

# *the* Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

## IN THIS ISSUE

They Will Reverence My Son

The Habit of Obedience

Me ... A Gate-keeper?

A Periodical for Young and Old

THE BANNER OF  
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

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## UNION WITH CHRIST AND THE LOVE OF CHRIST

"The moment I make of myself and Christ two, I am all wrong.  
But when I see that we are one, all is rest and peace."

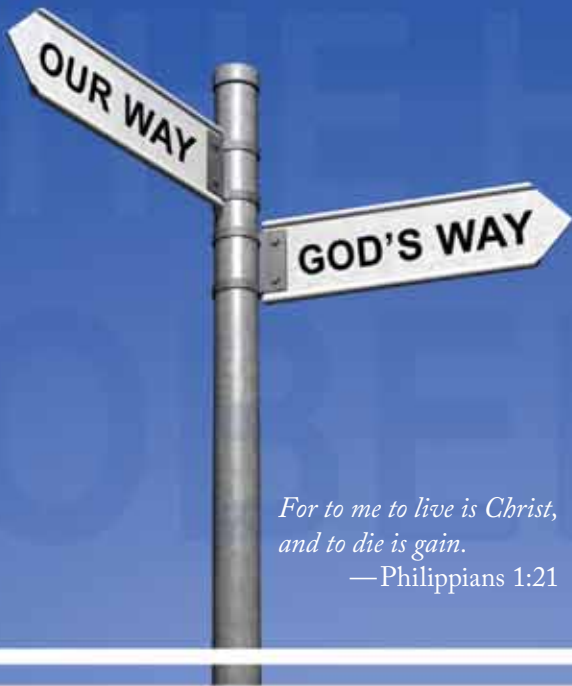
—MARTIN LUTHER

"Every day we may see some new thing in Christ. His love has  
neither brim nor bottom." —SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

"The man who knows the love of Christ in his heart can do more  
in one hour than the busy type of man can do in a century."

—D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

"There is no higher priority in the believer's life than to delight  
himself in the love of Christ." —MAURICE ROBERTS



*For to me to live is Christ,  
and to die is gain.*  
—Philippians 1:21

# THE HABIT OF OBEDIENCE

Many people promise to obey. Police officers must hear this all the time as they pull over people for traffic violations: “I will drive slower next time.” Parents, too, are certainly familiar with the look in their child’s eyes when punishment is about to be given, “I won’t do it again....” Promises to obey are often coverings for disobedience.

We need much more than promises. We need the habit of obedience. The habit of obedience is the God-given inclination to obey at all times. It is said (and proven) that we are “creatures of habit,” but sadly our habits do not include acceptable obedience to God. Our natural habits tend to be so minor and insignificant compared to the importance of habitual obedience to God.

The Apostle Paul’s habitual obedience is stated clearly in Philippians 1:21: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” He is using a most difficult and delicate situation in prison to show how habitual obedience has become for him. It is safe and glorious to have a heart and life where joyful, spontaneous obedience to God thrives.

We often view the book of Philippians as dealing primarily with Christian joy. Too often, though, we miss the fact that this joy and rejoicing stem from obedience. Obedience is at the heart of this joy and rejoicing that Paul commends, just as he has experienced. Do you rest content with promises to obey, or are you nurturing habits of obedience?

The habit of obedience is formed actively and passively. When Reformed Christians hear the phrase “active and passive obedience,” they instinctively think of Jesus Christ. This is a biblical distinction with great practical use to help us understand Christ’s work. But two-sided obedience is not simply something we admire in Christ; it has to work in His people, too. Paul says, “[T]o live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The habit of obedience requires repeated action, but it also

demands being acted upon. Grace in action and grace being received promote this habit of obedience. How do you consciously experience this active and passive obedience, which alone is pleasing to God?

This habit of obedience involves the body as well as the soul. We easily fall prey to thinking that our bodies are bad and our souls are good. This leads to the conclusion that habitual obedience demands the promotion of our souls and the demotion of our bodies. Paul’s inspired statement will not allow this. “To live is Christ” means that Christ is Paul’s living strength in the body! Christ is the life not just of Paul’s soul but also his body. This is balanced by the spiritual “to die is gain.” In the putting off of this mortal body will be the soul’s ultimate gain, immeasurable and unknowable by the standards of our current existence. Our habit of obedience will only be as strong as the consistency with which we keep this balance between body and soul.

Take comfort from this final thought: habitual obedience is reality for God’s people now and will be more fully enjoyed in the future. “To live is Christ” is the present enjoyment of a new habit of obedience. There is no greater motivation for our obedience than Christ’s obedience (Phil. 2:8) and no greater goal for our obedience than to be more like Christ. Yet, more is in store for God’s people on the other side of death. We can’t fathom what the habit of obedience will be there, being exercised in both soul and body for the entire man will be perfect, but it will be far greater and more glorious than our greatest obedience here and now.

Joy will be the possession of those who habitually obey God. This joy is sensed in the words of Paul, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Is this supported by your life?

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## HOW CHRIST'S RESURRECTION SHAPES OUR

# HOPE

PART THREE

*In recent issues, we have considered our miserable condition if Christ had not risen from the dead. We then considered five aspects of our magnificent hope in Christ because of the resurrection: our magnificent Christ-centered hope, conscience hope, corporate hope, corporeal hope, and comparative hope. This concluding article considers the resurrection's chronological hope and comments on a moving yet immovable hope.*

• *Consider the resurrection's chronological hope.* We are tempted to be carried away by our imagination in matters of eschatology. No doubt Charles Hodge is right in asserting that we will all be surprised by some of the events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ, just as the most godly believers were at Jesus' first coming. Nonetheless, some things appear to be clear in Scripture.

First, Scripture tells us Christ's second coming will be bathed in glory. As Matthew 16:27 says, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father." He will come as King of kings into whose hands the Father has given the final judgment (Matt. 24:30). He will come in the glory of His holy angels, which number thousands times ten thousands (Matt. 24:31). Jonathan Edwards says, "Heaven will be for a time deserted of its inhabitants."

Christ will also come suddenly and unexpectedly. The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:15–16a). There will be great upheaval in the earth as every grave is opened. Everyone who has died, whether martyred, eaten by wild animals, drowned in the sea, or cremated, will be brought to life.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first," says 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The Thessalonian Christians were concerned that fellow believers who died would be deprived of some of the glory of the Lord's return. But Paul says the dead in Christ would rise first, including people like Stephen, the first martyr, and James the son of Zebedee, John the Baptist, and all the Old Testament saints back to Jeremiah, David, Joshua, Abraham,

and Abel. All of your loved ones who trusted in Christ before they died will be there. And if we die before Christ returns, we too will rise at the first command of the Son of God. What a moment that will be!

In 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul says, "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." In the twinkling of an eye, you will lose whatever failings of the natural body you struggle with today and will gain all the glories of your resurrection body.

But the primary joy will be the union of Christ with His bride, the church. Those who have already died and those who remain alive will together meet Christ, their Bridegroom, in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). This is the great moment of triumph when the Lord gathers unto Himself His own to be with Him forever. The prayer of Jesus in John 17:24 will be fulfilled: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

Unbelievers who died as well as unbelievers who are still alive at the time of Christ's return are not described in these passages. But John 5:28–29 tells us, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

We know that the resurrection will happen, but it is difficult for us to conceive what it will be like, for nothing like it has ever occurred before. There have been raisings of the dead

by Christ, by prophets such as Elisha, and by apostles such as Paul. Those who were raised from the dead were offered a foretaste of what is to come. But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Have you ever counted the days to something wonderful that was about to happen in your life? Maybe it was graduation from college, your wedding, or a long-awaited vacation. Whatever it was so energized and motivated you that you could hardly wait for it to happen. Likewise, even though we cannot know everything that the resurrection of the body will bring, we can focus all our energies on the prospect of the greatest wonder of all: to be like the risen Christ and be with Him forever. That is the goal of our existence and the hope that inspires all our efforts in this life.

At the resurrection, the souls of the deceased will enter their bodies, never to be separated again. As for the wicked, "death and hell shall deliver up the dead that were in them." All shall appear before the eternal Judge. Then, as death leaves us, the Judgment Day will find us; time will end when Judgment Day arrives, and when time is no more, change will be impossible. As Ecclesiastes 11:3 says, "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

Unbelievers will then cry to the mountains, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16), but believers will joyfully gather at Christ's right hand. Jonathan Edwards writes: "Their joy will as it were give them wings to carry them thither. They will with ecstasies and raptures of delight meet their friend and Savior, come into His presence, and stand at His right hand." Every person will be judged, says Romans 14:10, including the saved and unsaved. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. All people will be judged according to the degree of light and privilege they have received.

God will open four books: first, His book of remembrance. If we are not saved on that day, all our sins including our secret sins are printed in heaven's book, and God will read them aloud before the whole world. What we dared not tell others, what we dared to minimize and made light of and even forgot, will be exposed to all.

Second, God will open the book of providence. All of God's goodness that should have led us to repentance and all our hardness of heart against such providences will be revealed as this book is read.

Third, God will open the book of Scripture that includes both law and gospel. Romans 2:12 says, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." Those who have the gospel will be judged by the gospel, for Paul says in Romans 2:16, "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Condemnation will be in exact proportion to guilt, and guilt in exact proportion to abused light and privileges.

Finally, the book of conscience will be opened. If you are unsaved on the Judgment Day, this book will be worse than a thousand witnesses, for you will have no answers for a thousand questions (Job 9:3).

Believers need not fear these open books, however, for their names are written in the book of life and the book of the Lamb. On Judgment Day, Ephesians 1:4–6 will be fulfilled: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children 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."

None of these books will condemn believers. As for the book of the law, believers experience that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). The book of the gospel and of the conscience promise believers, as Romans 8:1 says: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Christ will judge everything: our thoughts, words, and actions; our motives and intentions; our talents and time. Nothing will be skipped. Christ is plain: "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). Christ's judgment will be searching, for He says, "I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:23). He will also ponder our hearts and everything we do (Prov. 5:21; 21:2).

Christ's judgment will be impartial, final, and irreversible. He will take no bribes; there will be no parole, no bail, no intermission. Even now, Christ's judgment is near. James 5:9 says, "The Judge standeth before the door." Friend, make sure you are ready for Christ's judgment *today*.

Christ will then execute His judgment. Matthew 25:46 says, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Those who refused to respond to the winsome invitations of the gospel will be compelled to hear the dreadful voice of Christ. As 2 Corinthians 5:11 says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." How dreadful it will be to be cast with Satan into hell, to be always dying but never dead, to be always consuming yet never consumed!

Unless you are born again, God will say of you on that day: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 22:13). Joseph was cast into a pit, Paul and Silas into an inner prison (Acts 16:23), but there is no pit or prison like hell. Jesus, the greater Joseph, the Lion of Judah, will

Christ's judgment will be impartial, final, and irreversible. He will take no bribes; there will be no parole, no bail, no intermission.

cast unbelievers into the bottomless pit where the fiery wrath of God and a burning conscience will eat at them forever. Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace is like ice compared to God's fury in hell. The city of hell has no exits, the building of hell has no doors of escape, the society of hell has no relationships. Hell is radical loneliness, radical forsakenness of the favor of God and men.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" asks Hebrews 2:3. J.C. Ryle says: "The saddest road to hell is that which runs under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the midst of warnings and invitations." Make haste for your life's sake. Flee the wrath to come. Stop putting your heart into this world, for what will it profit you if you gain the entire world but lose your soul? Repent and believe the gospel while it is still the day of grace and salvation.

Christ will say on the Judgment Day: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. 22:11). Hell will house no agnostics, but on the Day of Judgment it will be too late to believe. *Too late* is written across the gates of hell. Consider, friends, an endless hell can no more be removed from the Bible than can an endless heaven.

We all are a heartbeat from eternity. So pray with Jonathan Edwards, "O God, stamp eternity on my eyes." Stamp it on my hands, my feet, and especially, my soul. Consider that if you have no vision of eternity, you have no understanding of time. Our lives are not just a journey to death, for we are either journeying to heaven—the eternal day that knows no sunset—or to hell—the eternal night that knows no sunrise. Which destination are you heading for? Are you truly a follower of Christ Jesus? If you were arrested today for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace is like ice compared to God's fury in hell. The city of hell has no exits, the building of hell has no doors of escape, the society of hell has no relationships. Hell is radical loneliness, radical forsakenness of the favor of God and men.

