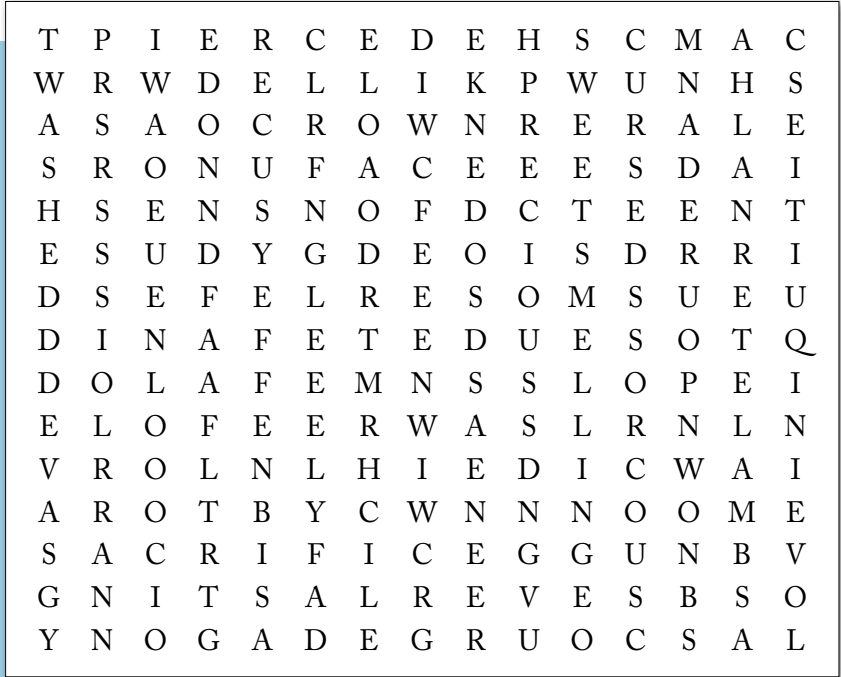
Puzzle

Unscramble the words, and then find them in the puzzle. Sometimes letters are used more than once in the wordsearch. The texts given contain the word. I have included little words and longer words so there are challenges for the different age groups. Do as many as you can; the important thing is to think about the meaning of the words and the corresponding texts.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. L A L _ _ _ (Romans 8:32) | 19. E D R E M E _ _ _ _ _ (Titus 2:14) |
| 2. E N W _ _ _ (Matthew 26:28) | 20. S W E D A H _ _ _ _ _ (Revelation 1:5) |
| 3. N O W _ _ _ (Isaiah 43:25) | 21. L N E S C A E _ _ _ _ _ (1 John 1:9) |
| 4. S N O _ _ _ (1 John 1:7) | 22. R E N T A L E _ _ _ _ _ (Romans 6:23) |
| 5. H W Y _ _ _ (Mark 15:34) | 23. V E F O R F E D _ _ _ _ _ (Hebrews 9:28) |
| 6. E D I D _ _ _ _ (Romans 8:34) | 24. D I R C E P E _ _ _ _ _ (John 19:34) |
| 7. A F E C _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 50:6) | 25. U N E D D O W _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 53:5) |
| 8. L B M A _ _ _ _ (John 1:29) | 26. I P O E U R C S _ _ _ _ _ (1 Peter 1:19) |
| 9. V L E O _ _ _ _ (John 15:13) | 27. S U G O E R C D _ _ _ _ _ (John 19:1) |
| 10. H E S D _ _ _ _ (Mark 14:24) | 28. C I A F E R S I C _ _ _ _ _ (Hebrews 9:26) |
| 11. Y N A O G _ _ _ _ _ (Luke 22:44) | 29. I F U R G F S E N _ _ _ _ _ (Hebrews 2:9) |
| 12. D O B O L _ _ _ _ _ (Romans 5:9) | 30. N L U T A B N A D Y _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 55:7) |
| 13. R S C O S _ _ _ _ _ (John 19:17) | 31. S I U I E I T Q N I _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 59:2) |
| 14. W R O N C _ _ _ _ _ (John 19:2) | 32. V I G L E N A R T E S _ _ _ _ _ (John 3:16) |
| 15. A D E V S _ _ _ _ _ (Romans 10:13) | 33. H I E S M T A N C T S E _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 53:5) |
| 16. D U S C E R _ _ _ _ _ (Galatians 3:13) | 34. G E L T W I L E S S E M N _ _ _ _ _ (Ephesians 5:2) |
| 17. L E L K I D _ _ _ _ _ (Mark 8:31) | 35. S E S R I S R A G O T S N N _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 44:22) |
| 18. O P R U D E _ _ _ _ _ (Isaiah 53:12) | |

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

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Daniel Beeke | Natalie Koeber |
| Tara Beeke | Amanda Koppert |
| Lauren Bilkes | Jacob Koppert |
| Leah Boerkoel | Hailey Meerdink |
| Neal Boerkoel | Lukas Meschke |
| Andrew Boesterd | Nick Meschke |
| Justin Boesterd | Abby Mouring |
| Katelyn Boesterd | Tim Mouring |
| Becky Boot | Kaitlyn Stubbe |
| Shelly Boot | Sara Stubbe |
| Dale Burns | Janine Sweetman |
| Janae denHertog | David VanVugt |
| Matthew denHertog | Lauren VanVugt |
| Ella Koeber | |



Here are the answers to last month's quiz.

