

the Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

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The Authorized (King James)
Version and New Translations

The King James Version: A Tribute

Practical Reasons for Retaining the KJV

Our Unknown Confession

A Periodical for Young and Old

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Special Theme Issue: 400th and 450th Anniversaries

This issue contains several articles celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James (Authorized) Version of the Scriptures and the 450th anniversary of the Belgic Confession of Faith.

Christian Renewal notes: "Christian Newswire reports that the online readership of the bestselling King James Bible is on the rise. As people around the world celebrated the 400-year anniversary of the KJV, more people than ever before are searching the web for the translation. Keyword phrases including either 'King James Bible' or 'King James Version' were searched more than two million times per month. The KJV was the first English Bible printed in the United States, with more than one billion copies published worldwide."

May God graciously grant His blessing on the reading and preaching of the precious King James Version of His infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word that is able to save our souls. May He also bless the present project being worked on (see page 161) to produce the first-ever thoroughly Reformed KJV Study Bible that will provide helps for family worship. Pray with us that this Study Bible might greatly help the present and future generations in understanding, retaining, and treasuring the King James Version.



Meditation > Rev. Don Overbeek

Christ's Discipline

Matthew 16:13–20

Summer is exciting! Children can replace school books with bats and balls, homework with hide-n-seek, early bedtimes with longer bike rides. Parents plan trips, enjoy the outdoors, and have a skip in their step at work.

As we enjoy summer, we must do so in a disciplined way. Simply understood, discipline is training students to resemble their teacher. It consists of learning practices that conform to the teacher and “unlearning” tendencies that contradict. It takes place in the classroom of experience. Our summer months free us from school classrooms and give us a break from catechism classes, but we are still in Christ's classroom where we are called to increasingly reflect Him. This reflection is not simply an individual calling, but one that comes to His church as a whole. Discipline will go a long way in helping the church reclaim her rightful place in the world.

Matthew 16 reveals Christ working with the church of His day. He saw contradiction. There was the earthly, undisciplined church led by the religious leaders (vv. 1–12) and there was the heavenly, disciplined church embodied by Christ (vv. 13–23). He had to train His disciples to unlearn opposing tendencies (they are slow learners like we are [v. 22]) and to learn conformity to His disciplined life. From verses 13–20, let's learn about the church's calling by seeing her Lord's discipline.

Verses 13 and 14 teach us that Christ's discipline was carried out in relation to humanity at large. There are different renderings of verse 13, but the message is clear: one thing the Son of Man would be known for among men is His discipline! Jesus knew how He fit into a long line of prophets renowned for their way of life and ministry. In all His human relationships, Christ was to be disciplined. He would not countenance sin, but, at the same time, He would not destroy the sinner. How do our churches maintain balance in treating people as people—apparently sinful but incalculably valuable?

Verses 15–17 prove to us that Christ was disciplined toward God as well. His discipline was outward but it was also upward. This is why He asks His disciples whom they knew Him to be, which is tantamount to asking if He was showing the discipline of being the divine Son of the divine Father. He could reveal Himself to His disciples in any number of ways, but it would be unfit for the Son to take such responsibility to Himself; it was for the Father to reveal the Son. In what ways do our churches model discipline, knowing both what we are called to profess and what we cannot do in ourselves?

Verses 18 and 19 display Christ's discipline toward the future. He would not blur the immediate future with the distant future. He knew the impending assault of hell that would be pitched against Him and His church in His death, but He would use that occasion to guarantee victory. For the distant future, He entrusts His church with a ministry that would be effective for the longest term—even to heaven. This ministry is prophetic, priestly, and kingly, and is shared by all true Christians in their union with Christ. How do our churches live the balance of present victory through Christ's death and future finality that will come by carrying out the ministry entrusted to her?

This summer, how will we reflect more of the discipline of Christ? We could start by truly listening to people, learning where they are disciplined and where sin keeps them undisciplined. We could then pray for those people and serve them, trusting God to reveal His Son to them. We can invite them to church—where the clash is intense but the conquest is sure. As we do these things we will find that excitement isn't tied to summer only, but to a disciplined life of reflecting Christ.

