

the Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

IN THIS ISSUE

The Discipline of God

An Enemy Hath Done This

Give Thanks Every Day

A Periodical for Young and Old

THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH

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THANKSGIVING

THOMAS BROOKS...

A thankful man is worth his weight in gold.

STEPHEN CHARNOCK...

How worthy it is to remember former benefits when we come to beg for new.

SINCLAIR FERGUSON...

Thankfulness grows best in the seed-bed of conviction, just as some plants must be placed in the soil in the winter if they are to flower in the summer.

THOMAS GOODWIN...

Those blessings are sweetest that are won with prayers and worn with thanks.

WILLIAM GURNALL...

Thanksgiving is an act of self-denial.

WILLIAM HENDRIKSEN...

Prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings.

MATTHEW HENRY...

In thanking God, we fasten upon His favors to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon His perfections in Himself.

Giving Thanks EVERY DAY

*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will
of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:18



REV. WADE KOENEN

Thanksgiving day will be arriving soon: a day filled with family and turkey, laughter and stuffing, and joy and relatives. Most of us look forward to Thanksgiving and look back on previous years with fond memories. We usually take time each Thanksgiving to think about things for which we are thankful. If we were to make a thanksgiving list today, what would it contain? Would it contain only material things and outward blessings? Each and every good gift is from above and we are to be thankful for every good thing that we have received. But if we are thankful only for physical gifts and blessings, our gratitude will not last. If the basis for our thankfulness is materialistic, our thanksgiving will disappear the moment our needs and desires are not met.

First Thessalonians 5:18 tells us, “in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” True thanksgiving is not a day; it is a life. We are not only to be thankful one day a year but every day of the year. We are to be thankful in everything and in every circumstance on every day of the year.

What is the key to being thankful in everything all the time? Luke 17:12–19 records for us the miracle of the ten lepers cleansed by Jesus. They came to Jesus with their leprosy condition. The diagnosis of leprosy was not an easy thing; leprosy then was like being diagnosed with terminal cancer today. It brought with it a sense of hopelessness. Leprosy also had social ramifications: those who had leprosy were not allowed to stay with others in a community. They had to live outside the community, quarantined in isolation and forbidden from having any physical contact with any who did not have leprosy. This meant loved ones could not show or receive affection from lepers. Lepers also suffered from severe physical deformities. Nerves would deaden which would cause secondary injuries that at times could be very serious. As bad as the secondary injuries could be, leprosy often worsened to the point where it was hard even to look at a leper. Advanced leprosy caused noses, ears, cheeks, and chins to slowly decay. Not a pretty picture! The hardest of all was the spiritual judgment from others and the sense of guilt that came along with it. Often they were told that they had received the “finger of God” or the judgment of God upon their sins.

This was the condition with which these men came to Jesus crying for mercy. We know the history: Jesus hears the cry of these ten lepers and commands them all to go to the temple to be declared cleansed by the priests. They obey; but only one of them comes back to Jesus, falls down at His feet, glorifies God, and gives his thanks to Jesus — thanks for the cleansing and the new life and hope that he received from Jesus.

The story of the ten lepers gives us many lessons, one of which is the key to daily thankfulness. Daily thankfulness begins with being cleansed from the eternally condemning spiritual filth of our sins. The blood of the cross is the doorway through which the Lord Jesus offers and gives the forgiveness of sins. The cross is the foundation and reason for daily thanksgiving. When we have had our sins cleansed and covered in the blood of Jesus, we have new life; we are declared pardoned from our sin and are freed from God’s wrath. We have a real relationship with God, we have God as our Father, the Spirit as our Sanctifier, and a future home and eternal inheritance that does not fade away.

It will be very easy or very hard to be thankful on Thanksgiving Day and in the coming holiday season; it all depends on whether we base our thankfulness on our circumstances or are enabled by the Holy Spirit to base it on the cross of Christ. The cross, which is the way to a personal relationship with Jesus and the heavenly Father through His Spirit, is the key to thankfulness each and every day in every circumstance.

Rev. Wade Koenen is pastor of the Fort Macleod, Alberta HRC Outreach.

JODOCUS VAN LODENSTEIN

EDITORIAL

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

(1620–1677)



Utrecht Academy

Jodocus van Lodenstein was born February 6, 1620, in Delft, in the province of South Holland, in the western Netherlands. Delft was situated along the Schie River between Rotterdam and The Hague.¹ Jodocus's father, Joost Cornelisz, was from a prominent family and served as mayor of Delft for a time. His mother, Maria van Voorburg, was also from a prominent aristocratic home. Though Jodocus lived simply, refusing to indulge in the luxuries of the aristocracy, he never denied his association with this social class.

Boyhood Years

Jodocus's early years shaped his life in at least five ways:

- Godliness was his goal from early boyhood. He even took a vow of chastity in his pre-adolescent years so that he could serve the Lord single-mindedly all his life. His affluence and singleness shaped his unique ministry.²
- Suffering marked his life. Jodocus suffered throughout his life from what is now thought to have been an allergy that frequently caused bacterial infections. He also had a severe speech impediment. Since the speech problem hampered his ability to speak, his parents did not support his call to the ministry in its early stages. In time, however, God graciously healed him of this impediment. Carl Schroeder says this healing influenced Jodocus's view of the Holy Spirit's work.³
- Jodocus's parents greatly influenced him and his theology. They raised him to see the necessity of truth and godliness: to understand, know, and experience truth was to live a life of holiness. This conviction became a dominant theme of Jodocus. His parents were profoundly interested in each of their children's gifts and abilities and helped them develop those gifts. Jodocus's father rallied behind him throughout his training and helped him acquire his first pastorate.⁴
- While a pre-adolescent, Jodocus heard the great English Puritan, Thomas Hooker (1586–1647) preach, which was a lasting legacy. He developed a love for the English Puritans, which led to his calling as a pastor and his preaching on repentance.⁵
- Jodocus was an intelligent, intuitive, and caring person. From childhood to death, he was sensitive to the

needs of others. That character trait shone through his musical gifts. He excelled in playing the lyre and wrote numerous hymns, many of which were sung by his congregations. He seldom showed his emotions to others, but his poetry revealed his heart and soul.

Education

At age sixteen, van Lodenstein entered Utrecht Academy, where he first met Gisbertus Voetius. In an academic world permeated by scholasticism, Voetius reinforced van Lodenstein's belief that piety should mark the true Christian. The writings of many English Puritans translated into Dutch also influenced van Lodenstein in that conviction.⁶

While van Lodenstein was at Utrecht, the Enlightenment's stress on individualism began to permeate society. Though the Enlightenment was largely rejected by Dutch Further Reformation divines, Voetius had a tinge of individualism in his preaching. That was also evident in van Lodenstein's later sermons and comforted him in his greatest hours of personal need.

After graduating from Utrecht Academy, van Lodenstein returned home because there were no empty parishes. His father arranged for him to study Eastern languages under the German pietist scholar, Johannes Cocceius, in Franeker. Though van Lodenstein wanted to go to England to learn more about Puritanism, he acceded to his father's wishes. He boarded in Cocceius's home and studied under him for two years. Eventually, biblical and theological disagreements separated the two, though their friendship endured. Meanwhile, van Lodenstein increasingly felt the weight of his call to the ministry.⁷

First Pastorate: Zoetermeer (1644–1650)

In 1644, van Lodenstein accepted a call to pastor Zoetermeer, a congregation of nearly three hundred people in a town of fewer than six hundred. Though his preaching there deeply impressed many, it also stirred up resistance. Zoetermeer's former pastor, Rev. Johannes Georgii, had died two years before van Lodenstein arrived. Without a pastor, the congregation began splitting into factions. Those factions were exacerbated by van Lodenstein's attempt to enact two substantial changes.

The first major change was his pressing for stricter Sabbath observance. With the dawning of the Golden Age of the Netherlands, the congregation was flourishing. But as is so often true of prosperity, unholy living quickly followed. Thus,

the second major change van Lodenstein asked of his congregation was to listen monthly to repentance sermons. Influenced by the English Puritans (especially Thomas Hooker) to preach a monthly “penitential sermon,” van Lodenstein repeatedly admonished his congregation to repent of their ungodly ways and be more spiritually committed. He said it was important to cultivate holiness but also to continually repent for failing to live godly in Christ Jesus.

These changes were not well received by some people, while others reticently accepted them in respect for their earnest new minister. More liberal people in the congregation viewed him as a legalist who was challenging their lifestyle, while more conservative people viewed him as an Arminian who implied that a believer could sanctify himself of his own free will. Less than three months into his first pastorate, van Lodenstein was brought before the regional classis and charged for his so-called “heretical doctrine of repentance.” The Classis of Delft ruled in favor of the dissenters; however, the church consistory, which had approved van Lodenstein’s changes, refused to obey the classis injunction to read an announcement against van Lodenstein from the pulpit.⁸

Rather than allowing this divisiveness to destroy the church, van Lodenstein held steadfast, helping his own cause by walking humbly rather than defensively among his people and generously giving to the poor. He kept himself busy with catechizing, visitations, preaching, conventicles, teaching, and hymn writing. At no point did he relinquish his convictions. Feeling the church’s need for renewal, he spent much time preaching the need for repentance.

Second Pastorate: Sluis (1650–1653)

After six years at Zoetermeer, van Lodenstein accepted a call to Sluis in Flanders, in the province of Zeeland. People here were sympathetic to pietistic leanings, due to the prior preaching of Willem Teellinck (1579–1629) and Godefridus Udemans (c. 1581–1649). Van Lodenstein made a smooth transition to the congregation of about 1,200 people, which was about four times the size of Zoetermeer. He prayed that Sluis would help him further his goal of spreading spiritual renewal throughout the Netherlands.

Van Lodenstein formed a close bond with the congregation as he shepherded them with loving discipline. While at Sluis, van Lodenstein published *Memoriale versen over de historijboucken des Ouden Testaments* (“Memory Verses from the History Books of the Old Testament”).