For you, dear believers, the Judgment Day means receiving a never-fading crown. Your Savior Judge will usher you into the heaven of heavens with other believers as one undivided family. He will present you as His bride without spot or wrinkle to His Father for permanent resi-

dence in glory. You will dwell forever with Christ, who will feed you and lead you to living waters. You will drink of the fountains of the Triune God, praising Him for all eternity in holy, glorious activities, many of which are beyond your deepest imagination (1 Cor. 2:9). All that you have experienced

here of God and His gracious salvation will be but a shadow compared to what you will enjoy in heaven with God and the saints and the holy angels.

### *An Unmovable Yet Moving Hope*

In 1 Corinthians 15:58 Paul says: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." You may wonder why Paul adds this verse after an entire chapter devoted to the resurrection. Actually, Paul applies the entire doctrine of resurrection by teaching us that we are not simply to say, "The Lord is risen indeed! Now let us sit back and wait for God to apply the resurrection power of His Son."

Rather, Paul says that because believers are recipients of this magnificent resurrection hope, they must be steadfast and unmovable. What difference does it make whether our Lord comes today or tomorrow, and in a moment or a twinkling of an eye? If He is coming today, I want to be ready. I want to live in anticipation of what will be mine when Christ comes. Paul says that, in rising from the dead, Christ is the firstfruits of those who sleep. So for those in Christ, who now reigns, rules, and brings all things into subjection to Himself, the final enemy to be subjected is death. Believers live in anticipation that this incorruptible will put on incorruption and they no longer are in their sins but are justified and being sanctified. So "Thy kingdom come, Lord, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is a prayer born of this resurrection hope. If you believe in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the resurrection hope, then you must stand firm—unmovable and steadfast—for Christ and His gospel.

Second, Paul says we are to be moving and active. We must be motivated by our steadfast resurrection hope to become active in the work of God. We must be willing to die every day for the sake of the gospel, says Paul, who fought with wild beasts in Ephesus. Why would Paul do that if Christ had not risen from the dead? But He *has*, and that puts wind in Paul's sails! It gives us strength and hope-filled expectation! It makes us want to be about the business of the King. We want to aim for our Father's glory, for the edification of the saints, and for the salvation of the lost.

Many people around us today have no sense of direction and no future. Their lives are vacuous; they live as though they were just killing time. We have a message for them: Christ was crucified for sinners and raised for their justification. He will come again at the end of the age, and every believer will share in His resurrection victory in the world that will come when He appears. Seek Him so that you may live in hope today and in the world to come.

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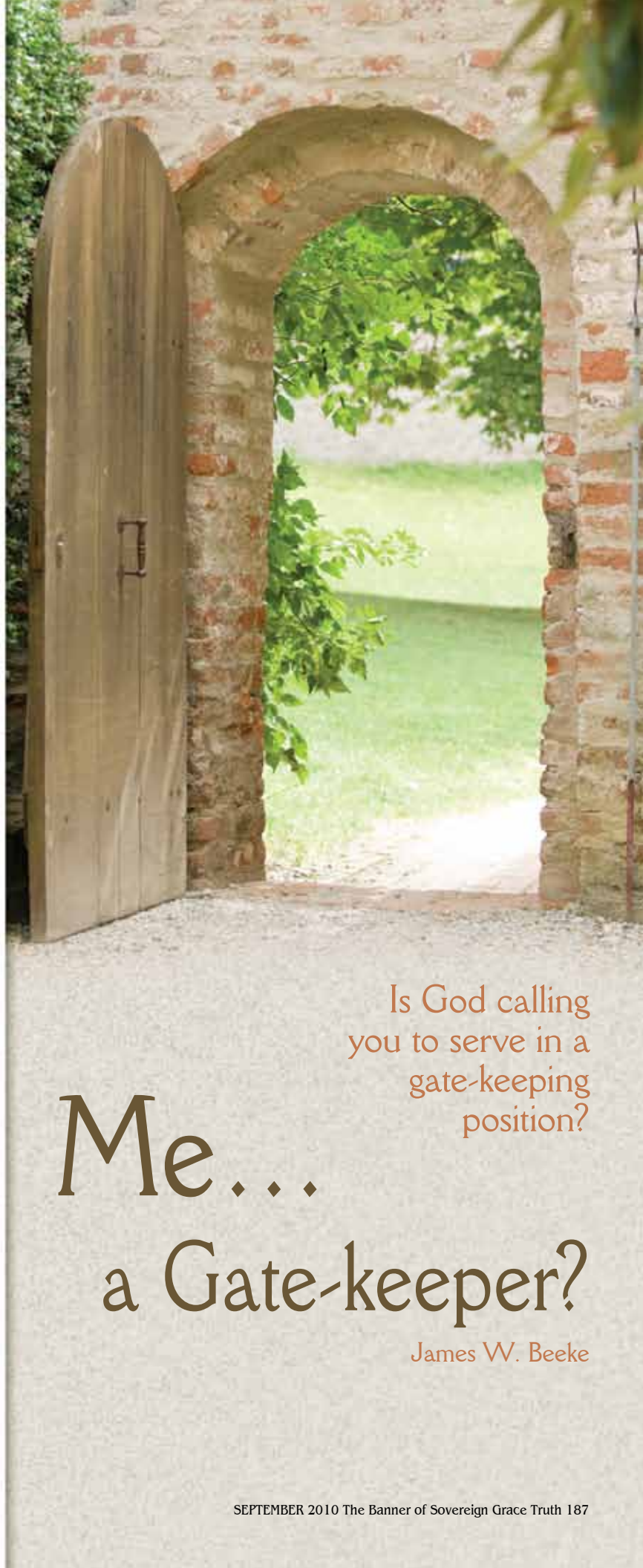
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What do I mean by “gate-keeping”? In biblical times, cities were protected by thick, high walls. People only entered or left a city through its gates. “Gate-keepers” were placed in positions of authority to control who and what came into or left the city. The rulers of the city often “sat in the gate of the city.” This referred to the designated area inside the gate where the leaders of the city often met.

The Bible provides us with many examples of young people called to serve the Lord in gate-keeping positions. In their respective positions of authority, they were able to exert a positive influence on their culture. They were used by God to stem evil and promote good, and served as a blessing for their people and country. Think of Joseph, Moses, David, Obadiah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and many others. I want to focus on four of these examples.

Think of *Obadiah*. We read about him in 1 Kings 18. God placed Obadiah in the gate-keeping position of governor over King Ahab’s house during the time of Elijah when Israel experienced three and a half years of no rain and severe famine (v. 2). Obadiah governed in the palace of a terribly sinful king and wicked queen, Ahab and Jezebel. Yet, the Bible informs us that “Obadiah feared the LORD greatly” (v. 3). Because of his leadership position, he became aware of the queen’s murderous plans before they were executed, and he was able to act in time to decrease the extent of the damage. “For it was so, when Jezebel cut off [killed] the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water” (v. 4). If Obadiah was not occupying this gate-keeping position in Israel, he would neither have known about this plan nor been able to make arrangements to keep one-hundred prophets of the LORD alive.

Think of *Nehemiah*. God placed him in a gate-keeping position as cupbearer of King Artaxerxes in Sushan, the palace (Neh. 1:1 and 2:1). A mighty king was in continual danger of plots to kill him so that others could ascend his throne. One way to accomplish this would be to poison the king’s drink, so kings employed trusted subjects as their cupbearers. The cupbearer carefully watched over the king’s drinks and pre-tasted all to ensure that all were safe for the king to drink. In such a trusted position and with such near proximity to the king, cupbearers frequently became friends and confidants of kings. As a trusted friend of the king, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem. The king not only granted his request but also provided Nehemiah with royal letters giving him official permission to build, and instructing Asaph the



Is God calling  
you to serve in a  
gate-keeping  
position?

# Me... a Gate-keeper?

James W. Beeke

keeper of the king's forests to provide the timber he needed. Artaxerxes also commissioned captains of his army and horsemen to accompany and protect Nehemiah (Neh. 2:5–9). The Lord used Nehemiah, and under His blessing and Nehemiah's faithful leadership, the wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days (Neh. 6:15)! If Nehemiah was not in this gate-keeping position in the palace, he would not have been in a position of trust and friendship with the king in order to request and receive the king's approval and support for rebuilding Jerusalem.

Think of *Esther*. God placed her in a gate-keeping position in the palace in Shushan as the queen of King Ahasuerus (Esther 1:2 and 2:17). Shortly after she was crowned, Haman the Agagite rose to power as chief of the princes (Esther 3:1). Haman received the king's approval and his ring to write and seal the terrible commandment ordering the people to kill all Jews, young and old, and those who killed the Jews could take their spoil. His commandment was sent to all 127 provinces of the kingdom. Esther went before the king after Mordecai asked her the question, "[W]ho knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). We know how the king honored Esther, gave commandment for Haman to be hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai, and authorized Mordecai to write a new law that the Jews could defend themselves and attack their enemies. After hearing of this, the fear of the Jews fell on all people, and the day that they had so feared turned into a day of great rejoicing and victory for the Jews. If Esther would not have been in this gate-keeping position in Shushan, the palace, she would not have been able to approach and speak with the king and the day of planned destruction would not have been turned into a day of victory and celebration for the Jews.

Think also of *Daniel*. God placed Daniel in gate-keeping positions in Babylon. He served as ruler over the province of Babylon, chief of the governors over the king's wise men (Dan. 2:48–49), third ruler over the entire kingdom under King Belshazzar (Dan. 5:29), and first president of three over 120 princes governing the kingdom under King Darius (Dan. 6:1–2). We know how ungodly these kings and kingdoms were. Yet we also read of the tremendous influence Daniel had, so that even these heathen kings made personal confessions and proclaimed kingdom-wide decrees honoring the God of Daniel (Dan. 2:47 and 6:25–27). If Daniel had not been in these gate-keeping positions in Babylon, he would not have been able to influence heathen kings to make such God-honoring confessions and decrees. Thus, the Bible provides us with many examples that illustrate the importance of serving God and country in gate-keeping positions.

What are the key gate-keeping positions in our city, state or province, and country? What positions especially influence our society? I am thinking of politicians and government adminis-

trators, lawyers and judges, and news reporters and journalists. When we review the last fifty years, it appears that Christian churches have not been challenging their young people to consider if God is calling them to use their gifts in these gate-keeping positions. How many of our middle-aged and elderly people can recall hearing one sermon where we were seriously asked whether the Lord might be calling us to serve the Lord in a key gate-keeping position in our society? Yes, we were encouraged to consider such positions as pastor, teacher, doctor, and nurse. And all of these are important. But what about government leaders, lawyers, and journalists? Instead of Christians being challenged to see if God was calling them to these positions and church members being motivated to pursue careers accordingly, the opposite was generally true. "How can a true Christian be a politician? You have to be corrupt to be successful! How can a Christian serve as a lawyer? You have to be a liar to make it! How can a Christian be a journalist? You have to slant your news to fit the liberal agenda! If you tried to stand on Christian principles in today's politics, courts, or media, they would simply throw you out! These are not suitable positions for serious Christians!" These views summarize the prevailing opinions of many Christians.

But is such thinking biblical? Are today's politicians and government officials more corrupt than King Ahab and Queen Jezebel who slew the Lord's prophets, commanded everyone to worship Baal, and falsely accused Nabal and then had him murdered so they could access his garden? Yet we read that Obadiah who served as governor in the court of this wicked king and queen "feared the LORD greatly."

Was the court of Sushan a more honest place than today's courts? Was Haman speaking truthfully about the Jews? Did King Ahasuerus even give it a second thought when he gave Haman permission to order the killing of all Jews and the plundering of their possessions? Was Nehemiah's name not maligned and his safety threatened?

Yet we know that Esther and Nehemiah faithfully represented God's purpose and people as queen and cupbearer and governor in sinful governments and challenging positions.