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Across: | 18. out | Down: | 8. thank |
| 3. and | 19. God | 1. lambs | 9. wings |
| 5. son | 20. cry | 2. songs | 10. world |
| 6. get | | 3. among | 11. babes |
| 12. woe | Down | 4. David | 12. whoso |
| 14. men | diagonally: | 5. sin | 13. enter |
| 15. not | 8. trees | 6. glory | 16. thy |
| 17. one | 10. works | 7. these | |

Please send your puzzle answers to:
Banner Puzzles and Questions
Attn: Mrs. Diana Kleyn
540 Crescent St., NE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
e-mail: cdkleyn@charter.net

School Friends

DIANA KLEYN

In the early days of America, the Lord blessed the preaching of Rev. Asahel Nettleton,¹ and many souls were saved. Among these new believers were two young boys who were close friends and attended the same school. They were overjoyed that the Lord Jesus had washed away their sins and given them a new heart, but there was something more they longed for: the conversion of their school friends. They prayed often for this and used every opportunity they could to speak about the Savior. Some of their friends had no interest in what the boys had to say, but others listened and began attending worship services and prayer meetings.

Weeks and months passed without any real change. Still the boys did not give up hope. One lovely spring day, as they walked to school together, one of them suggested praying specifically for six or seven of their closest school friends. They were encouraged by the Savior's promise in Matthew 18:19: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

Not long after the boys made this decision, one of these prayer warriors felt a strong impulse to kneel and pray right where he was. It was a lovely sunny day, and he was alone in his back yard. He knelt and prayed, and his heart overflowed in earnest prayer for his friends' conversions. As he prayed, a heavenly peace and joy filled his heart; he was certain that God had heard his prayer, and his pleadings gave way to praise and thanksgiving.

The following day this boy went to the prayer meeting as usual, which was held in a friend's home. Since he had been absent from school for two or three days, he had not seen his praying friend, nor any of the boys for whom they were praying. As he reached the house, his friend met him at the door. He pulled him aside and told him, "God is answering our prayers! All of the boys we are praying for are weeping for their sins. They are all here at the prayer meeting!"

The young boy was not expecting an answer to his prayers so soon. Only a day earlier he had been pleading for the salvation of his school friends. He certainly believed that God would answer his prayers, but he also knew that God does things in His own time. You can imagine how happy these two friends were to see the boys they had been praying for repenting of their sins. They gladly talked with them about the only Savior of sinners.

1. Asahel Nettleton (1783–1844) was converted at the age of seventeen. In 1805, he entered Yale College and was a spiritual adviser during the revival at Yale in 1807. He was very active during the revivals happening in America. Being a Calvinist, he clashed with Charles G. Finney (1792–1875), opposing some of the methods and teachings of his revival meetings, but worked tirelessly to promote the Lord's work in these times of revival.



The next day the boys were all present at school, but the freshly convicted boys could not concentrate on their schoolwork. They were so troubled by their own sinfulness and longed so intensely for forgiveness that they

could not pay attention to their assignments. When called to read aloud or answer a question, they could only respond with tears and sobs. Finally, the school day was over. The boys gathered outside in the schoolyard and prayed together. The teacher was also a believer and joined in. During the day, he had pulled the weeping boys aside and discovered the cause of their tears.

It was not long before these precious souls had learned the "new song" (Revelation 14:3), and for the rest of the school year, the boys would get together during their lunch hour or after school to speak of the love of Christ. They would sing songs such as this one with great sweetness and much feeling:

Humble praises, holy Jesus,
Infant voices rise to Thee:
In Thy mercy, O receive us,
Suffer us Thy lambs to be.

Gracious Savior, be Thou with us;
Let Thy mercy richly flow;
Give Thy Spirit, blessed Jesus,
Light and life on us bestow.

Hallelujah, sweetly singing,
Joyful tribute now we bring.
Hallelujah, Hallelujah!
Hallelujah to our King!²

Later, they all made a public profession of faith. Years passed to test their faith, but they remained true to their Lord.