Van Lodenstein’s preaching set the foundation for spiritual renewal. But before he could see this come to fruition, his time at Sluis was cut short.⁹

Third Pastorate: Utrecht (1653–1677)

After less than three years at Sluis, van Lodenstein received a call to minister in the *Domkerk* (the Tower Church), a very large congregation in Utrecht, which was the geographical and ecclesiastical center of seventeenth-century Netherlands. Eugene

Osterhaven writes, “The *Domkerk* (cathedral) at the city’s center, could hold several thousand auditors, and capacity crowds came to hear van Lodenstein expound the Word of God.”¹⁰ Nearly 10,500 people in the city of 20,000 attended the *Domkerk*. Van Lodenstein would spend twenty-four years at this church, where he was the younger colleague of Voetius.¹¹

Van Lodenstein was very busy at the church. Services on Sunday mornings began at 7:30 a.m., with the main service being just before noon. A staff of fifteen other pastors taught close to twenty catechism classes on Sunday afternoons, four of which were taught by van Lodenstein. On Tuesdays, he taught classes for people who wanted to become members of the church. On Wednesdays, he catechized again and preached mid-week sermons. On Fridays, he taught classes on spirituality, using either Willem Teellinck’s *Sleutel der Devotie* (“Key of Devotion”) or William Ames’s *Marrow of Theology* as texts.¹² He also published a booklet in which he showed his congregation how to read through the entire Bible in one or two years. He helped his congregation memorize the Scriptures, sometimes putting texts to music to aid memorization. In addition to all this, van Lodenstein visited thousands of church members and called on the poor, orphans, and the sick.¹³

Van Lodenstein was a captivating preacher. Voetius once said, “Our colleague van Lodenstein can do it like none of the rest of us can say or do.”¹⁴ His preaching was simple and direct. He avoided lengthy introductions and spent little time on the historical details of a text. Osterhaven says, “His messages were built around Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the need for and reality of renewal.”¹⁵ His main focus was application, particularly the need for conversion and sanctification.¹⁶

Schroeder notes six characteristics of van Lodenstein’s preaching: he was scriptural, he was faithful to the Reformed confessions, he spoke with great authority, he preached prophetically, he emphasized repentance, and he discouraged the observation of church feast days. He preached both the law and gospel, using the law to convict nominal Christians of hypocrisy and sloth. He also used the law to bring unregenerate, worldly, and self-seeking people to Christ.¹⁷ For those who were converted, he offered the promises of God. With this double-edged sword, van Lodenstein preached in a discriminatory manner, classifying his congregation into a variety of categories, as was typical of Voetian preachers and other proponents of the *Nadere Reformatie*.¹⁸

While in Utrecht, van Lodenstein joined the famous “Utrecht Circle,” sometimes called “Voetian Circle,” which included Justus van den Bogaert (c. 1623–1663), who became van Lodenstein’s closest friend; Johannes Teellinck (c. 1623–1694), son of Willem Teellinck, father of the Dutch Further Reformation; Andrew Essenius (1618–1676), a professor of theology at the Utrecht Academy; Theodore à Brakel (1608–1669), author of several edifying works and father of the better known Wilhelmus; Abraham van de Velde (1614–1677), and Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617–1666), co-author with Voetius of *Spiritual Desertion*. Also involved were some laypeople, most

notably Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), a highly educated German-Dutch scholar, poet, painter, and engraver who served for some time as Jean de Labadie’s assistant. She dropped out of the fellowship when de Labadie fell out of favor with the Utrecht Circle.

The circle was a means to share spiritual experiences, foster fellowship, and discuss important issues that faced the church, particularly the need for the church’s renewal. Van Lodenstein established close spiritual relationships with several colleagues in the Utrecht Circle, who became spiritual encouragers to him. By 1660, however, the Utrecht Circle was in decline, due to the death of some of its members as well as the disappointing experience with de Labadie and the concurrent wars and struggles of the Netherlands that presaged the decline of the Golden Age in the Netherlands.¹⁹

In Utrecht, van Lodenstein experienced two national crises. The first, in 1672, was France’s retaliation against the Dutch for losses suffered the previous year. By June 1672, the French occupied Utrecht and were using the Domkerk to conduct Roman Catholic masses. Van Lodenstein viewed this as a dreadful divine chastisement.

By 1674, the French were forced to leave Utrecht, but before doing so, they threatened to ransack the city. Eventually, they agreed not to do so but instead took hostage several prominent citizens, including van Lodenstein, until the Netherlands could pay them 450,000 guilders (five tons of gold). In November 1673, the hostages were taken to Fort Rees in Cleves. Three months later, the ransom was finally paid.²⁰ Van Lodenstein viewed those three months as profitable, though trying, for his soul. During this time he wrote *Meditatien over eenige van’s Heeren Gods eygenschapen* (1674; “Meditations on some of the Lord God’s Attributes”). He also wrote spiritually edifying poetry. The city of Utrecht did not share van Lodenstein’s view on the situation; despite the French occupation and van Lodenstein’s call to repent, most people remained unbelievers.

The second major crisis was in 1674. A huge hurricane passed through the Netherlands, destroying much in Utrecht, including a large section of the Domkerk. Many citizens were left homeless. Van Lodenstein used the loss to preach against sin, yet his efforts did not result in much spiritual renewal.²¹

Van Lodenstein suffered poor health periodically throughout his life. It affected his ministries in significant ways. For example, when he accepted the call to Utrecht, he could not be installed until the next year. He viewed his sicknesses as a God-given cross.

In the spring of 1677, van Lodenstein became seriously ill. With the help of a secretary, he continued to work until the end of July. When asked how he was doing, van Lodenstein would often respond, “It is enough for me that I know and believe that in God is the fullness and all-sufficiency of everything; I feel nothing, but I know that in the Lord Jesus is the fullness of grace, and I lay myself down on that covenant that is unchangeable.”²² On August 10, 1677, he passed into eternal glory. His last recorded words were: “I am so full of thoughts!”²³

1. “Delft,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/156478/Delft>> Accessed July 28, 2010. Evarudus van der Hooght, preacher at Nieuwendam and formerly a student of van Lodenstein, already published a biography of van Lodenstein in 1696. This work, which provides a warm testimony of van Lodenstein’s piety, has been included in many Dutch publications of van Lodenstein’s writings. For more recent, helpful biographies in Dutch, see Pieter Jzn Proost, *Jodocus van Lodenstein* (Amsterdam: J. Brandt, 1880), Marinus J. A. de Vrijer, *Lodenstein* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1947), D. Slagboom, *Jodocus van Lodenstein* (Utrecht: De Banier, 1966), and J.C. Trimp, *Jodocus van Lodensteyn: Predikant en Dichter* (Kampen: De Groot Goudriaan, 1987).

2. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost: Jodocus van Lodenstein and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: UPA, 2001), 17. See also Graafland, “Jodocus van Lodenstein,” 86.

3. *Ibid.*, 80.

4. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 24.

5. *Ibid.*, 19.

6. *Ibid.*, 20. In the seventeenth century, more than two thousand Reformed, pietistic titles were printed in Dutch, of which more than one-third were translations from Anglo-Saxon works (van Lieburg, “From Pure Church to Pious Culture,” 423–25). See also Willem Jan op’t Hof, *Engelse piëtistische geschriften in het Nederlands, 1598–1622* (Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1987); C. W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind: Studies in Seventeenth Century Anglo-Dutch Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983); Keith Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982); idem, *Trumpets from the Tower: English Puritan Printing in the Netherlands, 1600–1640* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994); J. van der Haar, *From Abbadie to Young: A Bibliography of English, mostly Puritan Works, Translated i/t Dutch Language*, 2 vols. in 1 (Veenendaal: Kool, 1980); idem, *Schatkamer van de Gereformeerde Theologie in Nederland (c. 1600–1800): Bibliografisch Onderzoek* (Veenendaal: Antiquariaat Kool, 1987).

7. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 22.

8. *Ibid.*, 24–28.

9. *Ibid.*, 33–37.

10. *Ibid.*, viii.

11. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: The Age of the Reformation, Volume 4* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 460.

12. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 41–42.

13. *Ibid.*, 84–86.

14. *Ibid.*, viii.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Graafland, “Jodocus van Lodenstein,” 110. See also A. J. Onstenk, “Lodenstein, Jodocus van,” in *Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme*, ed. D. Nauta, et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1988), 3:253.

17. Brienens, *De prediking van het Nadere Reformatie*, 1.4.2.b.

18. For a summary of the classification method of preaching, see Joel R. Beeke, ed., *Forerunner of the Great Awakening: Sermons by Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen (1691–1747)*, The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 36 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), xxx–xxxiv.

19. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 57–60; cf. Trimp, *Jodocus van Lodensteyn*, 116–36.

20. Teunis Brienens, “Jodocus van Lodenstein,” in *De Prediking van de Nadere Reformatie* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1974), 1.4.2.a.

21. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 60–65. See also F. Mallan, “Jodocus van Lodenstein,” 131–33.

22. Schroeder, *In Quest of Pentecost*, 109.

23. *Ibid.*, 101–10.

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THE Covenant-Focused PARENT & TEACHER

By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. — HEBREWS 11:22

Joseph, as second in command after Pharaoh, could have chosen to be buried in a royal tomb in Egypt. When we consider the pyramids of that age, the wealth buried with nobility at that time and the prominent place that Joseph's tomb would have received for generations, we will better understand that by faith he gave instructions regarding where to bury his body. He asked his children to swear that they would bury him, not in Egypt, but in the land of Canaan because he focused on God's covenant promise. He saw that God would bless the children of Israel, including his children's children, and that God would bring them out of Egypt and into Canaan, the land that God had promised to his fathers (Gen. 50:24–26).

For hundreds of years, Joseph's embalmed body laid in a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). All these years Joseph's body testified of his faith in God, in that which God would do! During all the years of Israel's intense slavery in Egypt, the bones of Joseph spoke! Joseph's unburied coffin reminded the Israelites that the trials in Egypt were just temporary. A time was approaching when God would deliver them, when He would bring them out of Egypt and settle them in the land of Canaan.