Was the kingdom of Babylon less proud and mocking and self-idolizing than today's media? Did not King Nebuchanezzar proclaim, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). Did not King Belshazzar openly mock God when he ordered the vessels of God's temple to be used for his drinking party (Dan. 5: 23)? Did not King Darius pass a decree that whosoever would ask any petition of any God other than of him for thirty days would be thrown into the den of lions (Dan. 6:7)? Yet we know that Daniel served the Lord in the palaces of these kings so faithfully that when the princes, who wanted to get rid of him,

**When we review the last fifty years, it appears that Christian churches have not been challenging their young people to consider if God is calling them to use their gifts in these gate-keeping positions.**

searched for failures in Daniel's performance, we read, "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Dan. 6:5).

The Bible provides us with numerous examples of how godly men and women faithfully served God and their nation while serving in key gate-keeping positions in very ungodly governments. In fact, today our communities, states or provinces, and nations are paying a huge price for Christians not pursuing careers in key gate-keeping positions. Perhaps Christians sat back and relaxed in the recent past, thinking that their nation was a Christian one. Or perhaps the dangers of serving in gate-keeping positions were considered too great or the responsibilities were not emphasized enough. Whatever the reasons for the lack of Christians serving in gate-keeping positions, others saw the opportunities and actively pursued placing their people in these key positions. Liberals pushed the importance of government leadership. Groups wanting to change the moral determiners of our land through the courts stressed the importance of becoming lawyers and judges. Same-sex activists are disproportionately over-represented among our nation's journalists. And they have effectively used their gate-keeping positions to bring about the changes they desired. While the Christian church was sleeping, those with an ungodly agenda for our culture were not. Now Christians are awakening to the reality that their Christian nation has been stolen and its influential positions usurped by unchristian leadership. The fruits demonstrate the disastrous change.

What must we do? Pray and work. Pray that God will provide us with godly men and women to serve our land in gate-keeping positions. Encourage gifted, godly young people to examine whether God is calling them to serve in these key positions. And if so, pray for and support them in their pursuits. The hearts of our people certainly need to be turned. We need to repent from sin and turn to God. But we know from biblical and world history that the leaders play a significant role.

When I was in China for some years working with high schools delivering Western, English educational programs, a senior Western-trained and certified teacher serving as a counselor and academic advisor at one of the schools said to me, "I have frequently been asked two questions by Chinese high school students when they are considering future careers that I never heard in all my years of teaching and counseling in the United States or Canada." "What questions?" I asked, my curiosity stirred. "The one is, how can I best use my abilities for China? And the second is, how, do you think, that I could best use my abilities for my family? In the United States and Canada, the only questions I have ever heard were, What

career should I go into? What, do you think, would be best for me?" The idolization of the individual in the West has permeated our thinking to such an extent that we think in terms of my time, my decision, my rights, and even my career. Young people, none of these things are solely yours. In the first place, they are all God-given. Secondly, they all impact others—family, community, and country. When considering a career, pray and think about how God may be calling you to serve others.

When I was serving in a leadership position in government for several years, I experienced that God does provide opportunities to be of influence when serving in gate-keeping positions. This is true not only when making decisions directly in one's sphere of authority and providing advice to influence government decisions on other matters, but it is also real in ways of personal influence. I have witnessed

government officials abstain from profanity, refrain from expressing mocking religious views, modify more radical recommendations, and even back away from promoting decisions in which they personally believe out of consideration for a Christian person in their presence that they have grown to respect. God also provides personal opportunities when serving in gate-keeping positions. These include opportunities in personal and group settings to explain Christian beliefs and perspectives that are quite different from the caricature that non-Christian officials understand from secular media, as well as individual, personal discussions. Opportunities even include atheist or agnostic government leaders asking personal religious questions or asking for prayer when experiencing a serious family or health issue. The opportunities are many, but we need to be there in a gate-keeping position and to have earned respect in it in order for these opportunities to carry weight.

Dear young people, if God has blessed you with good people and leadership skills, is He calling you to use these gifts to serve your city, state or province, or nation in an elected or government administrative office? If you are gifted with a keen and logical mind, could God be directing you to serve in the legal profession? If you are good at and love writing, have you considered serving God and your people as a journalist or in media?

We desperately need more Obadiah's, Nehemiah's, Esther's, and Daniel's in the gate-keeping positions of our land!

**While the Christian church was sleeping, those with an ungodly agenda for our culture were not. Now Christians are awakening to the reality that their Christian nation has been stolen and its influential positions usurped by unchristian leadership. The fruits demonstrate the disastrous change.**

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# “They Will Reverence My Son”

*Read: Matthew 21:33–46*

I once was in a house that was built right next to a quarry. On the main floor was an unusual step up into a side room. The owners of the house explained that when they had built the house, there was a rock outcropping that they had to build around. It would have been very difficult to get rid of it, so they decided to make this one room with a step up.

Christ is the rock that none of us can get around. Our sinful natures try to get around Him, but we end up stumbling all our lives long unless we recognize that He is the stone set up by God to be the cornerstone on which we must build. He must be revered—or we will never prosper. This is what the parable commonly known as the parable of the wicked husbandmen (or tenants) teaches.

The key to understanding this parable can be found in the relationship between *Son* and *Stone*. In Hebrew, there is only one letter difference between the words for “son” (*ben*) and “stone” (*eben*). In this parable, Christ reveals Himself as both. On the one hand, He is the Son of God, sent by God that we would reverence Him (v. 37). On the other hand, He is also the Stone of the corner, on which the whole structure of God’s building rests. Just as it is dangerous for a laborer not to respect the son of the owner and for a carpenter to ignore an unmovable rock, so we bring ruin on ourselves if we do not reverence the Son of God.

## Honoring the Son of God

Christ told this parable in the last week before His crucifixion. Matthew, Mark (12:1–12), and Luke (20:9–19) all record this parable, and the slight variations in details can easily be harmonized. Among all the parables, this one contains the clearest and most explicit reference to the death of Christ.

The basic picture of the parable is that of a vineyard, a comparison that the Bible regularly uses for the people of God (Isa. 5:1–7; Song 8:11–12). However, the focus in this parable

is on those entrusted with leadership among the people of God (the husbandmen). This is confirmed in verse 45: “And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.”

The parable does more, however, than just speak about events of that time. This parable gives us a story of how to understand all of human history. It tells the story of the whole design of history as it focuses on the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Despite what we have come to expect from our everyday life, the husbandmen of the parable did not respect the owner, his servants, or his son. If there were any doubt about the intentions of the husbandmen, verse 37 lifts the veil of their heart. We hear them say: “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.” What arrogance and insanity! It’s no wonder that when Christ asks what the owner will do when he comes (v. 40), the answer is obvious: “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen” (v. 41).

## Honoring the Stone of the Corner

From a certain perspective, the parable could have ended with verse 41. In that case, the parable would have ended with the picture of the dead son’s body outside the vineyard’s walls and the sound of the hoofs of an approaching army ready to judge the wicked husbandmen. But the parable doesn’t end there. If it had, there would be no gospel in the parable, and Christ was keen to speak not just of His coming death, but of God’s design in and through His death.

In order to do that, Christ quotes the Old Testament, as He often did, to prove that the gospel was not a new thing, but designed and prophesied before it was accomplished. He quoted Psalm 118, a Psalm which would have been on the minds of the Passover pilgrims at this time, since it was

part of their Passover liturgy. “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (compare Ps. 118:22–23).

As I indicated above, Christ intentionally moves from the picture of Himself as *Son* to that of the *Stone* of the Corner. Thus Christ did not just predict His own death, but God’s vindication of His Son in the resurrection. Psalm 118 is a Messianic Psalm in which the Psalmist, who trusts in the Lord, is beleaguered by many enemies (vv. 5–13a). Yet, the Lord does not put him to shame but vindicates him (vv. 13b–21), and even makes the stone what the builders foolishly reject as the cornerstone of the whole building of God.

By referencing these verses right on the heels of His parable, Christ changed the picture of a vineyard to that of a building. Those wicked leaders of God’s vineyard will not succeed. God is above and beyond them, and His purposes will prevail. Though they cast the Son out of the vineyard, this rejected Son will be the approved Stone for a new building of God. Thus God will receive the honor He deserves, and Christ will as well—not just as Son, but as the honorable Stone, rejected and yet vindicated.

## Lessons

1. *The height of sin is failing to honor God and Christ, whom He has sent.*

God has a right to us and our lives, since He made us. Consequently, He has a right to receive fruit from us. Especially in the visible church, God has built around us the hedge of His precepts and many ordinances and institutions that speak of His care for us and His will that we should render to Him our lives as fruit to His honor. By nature, however, not only do we not yield Him any fruit, we do not give Him the honor He deserves. In fact, especially those who have been appointed to lead in the visible church heap guilt to themselves when they neglect, despise, and reject God and put themselves in His place. That is what we are doing as long as we are not reverencing the Son totally and unconditionally.

2. *The glory of the gospel is that God will be honored through the death of His Son.*

When the Lord says: “They will reverence my Son,” this is not simply the wish of an otherwise “powerless” God. God’s design does not terminate with man’s rejection of Him or His Son. Straight through our rejection of His Son, He furthers His cause. Neither He nor his Son can fail. The Father has ensured that by raising Him from the dead. The very Stone

that man rejected as unfit to be used in building, the Lord made into the Stone of the corner. Everything will be built on Him, or it will not be built at all. Thus God brings double honor to Himself, for His design is not dependent on man, but despite him, and against all odds.

3. *Those who do not honor the Son should not expect anything but to be crushed under the weight of the glory of the Son.*

The Hebrew word “honor” literally means “to be heavy.” If our lives do not reverence the Son, we have every reason to expect God’s heavy judgment. If we are not built on Christ, the cornerstone, we will either stumble over Him or be crushed by Him (v. 44). He Himself will not move. Imagine a builder who foolishly tries to ignore the cornerstone and build next to it. He is going to be constantly tripping over the cornerstone. It will not budge for him; in fact, when it does move, it will crush him.

## Questions:

1 Read Isaiah 5:1–7. There is a similarity and a difference between our parable and this parable; discuss the relationship of the two.

2 What is involved in reverencing the Son? In order to answer this, compare our parable with Psalm 2:6–12.

3 The apostle Peter must have heard Jesus tell this parable. Discuss in what ways 1 Peter 2:1–8 further explains what it means to honor the Son.

4 Think about what it meant to Jesus as He was just days away from descending to the death of the cross. Discuss this both from the perspective of the shame He was to face as well as the honor that would be given Him.

5 Why do we by nature stumble over Christ rather than honor Him? What practical difference does it make in our lives that Christ’s honor is sure?



# William Greenhill (1598-1671)

CHURCH HISTORY  
DR. JOEL R. BEEKE

William Greenhill was probably the son of John Greenhill, husbandman of Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex. He entered Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, at the age of seventeen. In 1619, he earned a bachelor's degree and, in 1622, a master's degree, having attained proficiency in the classical languages and history. He was ordained in 1628 and the following year became rector of Oakley, Suffolk. John Preston (b. 1587), with whom he remained friends until Preston's death in 1628, was the primary influence in shaping his Puritan convictions. In the early 1630s, Greenhill participated in lectureships at Mendlesham, Suffolk, and at St. George's Tombland, Norwich, together with Jeremiah Burroughs and other Puritans. All of this came to a sudden halt in 1636, when Bishop Matthew Wren of Norwich deprived Greenhill for refusing to read the *Book of Sports*.

Greenhill and Burroughs took refuge in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where they worshipped in the Independent church pastored by William Bridge. By 1641, Greenhill and Burroughs had returned to England, and settled in London, where they became lecturers at Stepney, Middlesex. Burroughs lectured at 7 A.M. and Greenhill at 3 P.M. Due to their preaching gifts, the two became known respectively as "the morning star" and "the evening star."

After civil war erupted in England, Greenhill preached several fast sermons before Parliament, urging the enforcement of justice and the implementation of reforms. He defended the Magna Carta and parliamentary privileges. When the breakdown of royal authority promoted more Separatist congregations, Greenhill joined several Presbyterians and Independents in writing *Certain Considerations to Dis-*

*suade Men from Furthering Gathering Churches* (1643), yet the following year he accepted the pastorate of a newly gathered congregation in Stepney, becoming its first minister.