These two praying schoolboys learned early in their lives the value of loving, persistent efforts, coupled with simple, believing prayer for the conversion of souls. Let all young Christians, as well as teachers and parents, put this into practice, and prove the Savior's promise of answered prayer. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

Adapted from *Sketches from Life; or, Illustrations of the Influence of Christianity, Second Series* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 262–64.

2. Dimitri Bortmiansky (1752–1828).

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

YOU ARE INVITED TO A SPEAKER EVENING

Rev. Kuldip Gangar plans to speak on *Reaching the Sikhs with the Gospel* on Friday, March 26, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. in the Dundas FRC meeting room. This will be hosted by the Free Reformed Student Society. We welcome young people in the workforce, college, and university to attend our meetings.

Rev. Gangar is pastor of the Bellevue Free Reformed preaching station in Washington. He also prepares weekly Bible studies in the Punjabi language that are broadcast on the radio to the Sikh community in the Seattle area.

2010 HRC YOUTH CAMP

The theme for the 2010 Youth Conference will be:

TULIP—The Aroma of the Gospel

All too often we handle the truths of God's Word like a tulip. We see and perhaps admire them. We "smell" them from a distance. We know they are important to believe. But that's all. So often we don't take these truths into our own hearts and lives and apply them personally, or share them with others. We acknowledge that we are totally depraved, but do we live with the sober reality of what that really means before God? We confess unconditional election but do we live with the reality that this is the root of salvation and reveals the character of God? We confess limited atonement, that Christ died only for His people, but are you being cleansed daily by His atoning blood? You agree with irresistible grace, but do you come humbly and willingly when Christ is offered and are you in love with Him and His grace? Maybe you have heard about perseverance of the saints, but that is really far off in the distant future, so what bearing does that have on your life now as you fight against sin? These are truths to live and die by because they reveal the grace of God before time for rebels without a cause who must be washed in the atoning blood of Christ, be intoxicated by His grace and the best part is, that there are no lost causes if you are in Christ! Come and hear about these exciting and life-changing truths! Topics will include:

Total Depravity—Rebels Without a Cause
Unconditional Election—Grace Before Time
Limited Atonement—Mission Accomplished
Irresistible Grace—Intoxicating Grace
Perseverance of the Saints—No Lost Causes*

The conference will be held, the Lord willing, Tuesday, June 29—Friday, July 2, at Camp Michiwana in southwestern Michigan. All young people (grade 10 through age 25) are encouraged to attend. Speakers will include Dr. Beeke, Rev. Elshout, Dr. Murray, Rev. Fintelman, and Rev. Neels. Rev. VanderZwaag will be conducting a panel discussion. The format will be similar to previous years with topics, work shops, discussion groups, and time for fellowship. Mark your calendar! Registration forms are available this month through your local HRC churches.

The fee for the three-day camp is \$170 (US funds only). This includes all meals and lodging. Full-time campers may deduct \$20 if registrations are post marked by June 1, in which case the camp fee is \$150. (If possible, please submit your application by June 1, late registrations require a significant amount of extra last-minute work for all people involved with providing transportation, lodging, activity supplies, and food).

If you have any questions or need a registration form, you may contact: Mr. & Mrs. Doug VandenBerg (616-874-1648) or Mr. & Mrs. Tom VanRee (616-677-1727; email: thevanrees@iserv.net).

*TULIP terms taken from Michael Horton's book, *Putting Amazing Back into Grace: Embracing the Heart of the Gospel*.

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The women of the Jordan HRC would like to invite you to this year's Women's Conference. Our theme is taken from Titus 2:3-5, "Women Teaching Women." The conference will be held, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, May 18, 2010, in the Jordan Heritage Reformed Church, 4171 15th St., Jordan Station, Ontario. Registration and coffee will be at 9:30 a.m. A hot lunch will be provided. The cost will be \$20.00 in either U.S. or Canadian funds. Everyone is warmly invited to attend. Please register before May 4, 2010, with Jackie Heikoop at 905-892-1238 or email: jackieheikoop@hotmail.com.

HERITAGE SPRING RETREAT

The second annual Heritage Spring Retreat, hosted by Burgessville HNRC, will take place from 5 p.m. May 24 to 11:00 a.m. May 27, at the Brantford Circle Square Ranch, just outside of Brantford, Ontario. All singles 18 to 30 year old as well as married couples are welcome. This year's theme is entitled, "Contending for the Faith" and is based on Jude 1:3. Speakers will include: Pastors M. Kelderman, M. Kuivenhoven, D. Lipsy, D. Overbeek and J. Schoeman. Topic titles include: Introduction to the theme: Do I have Faith?; What is The Faith?; Contending Globally for The Faith; Contending Locally for The Faith; and Contending Personally for The Faith. There will be workshops that will challenge and assist you in living out this theme in the world today. For more information, or to register, go to: www.heritageretreat.ca.