Why would God deliver Israel? How could they be sure of this? Because of the Lord's covenant mercy and faithfulness. God had said to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7–8). Yes, there were times of oppression when deliverance from Egypt looked impossible, when escape and freedom from Pharaoh and his mighty army seemed like a dream that could never become reality, but it did. We read in Exodus 12:41, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt." And we also read, "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (Exod. 13:19). The faith of Joseph was not put to shame. Every word of God's promise was fulfilled—not even a hoof of an animal was left behind.

Dear parent, was your son or daughter baptized? Are there not rich promises of God upon which you have pleaded? "But," you say, "you do not know my son. Sin and the love of the world have such a powerful grip on him!" Yes, but I encourage you. Look to the children of Israel in Egypt. What a relentless grip Pharaoh had on Israel and for how long! But God is almighty and true to His Word and promise. Like Israel of old, while your son cannot deliver himself and you cannot free him either, God can!

"But my grandchildren are growing up in a world where sin is so available and accepted. Sin is no more viewed as sin. What will the future hold? What can I expect?" True, you cannot expect much from them or the society in which they live. But, is God not just as true to His Word today as in Moses' day? Look to Him. Listen to His Word. Consider His covenant faithfulness.

"But my high school students are not interested in learning about God. They are more interested in video games than the Bible. Their friends mean more to them than God does. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are not viewed as an evil thing, but they see these things as cool and exciting." Dear teachers, I encourage you not to fixate upon the will of your students but to look more to the will of their covenant-making and keeping God. "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." Whose will is stronger, your students' or God's?

Despite all the opposition and impossibilities, the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian slavery and walked freely out of Egypt. And they took the bones of Joseph with them. They carried Joseph's embalmed body with them during their forty years in the wilderness and their wars in Canaan. After all of this, we read "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem" (Josh. 24:32). The faith of Joseph was not put to shame because Joseph's God was a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. And remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8).

Dear parents and teachers, focus on God's Word and covenant. Look to His covenant faithfulness and mercy. Pray for your students, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even for your future seed that is not yet born. Plead upon God's covenant promises. Fix your expectation on who God is, and on what He has said, and on that which He has done and promised to do. Tie your hope and expectation by the rope of faith to the almighty, unchanging, and ever faithful God of the covenant. There is hope for today and expectation for the future.

Are you a covenant-focused parent, a promise-rooted teacher?

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“AN ENEMY HATH DONE THIS”

READ: MATTHEW 13:24–30, 36–43

We all know how frustrating it is to deal with weeds. Perhaps you've planted a vegetable or flower garden, only to find rather quickly that the weeds were more numerous than the plants you were expecting to see sprout from the ground. Perhaps you looked out over the weeds and wondered whether the painstaking and backbreaking labor would be worth it.

The problem that presents itself in the parable of the tares, however, is more serious yet. As they sprout and grow, tares look practically identical to wheat. It is nearly impossible to identify them correctly; the difference only becomes obvious at harvest time.

THE SCENERY

Matthew is the only gospel writer who includes the parable of the tares. It is the second among a series of seven parables that deal with the mystery of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:11). This parable and the parable of the sower are the only parables for which Christ gives an explicit explanation (vv. 36–43).

This parable begins by introducing us to a sower and his seed, as did the parable of the sower. But Christ speaks now of good *seed*, as opposed to a good *soil* (Matt. 13:24; see Matt. 13:8). The farmer sows good wheat seed on his field, but then, at night, an enemy of the farmer oversows it with bad seed. Jesus used the word “tares” to describe this bad seed. An expert in botany explained that the tare is not a weed, but actually an inferior, and unusable, member of the same family of grasses that includes wheat. As it grows, it is virtually indistinguishable from wheat. Only its leaf size is different, and only by a few millimeters. You can only clearly tell the difference when you get towards the harvest, and the useless (some even say, poisonous) kernel appears.

According to the parable, there is a point when the servants of the master do recognize what has happened (v. 27). They suggest to their master that they try to separate out the wheat from the tares. He responds: “Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest” (vv. 29–30). It's clear from the householder's answer that only in the final stage will the difference between the wheat and the tares be such that the reapers can separate the two accurately and effectively. Until then, the two must grow together.

THE SUBSTANCE

It is important to notice how the parable opens: “The kingdom of heaven is likened...” (Matt. 13:24). Some people have been confused by the fact that Christ later explains

that the field is “the world,” and assume that He is teaching that there are both good and bad people in the world at large. Though that is true, Christ is here focused on *the kingdom in the world*, in other words, on the visible church. The way God through Christ brings His reign of grace into this world (the field) could be compared to sowing.

Notice that in this parable the seed is *not* the Word of God (as it was in the parable of the sower), but *the people* whom God has regenerated through His Spirit by means of His Word (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18). Christ tells us that the “good seed are the children of the kingdom” (v. 38). They have the good heart (Luke 8:15), which God alone can give through the miracle of the rebirth. This comparison was also used in Hosea, where God says of His people, “I will sow her unto me in the earth” (Hos. 2:23). This is the first aspect of the kingdom in the world, namely, the true children of the kingdom.

There is also a second aspect: the bad seed, or as Christ explains, “the children of the wicked one” (v. 38). Now Christ is speaking about more than just the mystery of the kingdom. He is explaining what Scripture elsewhere calls “the mystery of iniquity” (2 Thess. 2:7). Contrary to what many imagine, the kingdom of God does not come in one sweeping development, where things simply get better and better. Instead, there is “an enemy” (v. 28). Satan is the wicked imitator of the Lord; he tries to parallel what the Lord does, but through evil means and to evil ends. He comes under the cover of night. That means it is impossible to know and see exactly what he has done. The results often can only be seen much later.

Christ's parable, then, is taking the whole history of the world and compressing it into one agricultural cycle of sowing and reaping. All those in the visible church from all times and places are in this field. There is wheat as well as tares; unregenerate and regenerate; Jacobs as well as Esaus; elect and reprobate; true believers as well as hypocrites.

At first, it is as if there is no apparent difference between all these plants on the field of the visible church. The good and bad seed grow up together. People come into your church and everything seems well, but the devil has brought them in under the cover of night. Others grow up in the church and everything seems to be going well with them. However the devil brought them in under the cover of night as well, and in the end there is among them only bad fruit.

Throughout the history of the kingdom, there has always been the tendency to want to put in the sickle of judgment before the allotted time. How often church leaders or other Christians, like the servants in the parable, have been too hasty in judgment and in their desire to purge the church.

So often we want to rid ourselves of those whom we consider blight on the kingdom of God. Two of Jesus' own disciples, James and John, on one occasion, asked Christ: "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54). If the householder of the parable had let his servants do what they wanted, they might indeed have gotten rid of some of the tares. But likely they would have missed plenty as well. More importantly, they would have pulled up some of the wheat with the tares. The householder's primary concern here is that none of the wheat be lost. After all, the tares do not *hurt* the wheat; they only *obscure* it—and only for a time. God will ensure that not a single stalk of wheat will be mistaken as a tare in the end, no matter how mixed up the two are in the field.

THE SAVIOR

Christ is present in the parable in three ways. First, *Christ is the source of His people*. He sows His people in the field of this world that they might live forever to the glory and praise of God. Nothing of His work will be lost, for in the end the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (v. 43). It's important to notice how this parable puts the work of Christ first. Before the enemy can do anything, Christ sows His people. And Satan cannot undo what Christ has done. He cannot *consume* the seed of Christ; he only can *confuse* the people of God (for a time) by trying to copy what the Lord does and working deceit.

Second, *Christ is the expositor of Satan's devices*. He helps His people understand "the mystery of iniquity." Notice that in the parable the servants do not know where the tares could have come from. The householder needs to explain that the enemy has sown them (v. 28). Sometimes we wonder why so many bad things happen in the church: corruption, abuse, strife, dissension, and so on. As a result, we even wonder whether the visible church is indeed God's work. Shouldn't we expect the church to be all neat and tidy if it is truly the Lord's work? Instead, Christ here reveals that it's precisely *because* the church is God's work that the devil comes alongside and sows his evil seed as well.

Third, *Christ is the patient protector of His people*. The comfort of the parable is that Christ does not need to depend on His servants to root out the problem of the tares. Instead, He has come to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He did so principally on the cross, and He will do so in a final way at the end of time in a way in which none of His own work will be ruined.

How patient Christ shows Himself to be! He allows the wicked and the righteous to coexist until the full harvest is ready. He so loves His own work that He endures the work of Satan up to a point that will most magnificently display His own glory. Paul describes the Lord's patience this way: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels

of wrath fitted to destruction"? (Rom. 9:22) What patience and care on the part of the Savior!

LESSONS

The parable teaches us three basic lessons.

1. *We need heavenly insight*. Just as the servants needed the perspective of their master on the situation in the field, so we need the Lord's perspective. We need it especially as it pertains to the presence of evil in our lives, in the church, and in the world, as well as what His purposes are in the midst of this world.

2. *We need heavenly patience*. The servants in this parable needed the same patience as their Master. Just because there is wickedness on every side and things seem to be getting worse rather than better doesn't mean that God's purposes will fail. We need patience in order to do what God commands, and wait to inherit the full promise when He wants us to have it (see Heb. 10:36). Christians are people whose hearts are directed to patiently wait for the full fulfillment of God purposes (see 2 Thess. 3:5).

3. *We need heavenly hope*. This is the flip side of the coin of our need for patience. Believers can take encouragement from the vast difference between the final destination of the wheat and the final destination of the tares. For many weeks, the tares grew in harmony with the wheat, with their roots even intertwined, perhaps. Yet, the day came when they were perfectly separated, and every stalk of good wheat ended up safely in the Master's barn. May our hope be for the day when all the mixture will be over and done with, and then only to shine brightly in the kingdom of God (v. 42).

QUESTIONS

1 There are some similarities as well as differences between this parable and the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1–8). If, when you read the parable of the tares, you are afraid you do not belong to God's people, how might the parable of the sower help you?