Greenhill served as a divine at the Westminster Assembly. He opposed the Presbyterian majority and sided with the minority of Independents, though, unlike Burroughs, Bridge, Thomas Goodwin, and others, he did not sign the *Apologetical Narration* (1643). He did join the Independents the following year, however, when they published *A Copy of a Remonstrance Lately Delivered in to the Assembly*, which, as Richard Greaves writes, "explained why they would not provide an alternative model of congregational church government. Not only had parliament by this time already implemented a form of Presbyterian polity, but the Remonstrants also felt the assembly had not seriously considered their previous reports" (*Oxford DNB*, 23:601-602).

Greenhill was involved in numerous kinds of activities in the late 1640s and throughout the 1650s. To mention only a few: he and others, including Goodwin and Simpson, urged Parliament in writing to support mission work among Native Americans. The letter was later published as *The Day Breaking, if not the Sun Rising of the Gospel with the Indians in New England*. In 1652, Greenhill was involved with nine other divines, including Owen and Bridge, in drafting a statement on behalf of Parliament condemning the Racovian catechism, a Socinian document. That same year, Cromwell made Greenhill a commissioner, or trier, for the approbation of preachers, and also appointed him as vicar of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East, the old parish church of Stepney. Meanwhile, Greenhill continued to serve as pastor for the

Independent congregation. With Owen, Goodwin, Nye, Caryl, and Bridge, Greenhill drafted the document of faith and order that the Savoy Conference approved in 1658.

Greenhill was an excellent writer. He dedicated the first volume of his massive commentary on Ezekiel to Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles I and queen of Bohemia, in 1645. After Charles's execution in 1649, Parliament appointed Greenhill chaplain to three of the royal children: James, Duke of York (later James II); Henry, Duke of Gloucester; and Henrietta Maria. The remaining four volumes of Greenhill's *magnum opus* on Ezekiel appeared between 1649 and 1662. Reprinted in one volume by Banner of Truth Trust in 1995, Greenhill's *Exposition of Ezekiel* is one of the foremost Puritan works in Old Testament exposition and is still one of the most helpful commentaries on Ezekiel in English. Here Greenhill shows his skill both as an exegete and a popular preacher. Spurgeon said about this work, "We always get something out of Greenhill whenever we refer to him. He had not, of course, the critical skill of the present day, but his spiritual insight was keen" (*Commenting and Commentaries*, p. 125).

In 1999, Soli Deo Gloria reprinted a slightly edited version of Greenhill's *Christ's Last Disclosure of Himself*. This work, based on Revelation 22:16–17, examines the last invitation of the Bible in twelve sermons. Greenhill shows Christ as the root and offspring of David as well as the bright and

out. If you are a Christian who yearns to walk before God with biblical, Christ-centered, spiritual vitality and practical reality, I know of no book more valuable than this one. If believers strove, in dependency on the Spirit, to put Greenhill's advice into practice, Christian families and the Christian church would be transformed, and the unbelieving world could not avoid noticing and respecting a Christian soundness that would truly function in every sphere of life as the salt of the earth and the light on the world (Matt. 5:13–14).

Being a lover of Reformed literature, Greenhill also wrote numerous commendations of treatises for colleagues in the ministry, such as Burroughs, Bridge, and Thomas Shepard. In prefacing Burroughs's *The Excellency of a Gracious Spirit* (1657), he says that books "are more needful than arms; the one defends the body, the other the soul."

Greenhill was ejected from his parish church in 1660 after the Restoration, but managed to continue to serve his gathered Independent church at Stepney—sometimes meeting in his house adjacent to the church and sometimes in a concealed attic—until his death. In 1669, when the congregation numbered five hundred, he took on Matthew Mead as his assistant. Mead became his successor upon Greenhill's death in 1671. By that time, the two preachers were also serving a conventicle of three hundred in Meetinghouse Alley, Wapping.

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*The Sound-Hearted Christian* and the appended sermons form an outstanding, practical summary of how to live *coram Deo* (in the presence of God) from the inside out. If you are a Christian who yearns to walk before God with biblical, Christ-centered, spiritual vitality and practical reality, I know of no book more valuable than this one.

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morning star. He clearly reveals the heart of Christ towards sinners. These sermons offer some of the finest material ever printed on spiritual thirsting, the willingness of Christ to save sinners, and the free offer of the gospel.

Greenhill's *The Sound-Hearted Christian*, originally subtitled, *A Treatise of Soundness of Heart, with Several Other Sermons*, was printed in London for Nathanael Crouch in 1670. Greenhill's exposition of sound-heartedness is superlative. The Christ-centered sermons on our need as believers to be "of Christ's mind" and to do all "in Christ's name" are simultaneously convicting, sobering, enlightening, and thrilling. And the two closing sermons that underscore the preciousness and sweetness of the Scriptures are sorely needed in our day when the Bible is analyzed more often than absorbed with reverence and submission.

Taken together, *The Sound-Hearted Christian* and the appended sermons form an outstanding, practical summary of how to live *coram Deo* (in the presence of God) from the inside

Having established a large network of ministerial contacts over the decades, Greenhill's loss was mourned throughout England and even in America. A few years before his death, he was still in active correspondence with the governor of Massachusetts, urging him to stop persecuting Baptists. He worked hard even until the end. Only weeks before Greenhill died, a group of magistrates and ministers in Massachusetts wrote to him requesting assistance for Harvard College.

John Howe referred to Greenhill as "that eminent servant of God whose praise is still in the churches." James Reid, in *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines*, described Greenhill as "a zealous Puritan, greatly against the Prelates, the superstitious ceremonies, and corruptions, of the Church of England."

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This article is Dr. Beeke's introduction to Greenhill's *The Sound-Hearted Christian*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a division of Reformation Heritage Books, last month for the first time since 1670. The two lightly shaded paragraphs summarize this excellent book. To order it, see page 200.



# CLEANING UP THE MESS

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

As the biggest ever oil clean-up operation continues, what spiritual lessons can we draw from the Deepwater disaster in the Gulf of Mexico? The task there has been made even more difficult by summer season hurricanes that have hit the Gulf, scattering the oil-covered waters further and hindering the massive clean-up operation. Hurricane Alex sent waves as high as twelve feet towards Mexico and Texas, putting a stay on BP's efforts to clean up the oil.

The oil has been spewing from the seabed ever since the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in April that killed eleven workers and injured seventeen others.

## DISASTER

The prospect of nature's violence exacerbating this huge manmade disaster has caused immense consternation among Caribbean, Mexican, and U.S. nationals, as well as environmentalists and marine biologists.

The world looks on in bemusement at the degradation of the energy giant who boldly declared in 2001 that it was now "beyond petroleum" and becoming a greener, cleaner company.

The rig sank in 5000 feet of water, spilling out a five-mile wide oil slick before it was discovered that the well itself was leaking under the water—about 1000 barrels of crude per day (bpd). Underwater robots were employed to seal the well, but not quickly or completely enough as the slick spread to the coasts of Texas and Florida, while a third leak appeared, pushing the unwanted flow up to 5000 bpd.

As shares in BP slid and tensions mounted politically between U.K. prime minister David Cameron and U.S. president Barack Obama—the President hyperbolically likened the spill to 9/11—a Deepwater worker added fuel to the fire by claiming the well was leaking before the incident.

This admission sparked international uproar and, amid gruesome scenes of pelicans, gulls, and other wildlife covered with dirty oil, and the death of thousands of fish, BP's CEO Tony Hayward was replaced with Bob Dudley.

## DEVASTATION

Hayward's company faces something like a \$20 billion compensation handout to victims as well as a \$2.35 billion clean-up bill.

It is perhaps all too easy to point fingers at lax safety and environmental precautions taken by the Deepwater rig. It was not an old rig—just twelve years old—but, as Mr. Hayward admitted, the company had not expected a leak or spill of this magnitude. BP simply wasn't prepared for the big stuff and,

it now appears with hindsight, hadn't paid enough attention to the little stuff that caused it.

However, there are also spiritual lessons illustrated by this drama. What has happened could be a picture of our own lives, even as Christians, if we don't take immense care.

Isn't this the way that sin works? A little crack, a little glitch and, before you know it, what starts out as small "leaks" of sin—thoughts, words, a little wink at sin—can suddenly become a tidal wave of open, outright disobedience towards the God we own as Savior and Lord.

Sin can explode and expand to devastate not only us, but those around us who we cherish. Before we know it, we are wringing our hands in despair and crying out, "I never expected a disaster of this magnitude."

The contagion of unchecked sin, like oil on water, cannot be easily contained or cleaned up. Jerry Bridges, in his book *Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins we Tolerate*, outlines this point clearly, as he encourages Christians to train their minds in Christ and deal with the little leaks of sin, whether it is condoning gossip, fudging tax returns, or lying to people by remaining silent when we should speak out.

## CHRIST'S POWER

All the detergents, oil dissolvers, and other expedients being employed in the Gulf of Mexico are having some positive effect, but the clean-up is very slow. And no environmental plan or compensation payment can make up for the tragic loss of human life.

Just so, no attempt to clean up our lives in our own strength can ever be effectual when it comes to rooting out and destroying sin. While the Bible gives us personal responsibility to seek a righteous life (Lev. 11:44), it also reveals the essential role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us. Without Him we can do nothing.

Christ as Savior and Lord is the only one able to "cap the well" of sin that would otherwise gush out uncontrollably (Matt. 15:18–20). Without Him, our best efforts are nothing but "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

For the born-again Christian, salvation is secure. As Paul said, "Death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9b), for he has died to sin. Christ has set us free from the power of sin and death in our lives.

But our besetting sins with their tiny leaks can stop us being more Christ-like, and can all too easily turn into a flood. We must go to Jesus to clean up these, too—the small "respectable" sins of gossip, wrongful thoughts, and tiny lies. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Editorial reprint from *Evangelical Times* 44, 8 (Aug. 2010):1.

# the *Criteria* for Self-examination

EXPERIENTIAL CHRISTIANITY  
REV. COR HARINCK

*This is the second of three articles on the vital and often misunderstood subject of self-examination. The concluding article next month will address the benefits of self-examination.*

Last month we looked at the scriptural mandate for self-examination as well as its difficulty and the dreadful possibility of self-deception. This raises important questions: “What are the criteria for self-examination? How must I examine myself? What touchstone must be used?”

The answer to the last question is: the Word of God. Isaiah exclaims, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). We should neither rely on the judgment of people nor on that of the church—nor should we trust our own judgment. We must only trust what God says in the Bible, and His Word gives us marks of a true Christian. At this point, I could enumerate a variety of such marks. I will, of course, not do what Bernardus Smijtegelt did who lists 340 of them in his book, “The Bruised Reed.” How he arrived at such a list is still a riddle to me! Instead, I wish to limit myself to the two most important elements of the Christian life: repentance and faith.

When Jesus began to preach, His message was this: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14). He detailed repentance and faith as requisites for entering the kingdom of God. He thereby endorsed the witness of the Old Testament prophets, for their message can ultimately be summarized as follows: “Repent, and believe in the salvation that is being promised.” Jesus proclaimed what John the Baptist had taught, and the apostles after Him were of the same mind. When Paul gave an account of himself to the elders of Ephesus, he said (not only of himself, but also of his fellow ministers), “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). These are the two fundamental components of the Christian faith and the two most significant marks of a Christian. Every true Christian experiences repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ.

What is repentance? I will be brief here. The meaning of repentance in the original text is “a change of disposition”—we begin to think differently, our inclinations will change, and our conduct will change as well. The Bible also defines repentance as a godly sorrow over sin and departing from evil, turning away from all that is wrong, and turning to God—so that from that point on, we love and serve God and seek His grace and forgiveness.

As far as repentance or conversion is concerned,<sup>1</sup> there are considerable differences in terms of individual conver-

sions. Some people do not believe that such differences exist; they must, however, read their Bibles more carefully. I will limit myself to the Acts of the Apostles. We read about the conversion of people on the Day of Pentecost. We could call that the conversion of Jews. We read about the conversion of Cornelius, and we could call that the conversion of a Gentile. We read about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and we could call that the conversion of a persecutor. We read about the conversion of the Philippian jailor, and we could call that the conversion of an ungodly man. Then we read about the conversion of Lydia, and we could call that the conversion of a religious person. We also read about Timothy, and we could call that the conversion of a young person.