FOURTH ANNUAL
Fraser Valley Bible Conference

Is the
Old Testament
still
relevant?
LEARN WHY ITS MESSAGE
STILL SPEAKS TO US TODAY

Dr. David Murray
Professor of Old Testament
& Pastoral Theology
Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary

April 23 & 24, 2010
Friday 7:30 pm & Sat. 9-1:00 pm
Emmanuel Free Reformed Church Conference Contact Info
3386 Mt. Lehman Road (604) 794 3501
Abbotsford, B.C. info@fraservalleybibleconference.com
www.FraserValleyBibleConference.com

TEACHERS NEEDED

Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown Ontario, is soliciting applicants for a Secondary French teaching position (Grades 9–12) to begin in September, 2010. For more information about Rehoboth, check out our website at www.rehoboth.on.ca. Applicants please send a cover letter and resumé to the attention of Mr. Jack Westerink—Principal, 198 Inksetter Road P.O. Box 70, Copetown, Ontario L0R 1J0, tel. 905–627–5977, fax 905–628–4422, e-mail: jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca

Providence Christian School invites applications for the positions of Principal/Teacher and Junior/Senior High Teachers for the 2010/2011 school year. Providence Christian School is situated in a beautiful, southern Alberta rural community, minutes from Lethbridge. PCS has grades K–12 with about 120 students attending and 12 staff members. We offer a four-day school week, competitive salaries, a growing, committed school community, and a dedicated team of teaching staff. Positions available include Principal/Teacher (The successful applicant will be in charge of administration and staff leadership, and will be expected to teach approximately half time at the Jr/Sr high school level, subject areas are negotiable), Jr. High Teacher, and Sr. High Math/Science/Computer Teacher. We encourage qualified teachers who demonstrate leadership skills, submit to God's Holy Word and the Reformed confessions, and are committed to educating children and youth in the Reformed Christian perspective to apply. Please send your resumé, references, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to: Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal, Providence Christian School, Box 240, Monarch, AB, T0L 1M0. For more information, call: 403–381–4418 or e-mail: provchr@telusplanet.net.

Jordan Christian School is accepting applications for possible teaching positions beginning in September 2010. Located in a rural setting in the Niagara Peninsula, near St. Catharines, Ontario, we are a small K-12 school. If you are energetic and versatile, committed to children, qualified to teach from a Reformed perspective, and interested in joining our teaching team, we would look forward to receiving

your application. Please send us a copy of your resumé, along with your statement of faith and philosophy of education. We review all applicant documents in the event of upcoming openings and contact you as our specific needs become known. Please send your applications to the principal, Mark Fintelman, jcschool@talkwireless.ca or the Education Committee secretary, John Berman, john@tremontwood.com. Jordan Christian School, 4171 15th Street, Jordan Station, ON, L0R 1S0.

The Board of **Oxford Reformed Christian School** invites applications for teaching opportunities for the 2010/2011 school year. Positions in both the elementary and secondary grades are available. ORCS is currently located in a rural setting 20 minutes south of Woodstock in Springford, Ontario. We are a parent-run school serving the needs of several local Reformed communities. Our present enrolment is 210 students and we offer Kindergarten to grade 12. We have a need for qualified, energetic elementary and secondary teachers to join our staff team. All applicants committed to the Reformed faith and to Christian education are encouraged to promptly apply. Applications should include a resumé, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references. Send to: Oxford Reformed Christian School, attn: Mr. W. Van Brugge (principal), 308 Church St., P.O. Box 68, Springford, ON, N0J 1X0. For further inquiries, please e-mail: orcsweb@execulink.com or phone: 519–842–3230. Oxford Reformed Christian School, 308 Church Street, PO Box 68, Springford ON, N0J 1X0, Ph: 519–842–3230, Fx: 519–842–5841.

Plymouth Christian Elementary and High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan are accepting teaching applications for the 2010–2011 school year for possible openings in the elementary and high school. Interested K–6 applicants should send their resumé and/or questions to Mr. David Engelsma (engelsma@plymouthchristian.us). Interested 7–12 applicants should send their resumé and/or questions to Mr. James Bazen (jbazen@plymouthchristian.us). Both principals are also available by phone 616–458–4367 (EL) or 616–454–9481 (HS).

OBITUARY

SCHRYVER, Marinus, aged 80, passed away on Thursday, February 25, 2010, in Agassiz, BC, Canada. He was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife Elizabeth, and his twin brother Piet. He is survived by his loving wife Corrie; his children Ria (Henk) Kosterling, John Schryver, and Audrey Schryver; his sister May (Arie) DeVos; 8 grandchildren; and 4 great-grandchildren. (Rev. B. Elshout, Hebr. 9:27–28; Eccl. 7:2–4.)