2 "Let them both grow together" (v. 30). Could this be said to contradict what Christ teaches elsewhere in Matthew about church discipline (Matt. 18:18–19)? How then can we properly apply verse 30 of our parable to the church?

3 Find other passages that also show how patiently Christ endures the mixture of His church. Can this teach us to have more patience with the imperfections and inadequacies that we see in the church around us?

4 What practical lessons does this parable teach about how Satan works? What other things does Scripture tell us about Satan's schemes or devices?

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THE | Discipline of God

AS A MARK OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

Church programs, campus ministries, and independent organizations today emphasize the need for radical discipleship. It is not always clear what they mean by this. The word *radical* can be a trendy term. What is clear is this: if one's view of discipleship undervalues discipline, then we can say that whatever adjective that person uses before the term *discipleship*, the latter has ceased to be biblical.

The words *disciple* and *discipline* derive from one Latin root and carry the notion of order. Referring to treatment that corrects or punishes, discipline is instruction or knowledge given to a learner (*discipulus*). Discipleship and discipline are inseparably connected; Jesus' ministry exemplifies that. Christ did not hesitate to correct His disciples (Matt. 8:26; Mark 10:14, 16:14; Luke 9:54–55), who often addressed Him as "Rabbi" or "Teacher."

This is not surprising, for what godly father allows his child to persevere in disobedience? Hebrews declares, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (12:6). The Father's chastening is indispensable to our relationship with Him. When the Father adopts us into His family, showering us with love, He treats us as true sons, fatherly discipline included. Discipline is not an end in itself; God uses it to correct our defective behavior and bring us to obedience (Lev. 26:23; 1 Cor. 5:5). Determined to have holy children, God disciplines us privately through providences and publicly through church discipline.

That means, first, that every Christian undergoes private chastisements for sin. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered Uriah, the Lord sent Nathan to rebuke him. "The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD

to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12:13–14). The Lord sent David consequences for his sin to vindicate His own honor and lovingly brought David to repentance and worship, as Psalm 51 poignantly describes. "Chastising is an effect of his love," says John Owen.

A cautionary note is that not every chastening act of providence stems from divine discipline. Though all suffering derives from the fall, there is not always a direct correlation between personal sin and personal suffering, as the accounts of Job and the man born blind plainly teach (see John 9:3). In their cases, God's chastening hand was motivated primarily by the furthering of His own glory. We cannot always link suffering to specific sin.

Second, Christ viewed discipline as part of church ministry. In establishing the New Testament church, Jesus committed to His disciples the keys of the kingdom along with the power to bind and loose (Matt. 16:19; 18:15–18; John 20:23). The strong language in these passages should not be interpreted too literally, as if the church itself has the power to forgive or condemn sin eternally. But Jesus has specially empowered the overseers of His church to regulate its membership and conduct. He instructs them whom to include and whom to exclude, and He provides biblical precepts that members must obey.

Church discipline thus has positive and negative aspects. Positively, church discipline includes instruction and teaching. The church is every believer's educator, trainer, and nourisher, as the Spirit acts through the preached Word, the sacraments, and church discipline. Negatively, discipline involves corrective actions for members, from rebuke to excommunication (Matt. 18:15–17). In this, the church officers utilize the keys of the kingdom.

The apostles and early church leaders understood Christ's instructions as abiding principles. The apostolic church administered firm discipline to those erring in doctrine or practice. Witness, for example, Paul's sharp admonitions to the Galatians for abandoning the gospel (Gal. 3:1–7) and how he urges the Thessalonians to withdraw from the disobedient (2 Thess. 3:6; see also Titus 3:10) and the Corinthian church to expel the immoral member (1 Cor. 5:4–8). Passing the torch of ministry to younger pastors Timothy and Titus, Paul insists those who sin should face public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20) and that vain talkers and deceivers must be stopped (Titus 1:10–11). Jude bids the church save some “with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23). The church is to discipline believers if their behavior is inconsistent with the gospel.

The apostles, then, viewed discipline as a requisite, perpetual function of the church. The church is to regulate who is part of the community, disciplining members who seriously err in doctrine and life, and expelling impenitent members (Matt. 18:15–17). Not an end in itself, expulsion is the public means God uses to cause repentance or cleanse His church of defilement. “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,” says 1 Corinthians 5:7.

The Reformers generally identified three marks of a true church: sound preaching of the Word, right administration of the sacraments, and biblical exercise of discipline. An important part of the church's ministry is to grow believers from spiritual infancy to adulthood by instructing and correcting. Quoting Cyprian's saying, “You cannot have God as your Father if you do not have the church as your mother,” John Calvin explained that God gathers His children into the bosom of the church “not only that they may be nourished by her help and ministry as long as they are infants and children, but also that they be guided by her motherly care until they mature and at last reach the goal of faith” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.1.1).

Discipline thus promotes genuine piety and godliness rather than rebellion or legalism—privately and in church ministry. By cultivating private disciplines such as Bible reading and meditation, praying, devotional reading, and journaling, Christians usually grow in godliness. But godliness also results from public church discipline, which should seek to encourage Christians to repentance and to live lives of holy, responsive, gratuitous obedience to God. Discipline so practiced offers the law as a set of rules we must follow not to earn God's acceptance but to express gratitude for being accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6). Believers do not achieve genuine piety by legalistic law-keeping, but by a life of love conversant with God's law flowing from our standing in Christ.

Thus, piety is not isolationist spirituality but a lifestyle of loving God and neighbor fostered by spiritual discipline. It brings together the freedom of love and the discipline of obedience. From these considerations, we may conclude that piety grows best in the context of the church, where preaching, administering the sacraments, and discipline work together to promote godly living in the home, church, school, and marketplace.

Today, though, discipline has declined in the contemporary church; many churchgoers see themselves as independent, voluntary members, accountable to no one. But Hebrews 13:7 says that submission to God and His appointed authorities, not autonomy, is a mark of faith. Our baptism into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost signifies this subjection to authority. When the Israelites were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” they were baptized under his God-given authority (1 Cor. 10:2). Baptism into the name of the triune God means that God calls us to be His disciples and brings us under His authority, exercising that authority through the church.

Some think that church discipline is cruel; they fail to see that giving medicine to the sick is never cruel. Others fear that church discipline will strip the church of her glory, costing respect and members. In actuality, when the church faithfully administers discipline, she grows in respect, glory, and often membership, just as she did after Ananias and Sapphira were disciplined (Acts 5). Others argue that God does not need officers to keep His church pure since vengeance belongs to Him—He will manage His own vineyard. It is true that God needs no man. But He delegates authority to human officers who exercise discipline in His name, for His glory and the church's purity. Sadly, few Christians realize today that receiving discipline from Jesus' appointed office-bearers, ruling in accord with God's Word, is receiving discipline from our Father Himself.

Discipline, then, is inseparable from discipleship. This is evident in our private lives, as God promises chastisement to all His children, and in the ministry of the church to her members. We must reclaim the teaching of the New Testament, the Ancient Church, and the Reformers, that receiving God's discipline willingly is a distinguishing mark of every true Christian. God promised to disciple and discipline His children, Jesus commanded it of His disciples, the apostles insisted on it in the churches, and the Reformers reckoned it a mark of the true church. As we await the judgment day, let us strive to disciple and discipline as God does, so the church might appear a spotless, beautiful bride for her long-awaited Bridegroom.

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Google Knows Everything

What Every Parent Should Know About the Internet (5)

David Clark

You may have heard the saying that “Google knows everything.” What this generally means is that using the Google search engine, almost all knowledge is accessible on the Internet. But have you ever considered how companies use the Internet to market and sell products, including dubious practices such as “viral marketing”? You will be surprised by how much they know about you. Not only does Google (and other search engines) know a great deal about the Internet, they also know a lot about you.

Identity theft

The Internet has opened up a huge amount of knowledge, and knowledge, particularly about individuals, can be sold. Some of this activity is illegal; much of it is perfectly within the confines of the law.

In a recent article, one senior fraud expert explained that criminals are exploiting the same data-mining techniques that are used by banks and governments to spot fraud. This process can be fully automated with the people who do this known as “Data Doggs.” To put this in context, a senior British Telecom executive explained that “for a small fee, \$50 (£30) or thereabouts, they’d gather all the data on you and prepare a three- to five-page detailed report. The fee implies this exercise probably took less than an hour.”¹

The price of free

Over the last few years, or in other words, since most people began using the Internet, we have become accustomed to free information. But, as the saying goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch. This is also the case for the Internet. While it is true that it is easy to find websites on the Internet that are there for purely altruistic reasons, many of those active on the Internet are driven by motives that range from making a profit to proselytizing. There are also many with much darker motives. Writing on the leading Internet search provider, one commentator suggested that “the ‘price’ that we pay for Google’s free services is to present ourselves as better targets for niche marketing.”² Google, in common with most search engines, makes 99% of its profit from advertising. Of course, the better, more focused the advertising, the easier it is to sell. Companies, after all, don’t want to spend money advertising to people who have no interest in their products.

“So what?” you may say. “Don’t we already live in a society bombarded with advertising, from television, newspaper, radio, magazines, and a myriad of other locations? There is nothing immoral or wrong about advertising. Is this not just another form of the kind of advertising that we have simply grown accustomed to ignoring?”

There is great strength in this argument, and I would not wish to suggest that advertising is immoral. After all, we as Christians advertise our meetings, our special events. We want people to know about them or about a cause for which we feel passionately.