We can identify significant differences in these conversions, but they are all conversions. The aforementioned individuals are all people in whose lives a transformation took place. They are all people who turned to God. They broke with their former lives and began a new life—the life of a Christian.

Conversion manifests itself in fruit: sometimes very remarkable fruits. Saul of Tarsus, “which persecuted us in times past,” preached the gospel (Gal. 1:23). Sometimes the fruits are less noticeable: Lydia received Paul and Silas in her home; the jailor washed the wounds of Paul and Silas; young Timothy accompanied Paul on all his journeys and shared the sacrifices and shame Paul had to endure.

However, conversion always yields fruit. It is a grace that transforms our hearts and lives. Jesus taught that “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). When people claim to be converted and to have received Christ, but you rarely see them in church; and they have no need for the preaching of the Word; and they have no desire to search God’s Word; and you see no change in their lifestyle; and you observe no breaking with former sinful ways; and they are as worldly, lazy, unreliable, and superficial as they have always been—then we must fear that there has been no true conversion.

Thus, conversion always bears fruit, and when it comes to self-examination, we must first of all ask ourselves, “Has conversion occurred in my life?” It will not merely be an external change, but rather the transformation of a life without God to a life with God—of a life that yielded to the lusts of the flesh to a life characterized by a desire and love to walk in God’s ways—of a life characterized by a fruitless, cold orthodoxy to a religion of the heart. It is the transformation of a prayerless life to a life of which can be said, “Behold, he prayeth” (Acts

9:11)—of a careless life to the life of one who asks, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)—of a life that saw no beauty in Christ to the life of one who now esteems Christ to be the pearl of great value. Has an internal and external change taken place that is of such a nature that we can say, “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17)?

Then there is the second element: faith. Faith in Jesus Christ is an essential component of conversion. Without true faith, we are neither a Christian nor can we be saved. So what is true faith in Jesus Christ? The root of the Greek word is closest in meaning to the common English word “trust.” Faith trusts in what God has spoken—in the promise of salvation and the promise of the gospel. It trusts in the grace and the person of Jesus Christ.

All true Christians have in common this faith in the promise of the gospel. They all rely on what God has promised, namely, that whoever believes in the crucified Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:14–16). This promise is the only hope of a guilty sinner. There can be differences of opinion regarding baptism, church government, the offices, or the doctrine of the last things, but all Christians have this in common: faith in Jesus Christ.

I cannot formulate this any better than our Belgic Confession does in Article 29: “With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks

of Christians, namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Savior, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbor, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof. But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great infirmities; but they fight against them through the Spirit all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they have remission of sins through faith in Him.” This is a beautiful description of the Christian. And what is the central aspect of the Christian life? We just read it: “...continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Person of Christ is central.

How can I know whether I possess this true faith? True faith consists of certain components. The first component is knowing one’s misery, wretchedness, and need. When we ask ourselves the question *who* believes in Jesus Christ, the answer

is, “Someone who is aware of his need for Jesus.” Thus a sense of one’s need is an active component of faith, for faith focuses on deliverance. This need prompts the sinner to believe in and take refuge in Christ. He puts his trust in Christ because he perceives that he is in need of deliverance.

One of the very important questions of self-examination is this: “Why am I seeking Christ? Why am I casting myself upon Him? Why am I trusting in the promises recorded in the Bible?” The answer should be that we desire to be delivered from a need that is both known and felt. A believer is someone who needs deliverance.

Obviously, this sense of need may be stronger with one person than with another. With the converts of Pentecost, Saul of Tarsus, and the Philippian jailor, we find great contrition and a deep sense of guilt. With Lydia, Cornelius, Timothy, and the converts of Philip the Evangelist in Samaria, there is a milder sense of guilt and lostness.

The measure of the knowledge of one’s misery can vary. It is therefore much better to say, as some good theologians do,

that conversion manifests itself at times in different and unique forms. Take Lydia, for instance. As a Gentile, she took her place among the Jewish women who gathered at the riverside to perform the Levitical cleansings and to recite the Jewish synagogical prayers. What was this Gentile woman doing there? We read that she served God. This meant no more and no less than that she felt an affinity toward the

Jews, and that she felt an attraction toward the Jewish religion. She looked for something in the Jewish religion that she could not find in her Gentile religion. From this we may conclude that there was a deep inner unrest in Lydia—that Lydia wrestled with questions about God, about peace with Him, and about what would come after this life. To all these questions she found no answer in her Gentile religion, and therefore she had turned to the Jewish religion.

Consider also Cornelius the centurion. Why had this man joined himself to the Jewish synagogue? Why did he pray Jewish prayers? Why was he benevolent toward poor Jews? Why did he desire to hear the words of salvation? Why did he long to know what he needed to *do*? He longed to hear from Peter what he had to *do*. And why did he desire to hear the “words of salvation” (Acts 10:22)? Though the intensity of his conviction was not like Saul of Tarsus and the converts of Pentecost, there was a real spiritual need, a sense of being lost, and seeking after peace with God.



Some are led to Christ by way of a burning and smoking Mount Sinai: with much fear and contrition. Others are led to Christ by a deep sense of dissatisfaction and unrest, accompanied with questions about death and eternity. However, though this may happen more quietly with the one than with the other, there will always be a certain sense of need that will bring the soul to Christ, and that sense of need will lead to the exercise of faith—just as a lack of water causes us to thirst, a lack of bread causes us to hunger, a sense of danger causes us to seek for safety, and being ill causes us to seek healing. Therefore, the exercise of faith has as one of its components

The sanctification of our hearts and lives is ultimately the only proof that we possess a true saving faith in Jesus Christ.

a sense of need and seeking for deliverance. I believe that ignoring this will only be harmful to ourselves and those who are entrusted to our care. The question is whether my faith is

genuine. Am I acquainted with the faith of which the Bible speaks? Did I come and take refuge to Christ? Have I personally come to Christ as one who labors and is heavy laden?

Another important component of self-examination is: *How* did you come? A number of sound writers do highlight a matter of importance in this regard by asking, “Did you come without or with an invitation? In other words, did you come of your own initiative, or did you come as an invited one?” It is important that we ask ourselves, “What prompted me to come? Did I come as a needy and guilty sinner who heard the inviting voice of Jesus, saying, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’” (Matt. 11:28)? Is this how you came? Did you come because Jesus called, and you heard His voice in your contrite heart? Then you need not fear, for the Master called you before you came.

True faith will produce fruits, and it is especially in this light that we need to examine ourselves. What is the fruit of true faith? In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read, “Therefore if any man be in Christ [that is, believes in Christ], he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” In the writings of an old Puritan I read that some are of the opinion that faith merely delivers us from hell, to which he responds that genuine faith also renews us.

Sanctification was the great objective of Christ’s suffering. In Ephesians 5:25–26, we read that “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” We do not read, “That she might get to heaven,” but rather, “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” In

Titus 2:14, we read, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” And in 1 John 3:3, we read, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

The sanctification of our hearts and lives is ultimately the only proof that we possess a true saving faith in Jesus Christ. True faith in Christ not only delivers us from perdition but also delivers us from uncleanness and the inclination toward it; from unrighteousness and the inclination toward it—and it sanctifies our heart and our life. Faith not only justifies, but it also sanctifies. With great emphasis the apostle writes, “...and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

The questions for self-examination are therefore the following: “You claim that you believe in Jesus Christ. However, has this faith wrought a new love in you? Are you now serving God in a new way, doing so in spirit and in truth—not to earn heaven, but because you have been purchased at such a great price? Does the love of Christ constrain you to love Him in return? Has your faith wrought in you a new hatred for all sin, understanding the price Jesus had to pay for sin? Is it because you understand that it is sin that caused the crown of thorns to be placed on Christ’s head and caused His hands, feet, and side to be pierced? That sin brought Him to Gethsemane and Golgotha and caused Him to endure the curse and wrath of God? Has your faith resulted in a new battle—a warfare against Satan, the world, and your own sinful flesh?” For not only do we recognize a Christian by his inner peace, but also because of his inner struggle—the good fight of faith. John Owen says, “I do not understand how someone can claim to be a true believer for whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble.”

Has your faith produced a new joy in you? When the citizens of Samaria believed the gospel of Christ preached by Philip, we read, “And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). Paul speaks of joy in believing (Rom. 15:13), and the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of “a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ” (Q&A 90). Or has your faith turned you into an unfeeling, cold, and pious person, who exclaims, “Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou” (Isa. 65:5)?

Finally, has your faith wrought in you a new expectation so that, with Abraham, you look “for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10)? True faith transforms us into a pilgrim—a stranger here below who is seeking a country (Heb. 11:14). The true believer will never truly feel at home here below.

Such are the characteristics of faith by which we are to examine ourselves.

1. In Dutch, repentance and conversion are the same word.

Rev. Cor Harinck is a retired minister of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* in the Netherlands and the author of many books. This article is translated from Dutch by Rev. Bartel Elshout.



# THE SOCIAL NETWORK REVOLUTION

3  
DAVID CLARK

What Every Parent Should Know About the Internet

In February 2009, the Daily Telegraph reported that Kimberly Swann, a 16-year-old, posted on Facebook that she thought her job was boring. She was called into her manager's office and handed a letter that cited her Facebook comments as the reason for dismissal: *"Following your comments made on Facebook about your job and the company we feel it is better that, as you are not happy and do not enjoy your work, we end your employment with immediate effect."*

## UNBECOMING BEHAVIOR

Stacy Snyder wanted to be a teacher. By the spring of 2006, the 25-year-old single mother had completed her schooling and was looking forward to her future career. Then her dream died. Summoned by university officials, she was told she would not be a teacher because she had posted a photo on the Internet showing her in costume wearing a pirate's hat and drinking from a plastic cup. This was deemed to be behavior unbecoming of a teacher.<sup>1</sup> Stacy considered taking the photo offline. But the damage was done. Her web page had been cataloged by search engines and her photo archived by web crawlers. The Internet remembered what Stacy wanted to have forgotten.

## PRESIDENTIAL WARNING

Even President Obama, in a September 2009 televised address to American schools, advised them to "be careful what you post on Facebook. Whatever you do, it will be pulled up later in your life."<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, social networks have emerged as one of the most popular recent web phenomena. The best known social network is Facebook, though there are many others including MySpace, and specialist networks such as LinkedIn for business users or even GovLoop for US government employees.

## THE 2009 OXFORD DICTIONARY "WORD OF THE YEAR"

For most people who started talking to others on the Internet using Instant Messaging (IM), social networks provide a

much richer set of capabilities. Not only can you "chat" to your friends online, you can also see messages they post about what they are doing, pictures, events, birthdays, or even play games together. A network is made up of people who have applied to "join" up with you and become "your friend." It is possible to set up a network so that only "friends" can view your pictures or see what you write on your "wall," etc. Should you choose, you remove people from your social network at any time. To remove someone is to "unfriend" them, a word that, as reported in the Independent newspaper, was adopted as the new 2009 "Word of the Year" by the Oxford Dictionary.

Social networks are useful for making contact with people you may have lost touch with, such as school or university friends. It helps keep family and friends abreast of what they are doing without having to write, email, or call.

## DANGERS

However, there are also dangers with social networks. It is not always understood that others outside the approved network of friends can see what is posted if security levels are not set correctly. In any case, messages posted on a social network can

easily be passed on to other in a kind of electronic "Chinese whispers." These networks can also be addictive. Because women outnumber men on Facebook (57% to 43% according to the Wall Street Journal<sup>3</sup>) the term "Facebook Widower" has been coined!<sup>4</sup>

Not only can social networks be addictive, they can also lead to creation of unhealthy relationships (something we will look at in more detail in another article), the projection of unrealistic persona, and the feeling that we have relationships that don't exist in real life.

John Steley is a Christian psychologist with a particular interest in the use of the internet by overseas mission and aid workers ([www.interhealth.org.uk](http://www.interhealth.org.uk)). John provided some helpful insights into the way that people relate to each other on social networks: "What comes to mind is the idea of 'power and vulnerability.' Social gatherings make people vulnerable—they can be rejected. Online situations do not expose people to the same level of risk. They feel safe in communicating."

John went on to explain that online, people can project a different persona from the one they really have. "People can have a fantasy about who they wish they were. There is no way of knowing who you are really dealing with. There is no way of really evaluating them."