Obituary notices, church events, and marriage and anniversary notices will be printed free of charge and under no obligation of a gift received. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

2010 Puritan Reformed Conference

Mark your calendars, and plan to attend the second annual Puritan Reformed conference this August 26 – 28. Our theme is

the *Beauty* and *Glory* of **CHRIST**

Speakers at this year's event include Joel Beeke, Jerry Bilkes, Iain Campbell, David Carmichael, James Grier, Albert Martin, David Murray, Ray Pennings, Richard Phillips, and William VanDoodeward.

This year's messages will address a variety of biblical, historical, and systematic topics related to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Once again, Reformation Heritage Books will have a large selection of titles on hand at the conference, all at steeply discounted prices.

For more information, or to register online, go to www.puritanseminary.org/conference/index.php. Send all questions and/or comments related to the Puritan Reformed Conference to conference@puritanseminary.org, or call Chris Hanna at 616.977.0599, ext. 138. You may write the seminary at PRTS, 2965 Leonard Street, NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525.

February 28, 2010 was a joyous and unforgettable day for the Grand Rapids HNRC. Candidate Maarten Kuivenhoven was ordained into the sacred ministry during the morning service, conducted by Rev. Mark Kelderman, under whose ministry he was drawn to faith. In the evening service, Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven delivered his inaugural sermon.

Rev. Kelderman preached from Joshua 1, especially verse 9. In this chapter we find Joshua being ordained to go before the children of Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of the Lord's hosts (see Joshua 5), sets before Joshua His rich promises. The Lord promised to go before them, wherever they would travel; victory would be certain. For this reason Joshua—and by extension, brother Kuivenhoven—was admonished to be strong and courageous, and not to be afraid. The Lord has promised His people He would be with them until the end of the age, that He would never leave them nor forsake them, and that the victory is theirs because the battle is already won. However, we must still, like Israel, engage in warfare and battle. We must therefore mix faith with God's promises, lift up our heads, and be strong and courageous.

Brother Kuivenhoven was reminded that God will use His Word to encourage and teach us. God tells Joshua to turn back to the words which He gave to Moses and by it he would be encouraged. By careful study and meditation upon the Word of God, not turning to the left or the right, he would have good success. The same is true for us today. We must take heed to this Word if we would also see good success—that is, successful growth in grace and conformity to Christ as well as witnessing His kingdom come with power and authority. This Word must be in your mouth, you must meditate in it day and night, and observe all that is written.

Happily, Joshua was not called to look within himself for strength and courage, but to the Lord who promised to be near at all times. Then, even if we are immersed in discouragements, we have no reason to fear, for our Lord goes before us. The Captain who has chosen you, brother Kuivenhoven, will equip you for all that you will encounter. "Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD thy God is with thee" (Josh. 1:9).

After our brother was directed to look to Christ, the congregation was admonished to say with Israel, "All that thou commandest us we will do" (Josh. 1:16). Do you desire blessing and to have good success? Let your eyes be focused upon the Captain of the Lord's hosts and trust in Him. Go forth into the battle, be strong and of a good courage, and you will have good success.

After the laying on of hands by several ministers (Dr. Beeke, Rev. Kelderman, and Rev. VanderZwaag) and elders (Henry DeVries, William Staal Jr., and Case Van Kempen), and brother Kuivenhoven's father, Rev. Kelderman gave a personal charge from 2 Timothy 2:1–2 with the prayer that our dear brother would be used mightily of God in his ministry and particularly in the lives of other young men who would be called to the ministry.

That evening, Rev. Kuivenhoven delivered his inaugural sermon from 2 Corinthians, speaking about "God's Peace Treaty": its Author, its ambassadors, its appeal. In 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul defends his ministry by laying out a theology of ministry in God's ministry of reconciliation. Reconciliation means that two opposing parties are brought together and relations are re-established after those relations have been broken. In His ministry of reconciliation, God has established a unilateral or one-sided peace

treaty with man through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–19). It is in this peace treaty that all ministers and all Christians ought to root their lives and ministries. This peace treaty is authored by God and accomplished by Jesus Christ. God has reconciled His people and is reconciling the entire cosmos to Himself, which is groaning under the effects of sin. You and I, though we have offended God, do not seek for this peace. God has come, unilaterally in His mercy, to establish peace between us and Himself and He freely offers this peace which He has authored!

While God has authored this peace treaty, He uses ambassadors to publish its terms (2 Cor. 5:20). Ambassadors are never sent out on their own initiative, but have a mandate from King Jesus to represent Him before sinners. The ambassador is motivated by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:12). The love of Christ constrained or compelled Paul in his ministry. As he faced difficulty, trials, and even death itself, it was the love of Christ that drove him onwards. The love of Christ ought to motivate every Christian to represent Him faithfully in speaking and living out the gospel. That is not the only motivation, but ambassadors for Christ are called to this task, to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ambassadors speak with urgency, beseeching and praying with people to be reconciled with God. When ambassadors of Christ speak, it is as if God is speaking, calling out to individuals and churches to be reconciled to Him. Ambassadors are called to be earnest, to have one focus—Jesus Christ.