Some dangers

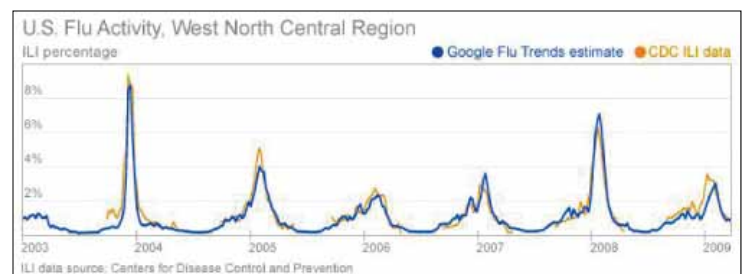
Yet there are peculiar and very real dangers with the Internet. Because it seems impersonal, for many it provides an almost irresistible draw. For example, as we discussed in a previous article, people are prone to reveal information about themselves on social networks, things that they would not say if they were face to face with an individual. It is precisely because of this that Internet predators succeed. Take the case of a 57-year-old man, Colin Maddocks, who conned twelve girls in British Columbia, Canada, between 13 and 16 years old into believing that he himself was a teenager. Virtual meetings would lead to face to face meetings where “Maddocks would offer alcohol, cigarettes and drugs as enticements in order to gain control and compliance to requests of a sexual nature.”³

The truth is that we are often far too naïve and ready to give out information about ourselves on a website, without knowing anything (or very little) of who runs the website or what they will do with the information. Not only this, but even the information we search for provides data that can be sold.

Information for sale

In his fascinating book entitled *Click—What Millions of People are Doing Online and Why It Matters*, author Bill Tancer draws data from an Internet marketing company called Hitwise Competitive Intelligence Services. The data is a sample of over ten million people using the Internet in the UK, USA, and other countries (a small sample compared with most search engines). Tancer illustrates the power of information through a series of examples. In one graph, he shows how searches for diet websites are at their highest two weeks after the US Thanksgiving holiday. Similarly, searches of homes for sale peak in July and slowly decrease until just after Christmas when there is another significant jump of interest. All of this is useful information for anyone wishing to sell a diet or a home.

When tracking the recent outbreak of swine flu, the Center for Disease Control turned to Google as a reliable source of information. The data provided by Google was as good as and more instantaneous than almost any other data source. Writing on their website, Google says that they “found that certain search terms are good indicators of flu activity. Google Flu Trends uses aggregated Google search data to estimate current flu activity around the world in near real-time.”⁴



A comparison of flu data from Google and the CDC

Author John Battelle, in his book, *The Search—How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture*, coins the term “the database of intention,” which he describes as “the aggregate results of every search ever entered, every result list ever tendered, and every path taken as a result.” He goes on to describe the power of Internet information by explaining that “information represents, in aggregate form, a place holder for the intentions of humankind—a massive database of desires, needs, wants, and likes that can be discovered, subpoenaed, archived, tracked, and exploited to all sorts of ends. Such a beast has never before existed in the history of culture, but is almost guaranteed to grow exponentially from this day forward.”

Going Viral

Internet marketers sell information, and the more targeted it is the better. It has been noted that “89% of adults share content with friends, family and associates by email.”⁵ Viral marketing works by adding targeted advertising to content that might be shared—for example, a YouTube video or a joke email. The psychology behind viral marketing is subtle. People receiving email or a recommendation from a friend or colleague are less likely to discard it. One viral marketer explains that “people generally like to share content because it makes them feel more important. If you appear to be the first to find something of interest to your peers or others and then give that thing to them, it will gain you kudos and instill within you a subtle sense of increased social worth.”⁶

How does it work?

Every time you search for something on the Internet, that search is recorded. Every time you go to a website or you click on a link, that fact is recorded. Every piece of information you enter into the Internet is stored and may be sold to others. Last year, Google’s annual revenue was more than \$23 billion. It made its money by selling targeted advertising. Clicking those sponsored links on the right of the search results page will generate revenue for Google. Companies bid on keywords used during searches. The more popular the keyword, the more expensive it is. The order in which the sponsored links are displayed reflects the price that bidders are willing to pay to have you click on their link. Other search engines, Yahoo or Bing and others, all operate on a similar model.

Website owners have a similar array of tools at their disposal. These tools, called analytics, store and analyze every piece of information—the number of visitors, where they come from, how long they spent browsing the website, which pages they looked at and for how long, whether they entered the website as a result of a search or from another website, what page they exited the website at, etc. All this information is useful in targeting users, improving the website, and better selling the products on display.

So what?

It should be apparent by now that everything you do on the Internet is being recorded, cataloged, organized, and probably sold. In one sense, there is very little we can do about this if we are to use the Internet at all. However, as Christians, we are to be wise about the world we live in and not easily taken in. We

should “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). We are sent “forth as sheep in the midst of wolves” and must therefore be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). The injunction comes in the context of a warning to “beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils.” Already, information gleaned on the Internet, particularly social networks, is being used as evidence in the courts. Imagine the situation in which the law of the land was anti-Christian, something we in the UK have come very close to with recent efforts to introduce what was termed “equality legislation.” How could the information harvested about us on the Internet then be used? While we have liberty, we are not to be shy in using our rights where they can further the cause of the gospel, as Paul did when confronting the authorities in Philippi after his release from prison. But in all things, it is good to remember and understand people’s motives and the potential use that they can make of information that we have freely given away on the Internet.

Practical Advice

The first thing is not to overreact. When George Orwell described Big Brother in his novel entitled *1984*, he had no idea of the extent to which our every action would be cataloged! While it is possible to install software that claims to cover up your tracks when browsing, in reality, this is a very difficult thing to achieve. Rather, we should be very wary of giving out personal information, particularly to websites of which we know very little. We must always bear in mind that the “privacy of our own home” is a misnomer when it comes to the Internet; all that we do is being recorded. Let us be wise in what we give away and the information we post, employing that most uncommon grace of “sanctified common sense.” Our approach to the Internet should be the same as the rest of life: “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). That also applies to the websites we visit!

1. <http://www.pcpco.co.uk/features/110472/whos-the-biggest-threat-to-your-identity-you>

2. <http://www.slate.com/id/2175651/>

3. <http://www.vancouverite.com/2009/12/08/12-kelowna-school-girls-lured-on-internet-with-drugs-smokes-and-booze/>

4. <http://www.google.org/about/flutrends/how.html>

5. <http://www.justilien.com/research/viral-link-baiting.htm>

6. How Users Share Viral Content Online, <http://www.viralmanager.com/strategy>

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*, April 2010. The author would appreciate receiving questions on this series of articles from readers via email to 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

NEW RHB BOOKS

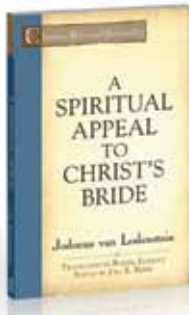


Moses' Self-Denial

Jeremiah Burroughs

Reflecting on Hebrews 11:24–25, Jeremiah Burroughs ponders how Moses relinquished his noble and comfortable rights as the son of Pharaoh's daughter to find greater honor as a suffering son of Abraham. Burroughs explains how Christians are called to deny all honors, privileges, and delights for the sake of Christ. He also shows how God is especially honored when we forgo selfish desires at a time when they seem most advantageous to us. You will benefit greatly to see how faith acts to transform losses caused by self-denial into true honor. This is an insightful, practical book—a helpful antidote for our natural selfishness.

(160 pages, HB) \$22.00/17.00



A Spiritual Appeal to Christ's Bride

Jodocus van Lodenstein
Translated by Bartel Elshout
Edited by Joel R. Beeke

A Spiritual Appeal to Christ's Bride consists of nine sermons preached by Jodocus van Lodenstein, one of the most prominent leaders of the Dutch Further Reformation. The sermons stress themes that are dear to the preacher's heart: the need for the Holy Spirit to carry the Reformation further than the mind, the need for perpetual reformation and growth in piety, the need to cultivate holiness and self-denial, and the need to know and experience as Christ's bride an intimate spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ, the perfect Bridegroom. The book calls nominal Christians to a more profound commitment to Christ, stressing that only such a commitment can deliver the church from shallowness and unholiness. Today, more than ever, the church needs to heed this call to awaken from its spiritual slumber.

(176 pages, PB) \$15.00/11.00



A Portrait of Paul: Identifying a True Minister of Christ

Rob Ventura and Jeremy Walker

What does a true pastor look like, and what constitutes a faithful ministry? How can we identify the life and labors of one called by God to serve in the church of Jesus Christ? To address these questions, Rob Ventura and Jeremy Walker examine how the apostle Paul describes his pastoral relation to the people of God in Colossians 1:24–2:5. By discussing these essential attitudes, qualities, and characteristics of a faithful minister of Christ, *A Portrait of Paul* provides gospel ministers an example of what they should be and demonstrates for churches the kind of pastors they will seek if they desire men after God's own heart.

(256 pages, PB) \$18.00/14.00

OTHER NEW BOOKS



Complete in Him: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying the Gospel

—Michael P.V. Barrett
For Christians, everything between this earthly life and eternity depends on what we think about Jesus Christ. This book examines the basic, essential, and inseparable elements of the gospel in order to show that everything relates to and flows from the Savior. Salvation in Christ is complete, and we are complete in Him.

(PB, Ambassador, 325 pgs.) \$17.00/\$14.50



Ever, Only, All for Thee

—Pamela D. Bugden
Frances Ridley Havergal is one of the most beloved and well-known Christian writers in English history. Even today, her famous hymns, such as *Take My Life and Let it Be*, are treasured by thousands. Bugden sketches the life of this woman who was gifted with spiritual insight, having about her the fragrance of Christ.

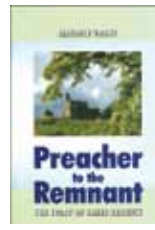
(PB, Granted Ministries, 167 pgs.) \$15.95/\$14.00



John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety

John Calvin
Elise McKee, editor
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Preacher to the Remnant: The Story of James Renwick

—Maurice Grant
James Renwick was one of the greatest field preachers during the Covenanting period. This biography combines fascinating historical detail with a warm spiritual appreciation for Renwick's devotion to Christ—a devotion that would eventually lead to his execution.

(HC, Scottish Reformation Society, 280 pgs.) \$35.00/\$25.00



Dinosaurs for Kids

—Ken Ham
Within these pages, children will uncover the facts about dinosaur history from the Creation to recent discoveries. Let Ken Ham take you on a journey through time to explore these awesome wonders of God's design. From where they lived to what scientists assume they know about these great creatures, dinosaurs have never been this exciting, revealing, and amazing.