John concluded by saying, "If you really want to know someone, then one possibility is to go on a teenage mission outreach with them. You will see them under pressure, first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and dealing with difficult teenagers." None of this, of course, is possible on a social network.

## "DOING CHURCH" ONLINE

The problem comes to the fore particularly when looking at a special kind of social network, the "online church." This kind of church is not simply a website, or a way of downloading sermons (whether audio or video), or even simply live streaming

of a church message. It is far more than this, and is intended to replace conventional churches with online equivalents. The online church websites provide social networks so that those listening or viewing on their computers can “chat to one another” during the service, share thoughts or ideas, or receive support from a pastoral assistant at any time.

### ALL YOU NEED IS ONLINE

In a blog post for ChristianityToday.com,<sup>5</sup> Bob Hyatt, a pastor who leads the brick-and-mortar Evergreen Community Church in Portland, Oregon writes that calling an online church a virtual church “gives people the idea that everything they need is available here.”

This is precisely what Craig Groeschel, senior pastor at LifeChurch.tv—an online church—says in a CNN interview: “We were blown away at how people could actually worship along [online],” he says. “The whole family will gather around the computer, and they’ll sing and they’ll worship together. Instead of trying to get people to come to a church, we feel like we can take a church to them.”<sup>6</sup>

In a book entitled “SimChurch,” just published by Zondervan, author Douglas Estes says that “today a new community of the people of God has begun.... A change is occurring in the Christian church the likes of which has not happened in centuries.... This type of church is unlike any church the world has ever seen. It has the power to break down social barriers, unite believers from all over the world, and build the kingdom of God with a widow’s mite of financing. It is a completely different type of church from any the world has ever seen.”

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

We can imagine the benefits of such an arrangement for some—for example, the Christian in an Islamic country, or a missionary isolated from any other believers. However, there are significant dangers for those who could otherwise attend a Bible-believing church. As with other social media, relationships are not real, but based on the comments and persona that each online user projects. How can an elder “shepherd the flock of God,”<sup>7</sup> if they effectively know nothing about them and could never meet with them? How can church discipline be applied, or the encouraging word be given? It is only after the Thessalonians had spent time with Paul, Silas, and Timothy that they could become “followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much afflic-

tion, with joy of the Holy Ghost” and so also become “examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”<sup>8</sup>

### PRACTICAL ADVICE

The dangers with social networks are those of addiction and lack of self-control. There are clear Christian principles here, including self-control and avoidance, if necessary. There are simple steps which everyone should take, such as making sure

that security settings on social network sites are such that only friends can access information. Similarly, you should always think before you type. In general, if you would not say what you are planning to write to someone face to face, you should not post it. Remember that the Internet never forgets!

With respect to online churches, it is difficult to see how replacing a local church with an online one is justifiable. Perhaps we need to examine ourselves to see what kind of local church we belong to. It is possible to have the same problems locally as exist online, barely knowing one another, even when we meet together every week. Rather, a local church must remain first a place where Christ is central and worshipped, and also one in which the

gospel is communicated clearly and in a way that can be understood. The church is to recognize that the world is changing. As the sixteenth-century Reformers put it, “*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*”—“the church reformed, always reforming.” Reformation was their strategy, all in accord with the plumb line of God’s infallible Word and for the glory of the Triune God.

The next article will look at the dark side of the Internet, particularly at online pornography, concluding with practical, helpful, and positive advice.

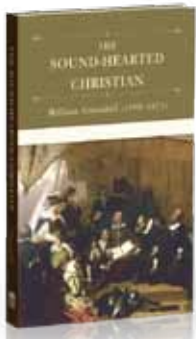


An image from the LiveChurch.tv website showing online “worshippers” at a Sunday service

1. Quoted in “Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in The Digital Age.” by Viktor Mayer-Schönberger.
2. Quoted in the *Washington Times*, Sept. 8, 2009.
3. See <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2009/10/07/women-outnumber-men-on-social-networking-sites/>
4. The Urban Dictionary defines a Facebook Widower as “a man who is neglected because his wife or partner spends so much time, addictively, on Facebook”—see <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Facebook%20widower>
5. See <http://bobhyatt.typepad.com/>
6. See <http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/11/13/online.church.services/index.html>
7. 1 Peter 5:2.
8. 1 Thess. 1:6–7.

David Clark lives in England where he has served on the Boards of Evangelical Press and *Evangelical Times*. He has worked with information technology for over thirty years. This article is reprinted from the British newspaper *Evangelical Times*, Jan. 2010. The author would appreciate receiving questions on this series of articles from readers via email to [ParentsAndTheInternet@googlemail.com](mailto:ParentsAndTheInternet@googlemail.com). These will assist him in writing future articles and where possible, posted contributions and emails will be answered anonymously in the final articles of this series.

# BOOK TALK



## **The Sound-Hearted Christian**

*William Greenhill*

*Introduced by Joel R. Beeke*

Nearing the end of his life and ministry, William Greenhill left his congregation a parting gift and lasting testimony of his pastoral care for their souls—he published *The Sound-Hearted Christian*. This book developed from a series of sermons Greenhill preached on Psalm 119:18, “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.” Greenhill shows that a sound heart is watchful and attentive, recognizing that our soul is our greatest possession. After demonstrating the excellence and desirability of a sound heart, he challenges us to test the soundness of our heart. He then directs and motivates us to get and keep a sound heart. The book ends with several appended sermons on faith, Christ, and God’s Word, which serve as further encouragements to establishing and maintaining a sound heart.

(240 pages, HB) \$25.00/19.00



## **Christians Get Depressed Too: Help and Hope for Depressed People**

*David P. Murray*

Many Christians mistakenly believe that *true* Christians don’t get depressed, and this misconception heaps additional pain and guilt onto Christians who are suffering from mental and emotional distress. Author David P. Murray comes to the defense of depressed Christians, asserting that Christians *do* get depressed! He explains why and how Christians should study depression, what depression is, and the approaches caregivers, pastors, and churches can take to help those who are suffering from it. With clarity and wise biblical insight, Dr. Murray offers help and hope to those suffering from depression, the family members and friends who care for them, and pastors ministering to these wounded members of their flock.

(128 pages, PB) \$10.00/7.50

## OTHER NEW BOOKS



### **The Godly Home**—*Richard Baxter*;

*Randall Pederson, editor*

The family and home are under attack in our culture, which is what makes this modern reprint so timely. Taken from Baxter’s larger work, *The Christian Directory*, this book gives basic and godly instructions for life at home. The Puritans believed that our homes should be like little churches, governed by the Word for the purpose of glorifying God. Baxter’s work will be beneficial to all who read it and seek to implement these godly truths in their home.

(PB, Crossway, 224 pgs.) \$17.99/\$11.00



### **Repentance**—*John Colquhoun*

In this treatment of the biblical doctrine of repentance, the author distinguishes between evangelical or true repentance and legal repentance. Though the latter may be produced by a fear of God’s wrath and lead to reformation of life, it is an experience which falls short of salvation. Evangelical repentance, on the other hand, is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in regeneration, is inseparable from faith in Jesus Christ, and is evidenced by turning from all sin to God.

(PB, Banner, 216 pgs.) \$11.00/\$8.00



### **Gospel Intimacy in a Godly Marriage**—*Alan Dunn*

This book is not your typical marriage self-help. Rather, it builds a theology of marriage upon the foundation of the gospel. Dunn provides a needed reminder that the marital relationship consists of two sinful people, and the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope of finding the God-glorifying intimacy intended in the beginning. This book will no doubt help those contemplating marriage, newlyweds, or those who have shared a lifetime together. Each chapter ends with thought-provoking discussion questions.

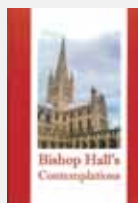
(PB, Pillar & Ground, 168 pgs.) \$10.95/\$7.50



### **Gospel-Powered Parenting**—*William Farley*

The one thing our children need most is the one thing that is beyond our power to give: a new heart. Yet God uses parents and parenting as the means by which He works this new heart. Christians must parent with one eye on eternity with the goal of transformation. This book seeks to instruct parents, and particularly fathers, in seeing the gospel as the foundation and transcript for Christian parenting.

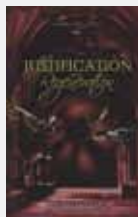
(PB, P&R, 233 pgs.) \$12.99/\$10.00



### **Contemplations on the Historical Passages of the Old and New Testament**—*Joseph Hall*

This volume presents the thoughts and meditations of one of the most venerable Puritan-minded theologians. Highly recommended by Baxter, Whitefield, and Spurgeon, Hall’s *Contemplations* are full of rich comfort, spiritual peace, and sacred reflections on some of the most well-read portions of Scripture.

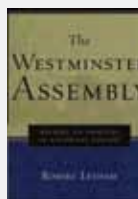
(HC, Tentmaker, 602 pgs.) \$60.00/\$45.00



### **Justification and Regeneration**—*Charles Leiter*

Among many in the church today there remains confusion and ignorance about the doctrines of justification (being declared righteous) and regeneration (being born again). These two great miracles lie at the heart of the gospel message, and Leiter seeks to bring forth in clear biblical light the nature and characteristics of both.

(PB, Granted Ministries, 176 pgs.) \$13.95/\$12.50

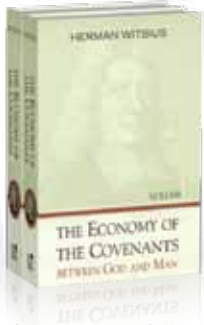


### **The Westminster Assembly: Reading its Theology in Historical Context**—*Robert Letham*

Drawing on new primary source material, this book considers the Assembly’s theology in terms of the unfolding development of doctrine in the Reformed church as a whole and its specific context in English history. This is a solid and comprehensive introduction to the Westminster Assembly and is suitable for seminarians, pastors, and lay people who are seeking to be historically and theologically informed.

(PB, P&R, 399 pgs.) \$24.99/\$16.00

# NEW RHB BOOKS

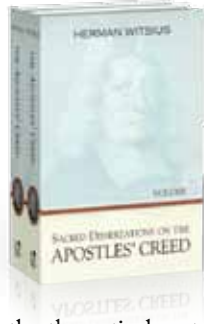


**The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, 2 vols.**

*Herman Witsius*  
*Introductions by Joel R. Beeke and J. I. Packer*

This, Witsius's *magnum opus*, is a reflection of some of the most fruitful and mature thinking on federal theology during the seventeenth century. It still holds a preeminent place today. Reformed theology has always understood the biblical doctrine of the covenant to be the theological framework which best unifies Scripture to make a consistent hermeneutic; Witsius presents the reader with a fully biblical and experiential doctrine of the divine covenants, opening up their nature, stipulations, curses, and blessings. Anyone interested in Reformed theology should read this book—it is Reformed theology at its best.

(984 pages, HB) \$45.00/30.00



**Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles' Creed, 2 vols.**

*Herman Witsius*  
*Foreword by Sinclair B. Ferguson*

In this work, Witsius exemplifies his own principle that "he alone is a true theologian who adds the practical to the theoretical part of religion." A marriage of extraordinary intellect and spiritual passion, this phrase-by-phrase exposition of the Apostles' Creed seeks always to apply Scripture to life. In both tone and substance, Witsius draws the reader into a deeper understanding and love of the truths most central to the Christian faith.

(1224 pages, HB) \$45.00/30.00



**Sacred Dissertations on the Lord's Prayer**

*Herman Witsius*  
*Foreword by Joel R. Beeke*

This volume contains more than the title reveals. Prefaced to his 230-page exposition of the Lord's Prayer, Witsius devotes six chapters to the subject of prayer in general, which he calls the pulse of the renewed soul. His exposition on the Lord's Prayer is itself a masterpiece. In many instances, his answers to challenging questions provide greater scriptural and practical clarity than anything else written to date. Sound biblical exegesis and practical doctrinal substance, this book represents the cream of Reformed theology.

(424 pages, HB) \$25.00/18.00



**Our Secure Salvation: Preservation and Apostasy**

*Robert A. Peterson*

This book, part of the Explorations in Biblical Theology series, walks the reader through the difficult yet necessary doctrine of apostasy and preservation. God's people often wrestle with family and friends who turn away from following the Lord. Peterson helps us get a Word-centered perspective on both God's promises and God's imperatives.