Ambassadors are sent with a message from King Jesus. They are sent with an appeal, which is also a command: "Be ye reconciled to God." This reconciliation comes through humbly receiving, by faith, what God has offered in this peace treaty. Faith is the hand that reaches up to grasp the promises of God offered in the gospel. The basis of this command is found in verse 21, which sets forth the doctrine of imputation. The certainty of reconciliation is grounded in what Christ has done. He was made to be sin for us, even though He knew no sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (v. 21). Here is the great exchange that takes place between the sinner and the Savior. Christ takes our sin and gives His right, pure, and sinless standing to sinners before God. This is so that God's holiness, justice, and righteousness can be upheld in punishing sin, yet also extending mercy to hell-worthy sinners, erasing their awful records of sin and allowing them to live for God.

After the sermon, Rev. Kuivenhoven spoke warmly to his wife and family, the ministers who were present, and to the congregation. Three speakers then wished him and his family God's richest blessings in Christ Jesus: Rev. VanderZwaag on behalf of the congregation and denomination, Dr. Beeke on behalf of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and Mr. Henk Kleyn on behalf of the Free Reformed churches. Rev. Kuivenhoven's dear wife, Jennifer, was also warmly addressed, as were their children, Gwynneth and Justice.

An opportunity was given after the church service on Wednesday evening, March 3, to greet the Kuivenhoven family.

We are deeply humbled by God's grace in providing us a third pastor, and pray that Rev. Kuivenhoven may be greatly owned of God in his labors among us, to the building up of Zion and the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan. We also wish him every blessing as he continues his studies on a part-time basis.

—The Grand Rapids HNRC

NATIONAL NEWS....

Roman Catholic Foster-Care Program in D.C. Ends

The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington was forced to end its foster-care program because it did not want to license same-sex couples as foster-care parents. The Archdiocese's program has been in existence for eighty years. Freedom-of-religion advocates have been warning that legalizing same-sex marriage could compromise religious organizations' social involvement in local communities.

The Washington, D.C. Council legalized gay marriage in the District. The same-sex marriage bill was approved and signed in December. Bruce Hausknecht, judicial analyst with Focus on the Family Action, said a similar situation took place in Massachusetts after its gay-marriage court decision; Catholic Charities Boston was forced to close the doors of its adoption agency rather than compromise its religious principles. "Unfortunately, the governments that are forcing unwanted social change upon their citizens do not appear to appreciate, nor care, that they are crippling or driving the faith-based programs out of business that are most effectively helping these government entities provide for the less fortunate," he said. —*Staff Report for Focus on the Family*

Good News: Researchers Find More Advances in Ethical Research

Scientists at the Stanford University Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine have developed a new and simpler way to create induced pluripotent stem cells. Pluripotent stem cells can be changed to numerous cell types without destroying human embryos. With the new technique, tiny circles of DNA are used to transform cells taken from human fat into pluripotent stem cells. The study was published online on February 7 in the journal *Nature Methods*. Dawn Vargo, bioethics analyst for Focus on the Family Action, said the continued advances in such ethical research means that embryonic stem-cell research is becoming irrelevant. "We're seeing that it will potentially be safe to use in patients," she said, "and it's also safe for the embryos, who are being saved from destructive research." (Roger Greer, *CitizenLink*)

PERSECUTION: CHINA....

ChinaAid has released its latest persecution report that covers Christian persecution in 2009—specifically, of house churches throughout China. Seventy-seven cases of house church persecution and three cases of persecution against individual Christians were reported in China last year. Compared to the data from 2008, that translates into a nineteen percent overall increase in persecution—and over the last two years, it marks an increase in persecution levels by 120 percent. Annee Kahler with ChinaAid says there are several reasons for the increase. "The year 2009 marked the 60th year anniversary of CPC rule in China, that's the China Communist Party, and so in preparation for the October 1 celebrations of this event, we saw an escalation again of persecution," she comments. "So there is some evidence to suggest that this year was very significant because it was a critical year for the Chinese government. Also, if you just look at the changing backdrop of the internal movement within China...it's going more from an agricultural, feudal-based system of society to a more citizen-based society." Kahler adds that the increase in persecution leads to an increase in faith and boldness among Chinese Christians. (*OneNewsNow*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS....