(HC, Masters, 64 pgs.) \$15.00/\$11.25



Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible

—Don Kistler, editor
One of the main tenets of the Reformation was "Scripture alone." This book unfolds the doctrine, dealing with recent criticisms and doubts, and offering solid exegetical and theological arguments. This book includes contributions from Joel Beeke, Sinclair Ferguson, Robert Godfrey, Michael Horton, R.C. Sproul, Derek Thomas, and more.

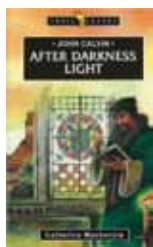
(HC, Reformation Trust, 144 pgs.) \$14.95/\$11.00



John Knox: An Introduction to His Life and Works—*Richard G. Kyle and Dale W. Johnson*

While many biographies have given sketches of Knox, the authors here have sought to offer a different approach. Interpreting Knox through his various writings, they allow him to tell the story of his life and ideas. This volume offers a succinct and readable account of one of the most influential Presbyterian Reformers.

(PB, Wipf & Stock, 208 pgs.) \$24.00/\$19.50



John Calvin: After Darkness Light
Catherine MacKenzie

John Calvin took the Reformation's message and taught it to the world through his preaching and writings. This easy-to-read children's book traces the life of Calvin in an enjoyable and stimulating way. Help your children learn about one of the most significant theologians in the history of the church.

(PB, Christian Focus, 159 pgs.) \$7.00/\$5.00



From Age to Age—*Keith Mathison*

Rather than seeing eschatology only in terms of the Second Coming, this volume traces the outworking of God's revealed eschatological purposes from promise to fulfillment throughout all of Scripture. The strength of this book falls on its practical import. Eschatology is not mere theological speculation; it affects the way we think, live, and worship. Mathison has given us a comprehensive, insightful, and up-to-date introduction to biblical eschatology.

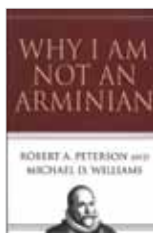
(HC, P&R, 812 pgs.) \$39.99/\$30.00



Pardon and Assurance: How to Know for Certain Your Sins are Forgiven and You are Bound for Heaven—*William J. Patton*

This book is packed with profound yet practical theology penned in simple language with numerous illustrations. It is unsurpassed in its clear presentation of the heinousness of sin, the essence of the gospel, and the experience of assurance of faith.

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Why I Am Not an Arminian
Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams

For the last hundred years, Arminian theology has been a trademark of evangelical churches in North America. With its lofty view of human nature and inadequate understanding of God's sovereign love in Christ, Arminianism poses a true and serious threat to evangelical Christianity. Here the authors engage with Arminian arguments and offer solid biblical and historical refutations. Marked by grace and insight, this book is accommodating to laypeople and pastors alike.

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Masculine Mandate—*Richard D. Phillips*

Popular culture is doing nothing but exacerbating the church's dearth of godly, strong men, putting forth new and redefined views of masculinity. The Bible alone has the answer for what men are to be, and in this book Phillips provides essential exegesis and issues a call for reformation in the church's attitude towards the role of men in the family.

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(PB, Christian Focus, 91 pgs.) \$8.00/\$6.00

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FOR OUR CHILDREN

DIANA KLEYN

After the great flood, God promised Noah that He would never again flood the entire earth. Instead, He promised that “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). From then until now, the seasons have followed one another, and night has followed day; God has kept His promise. October and November are months of harvest time; in these months we give God thanks for the harvest He has given in spite of our sins.

There is more to life, however, than food and clothing. Often, in the season of harvest, ministers preach on this text: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20). What does it mean? Children, this text is especially meaningful for adults who are still not saved. It is a picture of a sad spiritual state, when people are entering the autumn of their lives (which is the older years) and still are not saved. Many of these unsaved people wish they would have sought the Lord in the “seedtime” or springtime of their lives, when they were young. For your sakes, dear children, I would like, considering this text, to talk to you about the springtime of your lives, that is, your youth. I want you to avoid being in the situation of these older people facing their adult years without Christ and regretting the waste of their young years. Many of them would tell you to seek the Lord while you are young. Do not put off seeking salvation!

Why is your youth the best time to seek the Lord? Why is it more difficult when you are older? There are several reasons. First, you have more time when you are younger. As you get older, you must give many hours of your day to your job and caring for your family. There are more things that take your attention away from God. “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25).

Second, your heart becomes harder as you get older. This is a frightening truth. We become used to sin. We also become accustomed to the things of God, and often the Bible and the preaching have little effect on us. “For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed” (Matthew 13:15). Most of God’s children are saved when they are young, for your heart is more tender when you are young.

Third, older people doubt God more quickly. Jesus talked about “childlike faith” when He was on earth. Children believe more quickly and easily than adults do. That is a lovely characteristic of a child. “Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein” (Mark 10:15). Adults become wise in their own eyes and ask, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9), doubting God’s almighty power. “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him” (John 12:37).

Fourth, the appeal of the things of this world becomes stronger as we get older. Adults crave wealth and power while children are far less interested in these things. “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

For these reasons consider Jeremiah’s words. Instead of having to say, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved,” wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could say that the seed has been planted and the harvest will be great? Dear children, are you bearing fruit? Is the beginning of a great harvest evident in your life? Does your life show the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22–23)? Yet, as long as you live on this earth, you will have to repent of many sins. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to Jesus to wash you, and to sanctify you, so that you may glorify God more fully.

Or is your heart still unrenewed? Is this fruit of the Spirit absent in your life? Does that make you sad? Do you long to find forgiveness and safety in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you been praying for a new heart and fear there has been no change? Children, there are so many promises for you in the Bible! God is so gracious, especially to children, and in particular to covenant children. Bend your knees before Him and beg Him to sow the seed of eternal life in your heart so that you may bear much fruit. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near” (Isaiah 55:6). Plead with Him to save you while you are young so that God will never have to say to you, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved.”

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

Abby's Joyful News

Who can tell the results of a single sermon or follow the consequences of one conversion? When George Whitefield was preaching in New England, a woman was converted. She became concerned for the salvation of others and spent much time in prayer. However, no one would join her in prayer; no one else was convinced of the necessity of salvation. Only her ten-year-old daughter, Abby, knelt dutifully in prayer with this woman as she pleaded with God for the conversion of others. After a time, it pleased God to touch Abby's heart. Confessing her sin to God, she received forgiveness. Abby was filled with the joy of the Lord and longed to share it with others.

"Oh, Mother!" she exclaimed. "If only the whole world knew the gospel! I wish I could tell everyone! Let me go and tell the neighbors! I want everyone to know that they can find salvation and happiness in the Savior!"

You might expect the mother to share Abby's enthusiasm, but, sad to say, she did not. She was filled with the doubt that hinders many adults. "No, my dear child," she replied gloomily, "that would be useless. They will only laugh at you. No one will believe you."

"But I have to tell them," Abby pleaded. "Mr. Sinclair, the shoemaker—he'll believe me!"

Without waiting for her mother's response, Abby dashed down the street to the shoemaker's shop. She found him at his workbench, and he greeted her with a smile. Eagerly, she began to tell him that there was no time to waste. "Soon you will die, and you are a sinner, just like I am. You must pray for salvation, Mr. Sinclair. My mother prayed for me, and I asked the Savior to wash away all my sins. Now I am so happy that I want to tell everyone about Jesus. I want everyone to be just as happy as I am!"

The shoemaker was stunned. The girl's joy was obvious. He made no reply, but Abby's words sunk deep into his heart. Putting aside his work, he bowed his head. For a long time, he sat unmoving at his bench. Then he began to pray. His tears flowed as he confessed his sin to God and begged for mercy. He did not even notice when Abby left to tell others in her town about the dear Savior. With the Holy Spirit's blessing, many in the neighborhood were awakened and, within



several months, more than fifty people were brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and rejoiced in His power and grace.

Adapted from *Narratives of Remarkable Conversions and Revival Incidents* by William C. Conant (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858), 337–38.

Despising Salvation

Some sheep were following a young boy down the street. They were headed to the butcher in order to be sold and slaughtered. They made no resistance, no noise, but walked on peacefully.



A minister stood next to a man who was waiting for the sheep to pass. "The Son of God was just like one of these sheep," he remarked.

The man looked up in surprise, and then nodded. "Yes, I suppose you are right."

"He went quietly and willingly to be put to death for no sin of His own, just like these sheep," continued the preacher. "He died so that He could obtain eternal life for those who should believe on Him. He knew the value of the soul of man, though most men neglect and despise His salvation. I hope you don't despise His salvation."

The man looked up sharply. "I never despised His salvation!" he retorted angrily.

"Have you trusted in Christ for the salvation of your soul, then?" questioned the minister.

Uncomfortably, the man muttered that he had not.

The minister looked the man full in the face. "Well, that is despising His salvation. Though you may not have scorned it with your mouth, you have done so by the way you live. Suppose a man were to fall into this river here," said the preacher, pointing to the river flowing alongside the road. "Suppose we jump into that rowboat to try to save him but he refuses our help. Though he is drowning, he says he knows a better way. Wouldn't that be despising us and our help?"

"Yes, it would," agreed the man.

"In the same way, we despise the Savior and His salvation if we ignore Him and the free gift He offers us. What if a man who is condemned to death were to receive a pardon but he threw it away and never acted on it, and then was executed? Wouldn't you say that man deserved his punishment? He despised the redemption offered him! So it is with everyone who neglects the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Did the man begin to seek the salvation he had so long neglected? We don't know. What about you, children, are you neglecting this great salvation? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3). Turn to the Lord today, while you are still young! Ask Him for salvation. He will never turn away those who come to Him. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

Adapted from *Walks of Usefulness* by John Campbell. Boston (Heath & Graves, 1854), 150–52.