(PB, P&R, 239 pgs.) \$15.00/\$11.25



**The Apostles' Creed** — *Cornelis Pronk*

The Apostles' Creed is one of the most ancient of Christian creeds and yet still plays a vital role in the worship of the church today. In the first part of this series, *What We Believe and Confess*, Pronk walks through the Creed, opening up the mysteries of the faith. This book contains nineteen lessons with exposition and discussion questions that are sure to benefit individuals and study groups.

(PB, Free Reformed Publications, 116 pgs.) \$12.00/\$9.00



**The Ten Commandments** — *Cornelis Pronk*

The Christian life is not to be lived in a state of lawlessness. What once condemned us has now become our rule for life—to be lived out in heartfelt gratitude. In the second part of this series, *What We Believe and Confess*, Pronk emphasizes the breadth and width of the divine Law and tackles difficult questions. This book contains eleven lessons with discussion questions for individuals or study groups.

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Prayer is the Christian's vital breath and native air. In the third part to this series, *What We Believe and Confess*, Pronk explores each of the different petitions in the Lord's Prayer. This book contains ten lessons with faithful exposition and thought-provoking discussion questions suitable for both individuals and study groups.

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# ★ Back to School

FOR OUR CHILDREN

DIANA KLEYN



As the long, hot, summer days fade into fall, many children everywhere return to school. In August, families begin to plan ahead for the school year: students must have school supplies as well as clothes and shoes for the coming season. Some children are just starting their very first year of school while others might be commencing their final year of high school; some students attend a Christian school, some a public school, while others are homeschooled. Some of you live in Canada, some in the United States, and still others live in countries farther away; some of you live in cities, others in the country. Though every child is unique, there are a few common characteristics among students. One of them is that every student has *responsibilities*. A responsibility is a *duty*. What are your responsibilities or duties as a student? What does the Lord require of you when you are back in school?

First of all, *you are required to do your best*. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10a). Not everyone can get top grades, but every child must do their best. Your parents and teachers ask you to work hard in school, but the Lord Himself demands this, too. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23). God has blessed you with sufficient health and strength so that you are able to attend school, have the ability to learn and think, and have teachers and parents who guide and encourage you in your education. Just as your parents and teachers are required to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, your task is to do your best at school. Certainly, each student has different abilities and talents, and not every child can learn as well as another. You must not feel discouraged if you have difficulty learning or if there are other reasons that make attending or learning at school difficult. The Lord knows your needs: “for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). He wants you to tell Him all your troubles: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15). Ask this compassionate God to help you do your best at school. Those of you who have no difficulty learning must never tease or make fun of those who struggle in school. It is a terrible sin to laugh at other children or to make their lives miserable. “He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth” (Proverbs 24:21a); “Surely [the LORD] scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly” (Proverbs 3:34). You must also remember that

it is God who gives you your talents and gifts. “Then beware lest thou forget the LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:12a).

Second, *you are to obey and respect your teachers*. “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Deuteronomy 5:16). The Lord has placed your parents and teachers in authority over you. Your duty is to respect and obey them. True, they are not perfect—they make mistakes and need your forgiveness from time to time. However, God demands that you obey and respect them as long as they are obedient to God’s laws. When your teacher gives you an assignment, you may not complain; when your teacher makes rules, you must obey; when your teacher makes a mistake, you are to forgive; when your teacher has a hard day, you must be patient and understanding. You honor your teacher and your parents when you obey without complaining, and you honor God when you do your best with the talents He has given you and thank Him for them.

Third, *you must put into practice what you learn at home and at church*. “Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways” (Proverbs 8:32). There is more to daily life than doing your homework and trying your best. At school you are surrounded by other people. What you learn in church on Sunday and at home during family worship or alone in your private devotions is meant to be put into practice. Jesus summed up the law when He said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40). This is often where we run into trouble, isn’t it? It is one thing to turn in your homework assignments on time and to be obedient and respectful in class, but loving others as we love ourselves involves our heart and soul. What God commands us to do in this law of love is to think about others and their needs rather than to focus on ourselves. What are some ways we can be obedient to this commandment? Here are some suggestions. When you begin this new school year, look for new students who need a friend; befriend students who may be feeling lonely; be kind to all your classmates, not just your friends; refuse to gossip about other students; defend those

who are teased and excluded; come to school with a positive attitude; be cheerful and helpful.

These are not easy things to do, are they? Actually, they are impossible because of our sinful hearts. Did you notice that Jesus' summation of the law has two parts? The second one is the one we just talked about—loving your neighbor as yourself. What is the first part? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37–38). Why is it the *first* commandment? It is first because we cannot love our neighbor as ourselves if we do not first love God above all. By nature our hearts are filled with hatred against God and our neighbor (Rom. 5:10). We need the Holy Spirit to give us a heart that loves God above all and our neighbor as ourselves. Do ask God the Father to give Him to you (Luke 11:13). That is the only way we can truly honor our parents and teachers, and it is the only way we can be a blessing to our classmates.

So what kind of a student will you be this year? Will you try your best at school? Will you respect and obey your parents and teachers? Will you love others as you love yourself? Maybe you struggled with this last year—part of you wanted to be obedient and loving, but part of you was afraid of what others would say. Maybe sometimes, after you hear the Word of God preached or read at home, you really do want to fol-

low God and obey Him, but then you get to school and you give in to sin, and you are so disappointed with yourself. Paul expressed his own frustration this way: "For the good that I would [or, want to do] I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19). David and Paul and all God's people know, however, that their help is found in God alone. On our own we cannot do any good. Only in Christ do we find our righteousness. Adopted by the Father, washed in the blood of Christ, taught by the Spirit—only then can we be people who please God.

Are there some of you who do not even try to love and obey God above all? Though you know better, you choose not to obey God's law. Do you realize that this is very dangerous? The Lord will not be patient forever. Do you also know, however, that you may ask the Lord to change you right now? Go to Him at once and ask Him to give you a heart that hates sin and loves good. You are just the kind of person Jesus calls. Jesus said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:13). Do not wait until you are older or better; it will only become more difficult to seek salvation if you wait. Tell the Lord Jesus everything. He will listen and answer your prayers. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

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Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.



## Pray, Father!

A little American Indian girl, seven years old, was dying. She had heard the missionaries preach and had faithfully attended the Sunday school. She had listened intently to the missionaries' teachings, and soon they noticed that she was showing fruits of repentance and faith in Jesus. Her father, a proud, hard man, had once professed to be a Christian, but he had slipped back into his old ways and turned his back on the missionaries and their teachings.

The little girl had been losing strength rapidly for several days and it seemed she would soon die. One afternoon, however, she seemed a little better. She asked for her father to come. He came. She looked up at him with her soft brown eyes and said, "Could you carry me outside, please, father? I want to go to the brook once more; may I go?"

Without saying a word, the little girl's father wrapped her in her blanket, lifted her up in his strong arms, and carried her across the green meadow down to the little brook that wound its way over sand and pebbles among the alders and birch trees that skirted the meadow. He sat down in the

shade where the little girl could see the water and the bright play of light and shade between the trees. She watched them a moment and then turning her little face to her father's she said earnestly, "Pray, father."

"Oh, I can't, my dear," he answered hastily.

"Please, father, please pray!" she pleaded.

"No! How can I? No, no!"

"Father," she said, "I'm going to heaven soon, and before I go, I want to know that my father prays."

The strong man's head bowed, and everything was silent for some time. Then there went up from that brook's side such a prayer of repentance and confession and supplication for forgiveness that must have made the angels of heaven rejoice! He opened his eyes; his little girl had died. Her spirit had fled on the wings of joy and faith, finally able to say, "My father prays!"

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Adapted from *A Wonderful Field and What I Learned About it, and Other Stories*, by C. E. H. London: The Gospel Book Depot, n.d., pp. 142–43.



# Calling!

## Have You Heard God's Voice?

In our last article, we looked at the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, in conjunction with the Spirit's work in the hearts of sinners, we want to consider how salvation is worked out in the heart. The Scriptures give us words. There is a certain order which can be traced out in the Word of God (an order our forefathers have called the *ordo salutis* or order of salvation) that describes this work of the Holy Spirit as He unites sinners to Christ by faith. If you are interested in learning more about how this order is put together biblically, you can consult any Reformed Dogmatics book. However, our purpose is to consider with you in practical detail what each of these Biblical words and concepts mean. Then we can examine ourselves to see whether we have experienced these things personally.

The first word that we need to consider is *calling*. Paul mentions this in Romans 8:30: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified." Paul uses this frequently, and it is also in the Old Testament, as it relates to our salvation. We all understand what a call is. Our parents can call us to come inside, a friend can call us on our cell phone, a call goes out for people to help with a fundraiser. The Scriptures also mention many instances where we are to call upon the Lord, which could be seen as the result of the call of God to us.

When we use this word *call*, we are referring to God's call to us. This call comes to everyone who hears the Word of God. Everyone hears the exact same words when the gospel is preached, but we know that some, after hearing the words, actually act upon what they have heard and others do not. You maybe have experienced that. After hearing a sermon, someone is brought to repentance and faith while others who heard the same sermon were seemingly unaffected by the Word. So we need to distinguish this word *call* into two branches: the general call and the effectual call (or external and internal). By the general call we mean that God is sincerely and lovingly calling to everyone who has the privilege of hearing the good news of salvation. By effectual call, we mean that God actually makes us spiritually alive through the gospel by the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit. This is a mystery and yet we witness it around us time and again. This is the call that Paul was speaking about when he wrote to the Thessalonians, "For this cause also thank

we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). God's power accompanied the call and the result was that they believed.

There are people who are confused about this and say, "Well, I have not heard the call of God like I hear other people speak about it, so He must not be calling me." This is a problem of unbelief and sin, rather than a problem with the call. Our forefathers and, of course, the Scriptures clearly indicate that when God calls to us, He means what He says. God is sincere and earnest. "For why will ye die (Ezek. 33:11)... Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth (Isa. 45:22)... Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37b)." All these promises and more you may plead upon. When we speak about this call as an invitation to come to Christ, it is more than an invitation—it is a command of the most High God. The problem is with us, our ears and hearts. The fault lies with us. It is true that without the Holy Spirit opening our ears we will not hear, that without Christ making Lazarus alive he would not come out of the grave; yet, having heard His voice, Lazarus obeyed. This is the evidence that the call has come to us with authority; it is proof of the external call. But the internal call is a gift of God. It comes with power, the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit, who, as it is written, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5, 6).

Having heard God's call, have you obeyed His Word? Have you turned to God from your sins and rested in Jesus by faith? This is evidence that you have been called of God, and you may be assured that God will continue His work in you until the day of Christ's return and you will also know the continued work of the Holy Spirit in your life as continue to hear His call.

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**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

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

Joel Averink	Donald Duffin	Kaitlyn Stubbe
Samuel Averink	Hannah Kelderman	Sara Stubbe
Emily Beeke	Jacob Koppert	Hanna Sweetman (2)
Marianna Beeke	Rachel Koppert	Janine Sweetman (2)
Andrew Boesterd	Matthew Kranendonk	Kara Sweetman (2)
Breanne Boesterd	Samuel Kranendonk	Megan VanderStel
Justin Boesterd	David Lawter	Danique Veldhuizen
Don R. Cox	Irene Stam	

Here are the answers to last month's quiz.

1. thy	9. pitiful	17. mindful
2. above	10. taste	18. hands
3. own	11. who	19. let
4. might	12. daily	20. hosts
5. thereof	13. blessed	21. ask
6. bread	14. night	22. "How great
7. ear	15. for	is His
8. utter	16. glory	goodness"

## OBITUARIES

**BAZEN**, Ellen M, aged 77, passed away July 6, 2010 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her brother, James DeMaagd, and sister, Jane Brainard. Surviving are her husband of 56 years, Marinus "Mart," and children—Robert (Debbie) Bazen, Mark S. (Susan) Bazen; Brothers—Larry DeMaagd, Bernard DeMaagd, Roger (Joanne) DeMaagd; Sister—Carolyn (Joe) VanBemden; Brothers-in-law/Sisters-in-law—Rev. Peter (Marge) Bazen, James (Barb) Bazen, Joanne (William) VandenToorn, Marie (James) Rosendall, Gertrude (Henry) Rosendall, Edith Bazen, Helen Oudendyk, George Brainard; Grandchildren—Jamie Lynn & Jason Beeke, Brandi Lynne, Mark Steven & Taylor Dayne Bazen; great-grandchildren—Alexander & Zachary Beeke. (Dr. J. Bilkes, Psalm 63:3-4; Dr. D. Murray, Job 1:20-22).