Russia—Pastors Fined for Service

Two pastors in Russia were recently fined for holding a worship service in public. The ministers stand accused of not acquiring permission to hold an open religious demonstration. However, under Russian law, permission from government authorities is not needed in cases of religious services. Todd Nettleton, a spokesman with Voice of the Martyrs, wonders if this situation is the beginning of an unfavorable sequence. "It's hard to know if this is part of a pattern [or] if this is an isolated incident," he says. "It's one of those things where you watch what happens...and then you see [if] there [is] more coming. We do know the Russian government has exercised a little more control over the church in recent months." The pastors were fined the equivalent of about \$75. (Allie Martin, *OneNewsNow*)

Violence against Christians in Nigeria

The Home for Bible Translators (HBT), based in Jerusalem, writes Dr. Beeke about violence against Christians in Jos, Nigeria:

Recently we received a report from one of our alumni in Jos, Nigeria, informing us of the recent violence against Christians in Jos. His own family was affected. We are writing you so that you might join us in sharing the burden of our brothers and sisters in this difficult situation. The directors and staff at the Home for Bible Translators take a special interest in the lives of each of our students and alumni. We rejoice with them in the completion of Bible translation projects and we suffer with them in the difficulties they face. Please join with us as we pray for them.

Please pray for the many people, both Muslim and Christian, who have been injured and/or displaced in Jos and surrounding areas. Many Nigerian Christian brothers and sisters have had their homes burned, or they have been hurt or even killed—let us uphold them and Nigeria in prayer!

Blessings,

Halvor and Mirja Ronning; and Brian Kvasnica

CULTURE....

Texting: more than just dangerous driving

The Winnipeg-based Canadian Centre for Child Protection is launching a pilot program aimed at teaching children the potential dangers of texting, such as being vulnerable to sexually explicit messages and images, luring, invasion of privacy, and harassment. "The explosion of texting and cell phones is something teachers haven't been well-equipped to address," spokeswoman Signy Arnason told CanWest News Service. "That's the purpose of this: to get in early and tackle these issues before we're faced with a major problem." (TFN)

According to a 2007 Pew Research study, almost thirty-two percent of U.S. teens have received threatening messages, had embarrassing photos posted, or had rumors spread about them online. A 2009 Cyberbullying Research Center study found that twenty-two percent of teens reported having participated in online bullying at least twice in the past month.

John Goudzwaard is a member of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Who Are We?

REV. MARK KELDERMAN &
REV. MAARTEN KUIVENHOVEN

Who are we? Who are you? Why are you here? What does it mean to live and to die?

God tells us that He made all things in six literal days and that He made man as the centerpiece of His creation. Human beings were created by God to serve and know God, to enjoy and glorify Him forever. Man is the only creature God created in His own image. This means that we are the only created beings who reflect God; in particular, we were created with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This also means that we were created to live in personal and unbroken fellowship with God. God created a man and a woman, one set of human parents from whom the whole human race would descend. Note that God created a male and a female to become one in the union of marriage.

Man was created to demonstrate his love for God, his Creator, by his obedience and thereby he would also experience the love of God. God placed Adam at the head of the entire race of man. He was to act on our behalf just as a father or prime minister (or president) would act in behalf of a family or nation today. God has also told us that this Adam did not remain in his original relationship with God but sinned against God and severed the loving and pure relationship he had with God. This affects everyone who is born from Adam and Eve. This is why we all will die. Every person born into this world is born under a sentence of guilt. We are not only all guilty, but we are also all morally corrupt, unable to do anything good. No one can produce anything morally acceptable to God, who is holy and just. The very fact that unbelievers excuse their own moral failures is evidence of the reality of this truth.

The effects of the Fall include man's will and choice. Some might ask how God, who created man good and upright (Eccl. 7:29), can judge us for sin if we are unable to do what He commands us to do. If we do not obey God's commands because we had never been able or because we are forced to sin, that would be a fair question. We would be victims, not culprits. However, the problem is that we do not love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves—not so

much because we cannot but because we will not. Our corruption and enmity against God is so great that we would rather expose ourselves to eternal hell than confess that God is God and submit to His authority. If we were morally pure, we would be inclined to act, speak, and think with moral purity; however, since we have a morally corrupt nature, we are inclined to act, speak, and think impurely.

Man is free to choose as he pleases, but since we are inclined to impurity, our choices continually reflect this. Man only chooses what is morally impure before the eyes of God. George Whitefield put it this way: "Man is nothing; he hath a free will to go to hell, but none to go to heaven, till God worketh in him to will and to do his good pleasure." Martin Luther spells out in his book, *The Bondage of the Will*, that the will of man is in bondage to sin. And Calvin clearly points out that man's heart is a factory that continues to make idols. This means that man tries to invent a god after his own image and imagination rather than bow in submission to God. God Himself tells us what He thinks of us since we fell into sin: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:12).