Alice was the youngest of a large circle of brothers and sisters, who loved her dearly. She had a mother who loved each of her children and taught them obedience and respect. She was also a praying mother, whose heart's desire was to lead her children to "the Lamb of God, [who] taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b). The Holy Spirit blessed this mother's efforts, and the four oldest were showing evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. Her prayer now for little Alice was that she might have an obedient heart and a tender conscience. When she bathed Alice, she prayed that her heart might be cleansed in that fountain that flows for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1) and every transgression—the precious blood of Christ.

Alice was now five years old, and often played with her cousin Ruth. Many happy hours were spent together as they played with their dolls or skipped off to school. You might be tempted to think that little children are full of innocence and love.

One night, when it was time for bed, the oldest sister, Sarah, said, "Come, Alice, I will put you to bed."

Alice whined, "I want Mommy to put me to bed."

"Mommy has visitors this evening, so she cannot put you to bed tonight," explained Sarah patiently.

Alice became very quiet and looked away sadly. "Are you feeling sick?" asked Sarah, remembering that her little sister had barely eaten any supper.

"No, I'm not sick," answered Alice.

Sarah took Alice's hand. "Come. Let's go upstairs to bed."

"I want Mommy to put me to bed," repeated Alice.

"Mommy needs to stay with her company. You will see her in the morning."

At last Alice went with her sister, but slowly and unwillingly. As Sarah undressed her, she noticed tears running down Alice's cheeks. "What is the matter? Tell me, Alice, what's wrong?" asked Sarah anxiously.

Alice only sighed deeply. When it was time for Alice to kneel down by her bed to pray as she always did, she bowed her head but no words came. Sarah thought this was very strange. Alice then got up so silently, so sadly, so tearfully, that Sarah became frightened. When Sarah went downstairs again, she waited for an opportunity to speak to her mother and told her about Alice's strange behavior.

"I will go up as soon as I can and see what's the matter," promised the mother.

"She's not sick, Mom. It seems as if something is bothering her."

The mother excused herself from her guests and quickly went upstairs to check on her youngest child. Quietly she entered Alice's room, wondering if perhaps the little girl had fallen asleep.

"Mommy, I'm so glad you came!" cried Alice.

"My dear child," said the mother tenderly, stooping down to her bedside, "what troubles you? Tell me."

"Oh, Mommy, I'm such a wicked girl! I killed Ruth today!" Alice sobbed.

"What?" asked the mother in surprise.

"I have killed Ruth in my heart! She got angry with me, and I wished she were dead. I cannot ask God to forgive me until I've made up with Ruth. God won't listen to me because my heart has hate in it. God is angry with me! Oh, Mommy!" Alice cried as if her heart were broken. Indeed, her heart was broken, for the Holy Spirit was opening her eyes to the misery of sin. Alice's mother could not comfort her; the weight of guilt was too heavy for the little girl to bear.

"May I go to Ruth's house right now so I can make up with her? Then I'll be able to pray again. Please, Mommy?"

The mother thought for a moment and then replied, "Yes, my child, you may go," for she knew there was no more important matter than helping her child through the thorny places on the narrow way. She called Alice's father, who wrapped her in a thick blanket and carried her to the home of her cousin Ruth who lived next door. Alice was taken to Ruth's bedside. What a touching scene: the confession of sin, the plea for forgiveness, and the embrace of reconciliation! Then, laying her head on her father's shoulder, she asked to be carried home.

In her own bedroom again, Alice knelt down and asked God to forgive her the sin of killing Ruth in her heart. "Give me love in my heart," she prayed earnestly, "because God is love, and it was Thy love that made Jesus Christ die on the cross. Give me love, for I want to be like Jesus Christ. Keep me from hating and killing anybody in my heart. Amen."

This was Alice's prayer. Sin and conscience, love and hate, had been battling in her heart. Sadly, hate often conquers love in many children's hearts and time and again sin silences conscience. Through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, love gained the victory in Alice's heart. The love and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ healed her broken heart: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

The love that comes from God—love to God, love to others, love to do the right—this love identifies the children of God. Hatred, anger, and strife show us to be children of the devil. How many children reading this can remember hating and killing people in their hearts? Have you been sorry for it and begged to be forgiven? If not, it shows that you are far from God and holy things. Think of this.

Has the Holy Spirit made you sorry for your sin? Then flee to the Savior, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

RENEWAL AND GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS



Most subscriptions to *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* expire with the December 2010 issue. Please forward your renewal in the envelope provided prior to January 15 to avoid missing future issues (unless your church provides payment).

Subscription rates for 2011 have remained unchanged. As the rates still fall below costs incurred, donations remain indispensable. As in former years, we are trusting that many of you will be able to assist with smaller or larger gifts to enable us to continue keeping our subscription rates low.

Our appreciation is also extended to those of you who have donated generously for free subscriptions to seminaries, pastors, and prisoners. Please consider doing so again this year. If we had more donations for this purpose, we would be able to reach many more church leaders and prisoners with Reformed, experiential truth.

Please also prayerfully consider providing your friends with a gift subscription to the *BSGT*. That would be an excellent way to spread the Reformed faith and at the same time assist us in keeping our subscription prices as low as they are.

Finally, heartfelt gratitude to all who have assisted in providing material for *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*: our ministerial brothers, assistant editor, and others for their timely contributions; our subscription managers; our typesetters, secretaries, and printer; and our *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* Committee. Without you, this task would not be completed each month. Above all, may God command His blessing upon this work to many hearts—saving the lost, edifying His people, and glorifying His worthy Name. For this, we are totally dependent on His free and sovereign grace.



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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).

TEACHER NEEDED

Providence Christian School invites applications for the position of full-time Jr./Sr. High teacher for the current school year. Providence Christian School is situated in a beautiful, southern Alberta rural community, minutes from Lethbridge. PCS has grades K–12 with about 120 students attending and 12 staff members. We offer a four-day school week, competitive salaries/benefits, a growing, committed school community, and a dedicated team of teaching staff.

We encourage qualified teachers who submit to God's Holy Word and the Reformed confessions, and are committed to educating children and youth in the Reformed Christian perspective to apply.

Please send your resumé, references, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to Mr. G. Van de Haar, Principal, Providence Christian School, Box 240, Monarch, AB T0L 1M0. For more information, e-mail: vandehaar.g@pcsmoarch.com, or phone: 403–381–4418 (school), 403–824–3182 (home).

BRADENTON FLORIDA WORSHIP SERVICES

Please notice schedule changes and announcements

Interdenominational worship services are again scheduled to be held, the LORD willing, at the American Red Cross building located at 2905–59th Street West, Bradenton, Florida 34209. The services will begin at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 12, 2010 and each Sunday thereafter, also on December 25 until January 2, 2011 at which time a 10:30 a.m. morning service will be added. This schedule will continue through the second week of April. Guest minister preaching services will be supplemented by the reading of sermons based on sound Reformed doctrine. The Heritage Newsletter will be utilized whenever possible to announce guest preachers and any deviations from, or additions to, this schedule.

For additional information, please contact Mr. Wm. P. Noorduyn, Sr. at 616-457-8973 (MI), 941-747-0313 (FL), e-mail: wrnoorduyn@aol.com; Mr. Henry Mast at 616-878-1433 (MI), 941-753-6112 (FL); or Marinus (Marty) Staal at 616-363-8687 (MI), 941-751-9970 (FL), e-mail: mcs2032@aol.com.

..... • September 28, 2010
Louisville, Kentucky, USA



A growing international network of leaders, scholars, and pastors, focusing on the abiding significance of the Reformation, held an enthusiastic conference at the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, September 27–28. The first North American Conference assembled numerous speakers to launch the movement, which will sponsor a robust series of events through 2017 (the anniversary of Martin Luther’s *95 Theses*). The meetings were held in The Legacy Hotel and Conference center on the beautiful Southern Baptist Seminary campus.

Professor Herman Selderhuis and Karla Apperloo-Boersma, international leaders from the Netherlands-based project, brought greetings and introduced the first plenary session. Approximately 100 participants joined in various meetings, workshops, and sessions. Dr. Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama gave the first plenary address (taken from a new volume of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*) entitled “Reading Scripture with the Reformers.” Dr. George cautioned about using interpretations that were either “imperialistic for the present” or “imperialistic of the past.” After his address, Johannes Witte, representing tour partner Witte Tour and Travel of Grand Rapids, Michigan spoke about “Touring Reformation Europe: Why It’s Important.” Other speakers for the opening sessions were Dr. David W. Hall, North American Director for Refo500, and Dr. Erik Herrmann of Concordia Lutheran Seminary.

Among the widely published authors for a book signing at the Lifeway Bookstore at Southern’s campus as part of this conference were: Herman Selderhuis, Timothy George, and Joel Beeke.

Following the dinner banquet and an orientation to the Palatinate Museum of Heidelberg, Germany by its curator, Dr. Frieder Hepp. Southern Baptist Seminary President Dr. Albert Mohler gave a stirring plenary address on “The Reformation as Incomplete Project: Continuing Challenge for a Postmodern Church.” In his remarks, he noted his concern over the revisionism so often associated with calling the church to reform, while advocating the continuing need for reform of the church, spirituality, preaching, and other areas.

Several new project partners were announced at the conclusion of Monday’s events: Shepherd Press, Western Theological Seminary, Providence Forum, and Crossway Publisher.

Tuesday morning began with a breakfast for the project partners (<http://www.refo500.nl/en/partners>). After that, four addresses were given on September 28, including “Rediscovering the Laity: Reformation in the Pew and in the Classroom” by Dr. Joel R. Beeke, President of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan; “The Reformation: An Intercontinental Challenge” by Dr. Frank James of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; a chapel address by Dr. Timothy George, and “Union with Christ in the Reformation” by Dr. John Fesko of Westminster Seminary California.

In between the addresses on Tuesday were workshops on maximizing doctoral programs, ecumenical cooperation, travel possibilities, publishing announcements, and how the Refo500 program can involve and connect many.