**VANDER MALE**, Agatha C. (Uitvlugt), aged 88, passed away on July 6, 2010 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was preceded in death by her sisters, Rina Uitvlugt and Jeanette Tein, and brother, Henry Uitvlugt. Surviving are her husband of 61 years, Gilbert; Children—Bob (Cathy) VanderMale, Laurie (Steven) Stoutjesdyk, Norma (Rob) VerHeulen, John (Duffy) VanderMale, Anne (Dirk) Wierenga; Brothers—Aggo Uitvlugt, Martin (Virgil) Uitvlugt, Cornelius (Donna) Uitvlugt; Sister—Anna (Ed) Harvey; Brothers-in-law/Sisters-in-law—Pearle Uitvlugt, Dorothy VanderMale, Carl VanderMale, Helene VanderMale, Beatrice Potter, Emily (Jay) Lughthart; 15 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. (Rev. F. VanderZwaag, John 11:25 & John 5:25).

**DEN ENGELSE**, Eowyn Sophia, precious infant daughter of Korstiaan and Karla den Engelse, passed away on July 16, 2010. In addition to her parents, she is survived by her sister Anna, her brothers Elijah, Nicholas, Gabriel, Micah, and her twin brother, Malachi. She was preceded in death by her grandfather, Howard W. Knutson, and great uncles, Wilmer A. Knutson and Bas den Engelse. (Rev. John Byl, Rev. M. Dewey, Rev. F. VanderZwaag—John 11 & 1 Thessalonians 4).

**BLOK**, Rachel Ann, aged 71, passed away on Wednesday, July 21, 2010 in Grandville, Michigan. Rachel was preceded in death by her sister, Marie Engelsma; brother, James L. DeKorne; sister-in-law, Barbara Visser; brother-in-law, Ben Densel III. She is survived by her husband of 51 years, Arthur; Children—Art Blok, Scott & Julie Blok, Mike & Toni Blok, Anna & John Boerkoel, Matt & Lisa Blok; Brothers and Sisters—Jay & Phyllis DeKorne, Bob & Betty DeKorne, Cornelius "Bud" & Judy DeKorne, Jean Stevens, Ruth Densel; Brothers-in-law/sisters-in-law—Jim Engelsma, Gloria DeKorne, John Visser, Rev. Arie & Marge Blok, Fran and Harold Popovich, Bill & Irma Blok, Pauline GeBuys, Tony & Diane Blok; 17 grandchildren. (Rev. F. VanderZwaag, 2 Peter 1:19; Psalm 27:1).

## 2010 YOUTH CAMP REVIEW

"Tulip, the Aroma of the Gospel" was the theme this year at the 2010 Youth Camp, held on the very beautiful grounds of Camp Michawana in Hastings, Michigan. The theme of sovereign grace was stressed by all the speakers. Total depravity (Dr. Joel Beeke), Unconditional Election (Rev. Bart Elshout), Limited Atonement (Dr. David Murray), Irresistible Grace (Rev. Mike Fintelman), and Perseverance of the Saints (Rev. Jan Neels) were declared, absorbed, pondered, and discussed extensively by the 125 young people who attended. The Speakers' Discussion Panel on Thursday

evening, led by Rev. VanderZwaag, further explained and answered the questions presented to the topic speakers. The workshops held, 12 Lessons from the Life of Calvin (Dr. Beeke); Holiness and Legalism, What is the difference (Rev. Elshout); Faith and Finances (Dr. Murray); Evangelism by a Calvinist (Rev. and Gayle Neels), and Relating to Parents (Rev. VanderZwaag) were well attended, and provided valuable learning opportunities.

These full enriching days, with life-changing topics, also provided time to renew friendships and form new ones. There was time in the afternoons for playing sports and participating in other offered activities. Evenings were spent singing around the camp fire with question-and-answer time as well. Each day ended in the cabins, focused on that evening's devotion. The weather was pristine and the food and accommodations were great. We had a blessed time, and witnessed some early signs of Spirit-worked fruit in the hearts of young people. Pray with us that these fruits may abide the fire.

We wish to thank God above all, but also all those who assisted, for making this year's camp such a valuable and enjoyable time of spiritual and practical instruction. It was all so relevant to our young people. May the Holy Spirit continue to add His blessing.

Youth group topics are available on sermanaudio.com posted under: Heritage 2010 Youth Conference. To order a CD or DVD please email Mary Boluyt at mjb1191@aol.com. —IVdB

## PRINCIPAL NEEDED

Plymouth Christian Schools is a K-12 school located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is a member of the NRCEA and is an independent corporation operated on behalf of the First NRC (Beckwith Street) and the Heritage NRC (Crescent Street) both of Grand Rapids. The Elementary School (K-6) is currently seeking applicants for the position of elementary administrator. The position is presently held by Mr. David Engelsma, who has expressed his desire to begin reducing his workload commencing in the 2011-2012 school year. Mr. Engelsma has welcomed the School Board's request that he assist the selected candidate in assuming this role in order to provide a smooth administrative transition. The administrative duties are not fulltime, and will be balanced with some teaching assignments depending on the background and experience of the candidate. Interested applicants should contact one of the following members of the PCSA School Board's Education Committee with their resumé: Mr. Kevin Ash (kevin.ash@gentex.com) or Mr. Randy Carlson (Randall.Carlson@dematic.com)

*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.*

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS....

### Haiti Slowly Making Progress

David Heady and his wife are missionaries to Haiti through Global Outreach. The couple helps operate a number of ministries headquartered near Port-au-Prince where a 66-acre site houses a burn clinic, a conference center, and other facilities that have been used by relief organizations since January's quake. Heady reports that progress is slow in the capital. "Some of the streets are being cleared of the debris. A lot of temporary housing is going up," he explains. "The government has gone in and set aside some government land... and people have gone out and staked out their little plot of land to build a house on." Global Outreach is offering special attention to locations that house tent cities, and the missionaries are construct-

ing more stable homes for the people there. With the onset of the hurricane season, there is a special urgency to provide shelter for the vast numbers of people still homeless.

Jason Krul of the Chilliwack HRC Congregation is working for Mission Aviation Fellowship, flying much-needed supplies to Haiti. Mission Aviation Fellowship, or MAF, is a Christian organization that provides aviation, communications, and learning technology services to more than 1,000 Christian and humanitarian agencies, as well as thousands of isolated missionaries and indigenous villagers in the world's most remote areas. In 2009, MAF served in more than 55 countries with a fleet of some 130 aircraft. To contribute to the ongoing relief needs in Haiti, please consider Mission Aviation Fellowship, PO Box 47, Nampa, ID 83653. Mark for "Haiti Relief." (OneNewsNow.com—Missions)

**NATIONAL NEWS....****Theology Schools to Merge into University—  
Welcoming Other Faiths**

Two schools of theology—Andover Newton Theological School, outside Boston, and Unitarian Universalist—Meadville Lombard Theological School, in Chicago—recently announced that they were merging into an “inter-religious ‘theological university’” open to students of any faith. The new university, which will be based at Andover Newton, said that each constituent school would keep its faith identity and that the new institution was looking for other schools that might want to join them. Meadville would sell its campus in Chicago and become the “Unitarian” division of the new institution, with Andover Newton becoming the “Christian” component. Andover Theological Seminary was founded in 1807 by orthodox Calvinists who fled Harvard College after it appointed liberal theologian Henry Ware to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity there in 1805. “Andover is home to many, many Puritan writings in its library,” states Dr. Joel Beeke.

This news follows an announcement that Claremont School of Theology, in Claremont, California, would also offer training to Muslim and Jewish students. This will allow seminary students at Claremont to cross-enroll in programs that train future Muslim and Jewish religious leaders, while working toward their own degrees in Christian theology. Claremont has taught Methodist ministers and theologians for more than a century. Some more conservative elements in the Christian and Jewish communities have resisted, worried the approach may dilute their own faiths. The United Methodists have withheld funds, and called for a review of the curriculum. The announcements suggest a period of ferment among seminaries hit hard by the economic downturn. (AP)

**Reformed Church Organizations Merge**

Meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, over 1,000 representatives of more than 100 countries representing the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council have agreed to merge into one organization to be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The representatives claim that now more than 80 million Christians around the world are part of the one united church body. Members of the Christian Reformed, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian, and many other types of congregations will now be part of this larger network, to be based in Geneva, Switzerland. (Grand Rapids Press)

**Abortion Coverage Limited**

Abortion foes have won a round in the first test of how President Obama’s health care law will be applied. Traditional allies of the administration are grumbling about a decision to ban most abortion coverage in insurance pools for those unable to buy health care on their own. But Roman Catholic bishops “welcome this new policy,” said Cardinal Daniel DiNardo. (AP)

**Quebec Prepares for Euthanasia Hearings**

A fifteen-member all-party committee of the Quebec National Assembly charged with looking into the thorny issue of so-called “death with dignity” is seeking the views of Quebecers on euthanasia and assisted suicide, the *Montreal Gazette* reported. The Quebec government’s ultimate aim, as the *Globe and Mail* noted, is to “strike a balance” between those who believe that clear-thinking terminally ill patients have a right to hasten death as a way to end their suffering, and those who believe in the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. An Angus Reid poll released in February reported that 77% of Quebecers support

legalizing euthanasia and 53% support decriminalizing assisted suicide. (Nationally, the proportion of those in favor numbered 67% and 41%, respectively.) Euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal in Canada, but how and when the law is enforced is a provincial responsibility. (TFN)

**FCC’s Policy Discarded—Broadcasters Now  
Unrestricted**

A federal appeals court has thrown out a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) policy that can lead to broadcasters being fined for filthy language on live television. The Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan determined the policy violates the First Amendment and that it “chills speech, because broadcasters have no way of knowing what the FCC will find offensive.”

**PERSECUTION FOCUS: IRAN....****Iran Ramps Up Tension With the West**

Iran’s supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called on Muslims to fight the “blind and savage terrorism” fueled by the West. That bodes ill for believers, who are often targeted because of assumptions that Christianity is Western. Greg Musselman, with Voice of the Martyrs Canada, says there’s reason for concern. “(Iran President Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad has stated that he is going to really go after the underground churches. [He claims] they’re illegal, they shouldn’t be happening. There’s these apostasy laws.... We need to be praying for the legislators in Iran that they would do the right thing and that they would be guided by the Lord.”

Will these statements unleash a wave of violence against Christians? “Unfortunately, when there is this kind of violence taking place, Christians are targeted,” explains Musselman, adding that it is not always the faith aspect that draws negative attention. “The churches, if they’re displaying crosses or if they’re not dressing like Muslims,” can paint the mark.

However, the harsh reactions aren’t necessarily creating the response expected. A combination of disillusionment and despair is actually acting as a catalyst for the gospel. Musselman notes that “we’re seeing these underground churches springing up all over Iran, where there are young people coming to know the Lord.” God is raising up a group of Christians with youth and passion. Voice of the Martyrs Canada is doing what they can to resource the remnant church in Iran. “You work with the people that already know the culture and already speak the language. You empower them to go back into their homeland, or broadcast, get Bibles in—those kinds of things.”

Christians make up less than one-half of one percent of Iran’s population. The open witness of the gospel is banned, and government spies monitor Christian groups. Musselman says Iranian believers know what they’re risking when they profess Christ, but the oppression produces a refined body of Christ. “You see the fruit of that when you see people’s lives being changed and you see these Muslims that come to know Christ become pastors and evangelists. You see the passion that they have, because they have a deeper understanding of what Jesus Christ really means.” (Mission Network News)

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

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## MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name.

When darkness seems to hide His face,  
I rest on His unchanging grace.  
In every high and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood,  
Support me in the whelming flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my Hope and Stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh may I then in Him be found.  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

— EDWARD MOTE

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A Periodical for Young and Old