Because of the fall of man into sin, our God has more fully revealed some of His attributes to us, such as His love, mercy, and justice. We are absolutely dependent upon our Creator God for everything, not only in this life but especially for the life to come, after our death. If we know and believe in this God who made us and is able and willing to redeem us in Jesus Christ, our lives will be filled with joy and peace. We will have a taste of what it will be like to know and enjoy God forever.

Have you tasted this in your life? Have you owned up to God's estimation of who you are? Have you realized that true life will not be found in you or in your supposed moral goodness, but only in Jesus Christ?

Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario. **Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven** is a pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a Th.M. theological student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Feel free to email either of them: makelderman@execulink.com; kuivenhoven.maarten@gmail.com

From our Mailbag



CONFERENCE MINISTRY

From a friend in the Philippines:

Thank you for your addresses and the three articles you sent me on Puritan and experiential preaching. I shall treasure these much. They express what at bottom I have thought and felt about preaching, and I too now feel I have been a Puritan without knowing it. Not that I am a preacher, but I desire to be one, except that it's too late at my age to start—especially without a church. Neither am I a pastor. I pray that your articles will not end with my reading of them, but that they will bear much fruit according to God's will. Thanks once more.

From an e-mail friend in The Netherlands:

I benefited greatly from your lectures in the Netherlands, especially the opening session, on our spiritual adoption. I have long struggled with the question whether or not I am a child of God and whether or not my faith is in any way true and sincere. I was greatly moved by God's willingness to save any who would come to Him. Not on any ground in myself, but on the ground of His faithfulness and trustworthiness I trust His promises and their application, even unto a wretch like me.

From a minister in South Africa:

Thanks again for your ministry at Skogheim, South Africa. My wife and I really rejoiced in the emphasis on experiential Calvinism. Exactly that is our passion (as Afrikaners) in a country "plagued" by dead "Calvinistic" orthodoxy, which is changing rapidly into heterodoxy. Tragic beyond words is the fact that this false "Calvinism" was the philosophical force behind apartheid. The whiplash resulting from this causes the Afrikaners in this country (not to mention the other groups) to tumble into post-Christian secularism and post-modernism at an alarming rate. Knowing the situation in the Netherlands, you will understand exactly what I am talking about.

INHERITANCE PUBLISHERS

From a friend in Maryland:

Thank you for the generous package of sermons and gospel magazines that you sent to me.

My pastor has a number of your excellent sermon booklets in our church. I would like six copies of your sermon booklet "Wheat or Chaff" by J. C. Ryle to distribute to others. I have

been very blessed, convicted, and encouraged by your excellent sermons. They are treasures.

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From a friend in Alabama:

I am writing to express my thanks for your compilation of Puritan thoughts upon this experiential subject of adoption in *Heirs with Christ*. I will be preaching on Galatians 4:4–7 and have resorted to this work in preparation. It has done my soul much good and given me a greater understanding and appreciation of our adoption and of the work of our Triune God in the same. Thank you for the years and hours that are poured into your ministry of recovering our heritage. As you know, your labors are not in vain, already bearing fruit among those such as I; being compelled by works such as these to leave the shallow waters of typical American evangelicalism to feast upon the soul preserving substance of Puritan and Reformed experiential writings.

How might I begin a systematic approach in my study of the Puritans? To simplify, what are the first ten works that you might suggest to one who is just beginning to study the Puritans? To be quite honest, the task seems quite daunting for a 28-year-old who is married with four children and just beginning to read the Puritans. I will greatly appreciate your advice in the matter. Again, thank you for your labors. May fruit abound!

From an e-mail friend:

I would like to thank the authors of the book *God's Alphabet for Life: Devotions for Young Children*. I passed on a copy to a seeker at Christmas time, and she informed me today that her six-year-old daughter loves it and has been reading it to her mother, Lydia. The daughter seems to have the gift of faith in some abundance, and her mother is pleased with this so continues to ask many questions. Today, for example, she asked if it was okay for a non-believer to pray, so the three believers present gave her suggestions. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will draw Lydia into His loving family.

From *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*
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PERIODICAL
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Behold the Lamb of God!
O Thou for sinners slain,
Let it not be in vain
That Thou hast died:
Thee for my Savior let me take,
My only refuge let me make
Thy pierced side.

Behold the Lamb of God!
Into the sacred flood
Of Thy most precious blood
My soul I cast:
Wash me and make me clean within,
And keep me pure from every sin,
Till life be past.

Behold the Lamb of God!
All hail, incarnate Word,
Thou everlasting Lord,
Savior most blessed;
Fill us with love that never faints,
Grant us with all Thy blessed saints
Eternal rest.

Behold the Lamb of God!
Worthy is He alone
To sit upon the Throne
Of God above;
One with the Ancient of all days,
One with the Comforter in praise,
All Light and Love.

—MATTHEW BRIDGES

the Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
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A Periodical for Young and Old