For more updates and a calendar of upcoming events, visit the website at: www.refo500.com. The next Refo500 event in North America is a Conference on Reformation Worship outside of Atlanta, Georgia, Oct. 21–24 (see www.reformedworship.com for details); contact Dr. David Hall (David.hall@refo500.com).

—David Hall

*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....

Number of EU Children Born Out of Wedlock Doubles

The European Union says the number of children born out of wedlock in the 27-nation bloc has doubled over the past two decades and now accounts for over one-third of the region’s births. Eurostat, the EU’s statistical agency, said that 35.1 percent of births in 2008 occurred outside of marriage, up from 17.4 percent in 1990 and 25.1 percent in 1998. Estonia holds the highest out-of-wedlock birth rate at 59 percent, and every EU nation except Denmark—whose rate remained flat at 46 percent—has experienced an increase. Eurostat also said EU marriage rates have decreased from 6.3 marriages per 1,000 people in 1990 to 4.9 marriages per 1,000 in 2008. The only EU nations to see an increase in marriages were Denmark, Ireland, Poland, Finland, and Sweden. (AP)

NATIONAL NEWS....

“Burning the Quran Does Not Illuminate the Bible”

To address the growing tension created by a Florida pastor who vowed to burn a copy of the Quran on the ninth anniversary of September 11, leaders of Christian ministries desired to set the record straight. The media outreach, led by the American Bible Society, included placing a full-page ad in *The New York Times* that read, “Burning the Quran does not illuminate the Bible.”

More than thirty prominent ministry leaders signed on to the ad, including Focus on the Family’s Jim Daly, Family Talk’s Dr. James Dobson, New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, Chuck Colson, Ravi Zacharias, and Concerned Women for America’s Penny Nance. Gary Schneeberger, vice president of communications for Focus on the Family, said Daly didn’t hesitate to be a co-signer. “The idea that burning a Quran somehow advances the Christian faith in any way is just not something that we saw as a reality,” Schneeberger said. “One of the tragedies of this controversy is that the focus has been taken off what happened on September 11th in 2001.” Schneeberger said the primary mission of evangelical Christians is to share the gospel. “As Christians, we do not believe that the Quran is a holy book on par with God’s divinely inspired Scripture,” he said, “but, at the same time, if we are going to reach out and introduce non-believers to the one true God, lighting on fire a book that they consider to be their most holy book is certainly not the place to begin.” (CitizenLink)

Thanksgiving History—The First Thanksgiving
Jean Louis Gerome Ferris

The date and location of the first Thanksgiving celebration is a topic of modest contention. The traditional “first Thanksgiving” is the celebration that occurred at the site of Plymouth Plantation in 1621. The Plymouth celebration occurred early in the history of what would become one of the original thirteen colonies that became the United States. This Thanksgiving, modeled after celebrations that were commonplace in contemporary Europe, is generally regarded as America’s first. Authors and teachers Robyn Gioia and Michael Gannon of the University of Florida have argued that the earliest attested “thanksgiving” celebration in what is now the United States was celebrated by the Spanish on September 8, 1565, in what is now Saint Augustine, Florida. According to historian Jeremy Bangs, Director of the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, there may have been an influence of the annual services of thanksgiving for the relief of the siege of Leiden in 1574, which the Pilgrims witnessed during their stay in Leiden. Today, Thanksgiving is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November in the United States, and on the second Monday of October in Canada. In the Netherlands, a non-denominational Thanksgiving Day service is held each year in the Pieterskerk, a Gothic church in Leiden, to commemorate the hospitality the Pilgrims received in Leiden on their way to the New World. (Wikipedia)



County Removes Church’s Polling Privilege

A church in West Palm Beach has been told to alter wording on its sign or it will no longer be an election polling site. Belvedere Baptist Church has been a polling location for about 35 years—but apparently no longer. David Jasper, deacon at Belvedere Baptist, explains that leading into the upcoming election cycle, the church decided to display the message: “The Best Vote You Can Cast: Make Jesus Your Lord.” While Jasper acknowledges that is the type of message one might expect to see on a church sign, some people were apparently offended. “I guess there were some complaints that came in to the Supervisor of Elections Office for Palm Beach County,” he shares, “and they have told us that since we will not remove the sign, that we have now lost our privilege of hosting the voting booths at our church.” According to the church spokesman, the elections office would not reveal the nature of the complaints. Jasper contacted the attorney general’s office to make sure no laws were being violated, and felt comfortable enough after the conversation to leave the sign up. So in his mind, the elections office is “basically persecuting us for having something up on our sign.” (One-NewsNow)



WORLD RELIGIONS....

What is Hinduism?

There are a total of 900 million Hindus worldwide, including about 80% of India, making Hinduism the third largest religion (after Christianity and Islam). The term “Hinduism” includes numerous traditions, which are closely related and share common themes but do not constitute a unified set of beliefs or practices. Many Hindus are devoted followers of Shiva or Vishnu, whom they regard as the only true God, while others look inward to the divine Self (*atman*). Most Hindus respect the authority of the Vedas (a collection of ancient sacred texts) and the Brahmins (the priestly class), but some reject one or both of these authorities. Hindu religious life might take the form of devotion to gods, the duties of family life, or concentrated meditation. Given all this diversity, it is important to take care when generalizing about “Hinduism” or “Hindu beliefs.” Around 500 BC, several new belief systems sprouted from Hinduism, most significantly Buddhism and Jainism. In the twentieth century, Hinduism began to gain popularity in the West. Its different worldview and its tolerance for diversity in belief made some regard it as an alternative to traditional Western religion. Although there are relatively few Western converts to Hinduism, Hindu thought has influenced the West indirectly by way of religious movements like Hare Krishna and New Age, and even more so through the incorporation of Indian beliefs and practices in books and seminars on health and spirituality.

Two-thirds of the world is non-Christian. To introduce Christianity to other cultures, a knowledge of their current beliefs is essential. How would you share the gospel of Jesus Christ with a Hindu or other non-believers?

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

Except Ye Be Born Again

Rev. Mark Kelderman & Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven

In the last two articles, we considered the calling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of sinners. In this article, we will consider regeneration, or the new birth through the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

Regeneration does not mean that a person becomes religious. A Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu can be religious but remain unregenerate. Regeneration also does not mean becoming educated. Education can help a person understand a faith, but without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, he remains spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Regeneration is not reformation. A person can make many changes in his life without being made spiritually alive by the Holy Spirit.

So then what is regeneration? When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about regeneration, He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus and took His words literally. Nevertheless, Jesus used the language of birthing to give a picture of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a sinner: it is like a child that is brought into the world. The Apostle Paul uses different terms to describe regeneration, such as resurrection, recreation, circumcision, and washing away of former sins (2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, Eph. 2:10, Col. 2:12–13, Eph. 2:4–6, Col. 2:11, 1 Cor. 6:11).

Regeneration is not something that we can work by our own strength. It is monergistic, meaning that it is the one-sided work of the Holy Spirit. It is real and instant. Regeneration in the narrow sense happens immediately in the soul. Although it is mysterious and is compared to the wind by Jesus, there is something real and identifiable about the work of the Spirit in regeneration. That can be seen in several different ways.

First of all, we can see this work in the spiritual renewal of a sinner’s mind. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit illumines our minds. Our darkened understanding is given light. Scripture and sermons take on new life and meaning. Prayer is given new vigor.

Second, it is seen in the liberation of a sinner’s will. Before regeneration, the heart is hard and stony, not willing to respond to the gospel and obey the commands of God. Upon regeneration however, the Spirit looses the will which is captive to sin and makes us willing to serve and to follow God.

Third, it is seen in the cleansing of the heart. The sins of the heart are cleansed. The burden is lifted and the heart is freed for new desires in serving and worshipping God. Though our lives are still sinful and a battle with sin begins there is a new life, with a new affection for God and the things of God.

The new birth or regeneration is necessary because we are naturally dead, our hearts are deceptive, our spiritual eyes are blinded by sin, and our wills are powerless to effect any change at all. Jesus said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Regeneration is vital and, without it, there is no salvation.

How do you know if you are regenerated? Let’s ask several questions that can help you examine whether you’ve been born again. Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in Him alone to be your righteousness? Do you struggle against indwelling sin? Do you love others? Do you daily seek to be brought into line with God’s will? Do you desire to walk in righteousness according to the Word of God? Are you overcoming the world and the flesh in the power of God? Are you showing the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:23? Are these things beginning to take shape in your life? They won’t be there completely or all at the same time, but they will have a beginning. If you do not demonstrate these things, call upon the Lord, turn from sin by way of repentance, and turn to the Lord by faith which are His gifts to give (Acts 5:31). Only then will you know with certainty that you have been regenerated and resurrected to newness of life.

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.

REFORMED FAITH (NO)



O PRAISE YE THE LORD!

O praise ye the Lord! praise Him in the height;
Rejoice in His Word, ye angels of light;
Ye heavens, adore Him by whom ye were made,
And worship before Him in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord! Praise Him upon earth,
In tuneful accord, ye sons of new birth;
Praise Him who hath brought you His grace from above,
Praise Him who hath taught you to sing of His love.

O praise ye the Lord! All things that give sound;
Each jubilant chord re-echo around;
Loud organs, His glory forth tell in deep tone,
And sweet harp, the story of what He hath done.

O praise ye the Lord! Thanksgiving and song
To Him be outpoured all ages along!
For love in creation, for Heaven restored,
For grace of salvation, O praise ye the Lord!

O praise ye the Lord and sing a new song,
Amid all His saints His praises prolong;
The praise of their Maker His people shall sing,
And children of Zion rejoice in their King.

With timbrel and harp and joyful acclaim,
With gladness and mirth, sing praise to His Name,
For God in His people His pleasure doth seek,
With robes of salvation He clotheth the meek.

In glory exult, ye saints of the Lord;
With songs in the night, high praises accord;
Go forth in His service, be strong in His might,
To conquer all evil and stand for the right.

For this is His Word: His saints shall not fail,
But over the earth their power shall prevail;
All kingdoms and nations shall yield to their sway.
To God give the glory and praise Him for aye.

—HENRY W. BAKER

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