Rev. Don Overbeek is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Congregation in Bradford, Ontario.



EDITORIAL • DR. JOEL R. BEEKE

PRAYERFUL PRAYING: Taking Hold of Yourself and God in Prayer (3)

This article is the third of three adapted from the closing chapter of a new book, Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer, edited by Joel R. Beeke and Brian G. Najapfour. Six writers explore the writings and prayer lives of several Reformers and Puritans—among them Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, William Perkins, Matthew Henry, and Jonathan Edwards—seeking to guide us to growth in prayer and a more intimate and grateful communion with God.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

—JAMES 5:17

Taking Hold of God in Prayer

Deep within us, we know that it is impossible to solve prayerlessness by our own strength. The sacredness, gift, and efficacy of prayer are far above human means. God's grace is necessary for prayerful praying. Yet grace does not passively wait for God to strike us with revival. We must seek grace by first seeking the Lord. David writes in Psalm 25:1, "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul" (see also Pss. 86:4; 143:8). Paul commands us in Colossians 3:1–2, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." So direct your mind and affections towards our covenant God in Christ, and draw near to the throne of grace. Just as Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord and would not let Him go until he was blessed, so we must grasp hold of God until He blesses us.

Consider three principles for taking hold of God in prayer.

1. Plead God's promises in prayer. In His sovereignty, God has bound Himself by the promises He has made to us. Augustine said his mother prayed long for his conversion, pleading God's promises. She "urged upon Thee, as Thine own handwriting," for God in His covenant mercy chose "to become a debtor by Thy promises."¹ Psalm 119:25 says, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word." Thomas Manton (1620–1677), alluding to Augustine, wrote, "One good way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer.... Show him his handwriting; God is tender of his word."²

Some months ago, an elderly friend brought me a spiritual letter from my father, who passed straight from the pulpit to glory in 1993. My father wrote the letter in the 1950s, shortly after his conversion. "I thought you might like to have this," the friend said. "Like to?" I said, "I would *love* to have this." I sat down and read it immediately with great pleasure—it was so personal because it was my father's handwriting. How do you think your Father in heaven feels when you show Him His own handwriting in prayer?

The Puritans made much of praying God's promises back to Him. John Trapp (1601–1669) wrote, "Promises must be

prayed over. God loves to be burdened with, and to be importuned [urgently pressed with requests] in, his own words; to be sued upon his own bond. Prayer is a putting God's promises into suit. And it is no arrogancy nor presumption, to burden God, as it were, with his promise.... Such prayers will be nigh the Lord day and night (1 Kings 8:59), he can as little deny them, as deny himself."³

Likewise, William Gurnall (1616–1679) wrote, "Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's Word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again."⁴ He also urged, "Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer.... The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer."⁵

2. Look to the glorious Trinity in prayer. Much prayerlessness in our prayers is due to our thoughtlessness towards God. Our prayers may come from the stress of an immediate need or crisis, or they may become mere habitual talking to ourselves. But God dwells in our prayers most when our minds most dwell on God. Therefore when you pray, meditate on how the gospel reveals the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to draw sinners to God. Before rushing into your list of requests, bring to mind Scripture texts that speak of the glory of our God, and turn those texts into praise.

Ephesians 2:18 tells us how the three persons of the Trinity operate in our prayers, saying, "For through him [Christ Jesus] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Prayer is like a golden chain that runs from the Father via the Son and the Spirit back to the Father again. It is decreed by the Father, merited by the Son, shaped into words by the Spirit, and sent back up to the Son, who, through His intercession, presents it as acceptable and pure to His heavenly Father. So lean heavily on the Spirit to help you compose your prayers and trust in Christ to make your prayers effectual. By the Son and the Spirit, your prayers will reach the ears of the God of Sabaoth.

John Owen (1616–1683) advised us to commune with each person in the triune God.⁶ He did so based on 2 Corinthians

13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” So in your prayer life, pursue a deeper and more experiential knowledge of the riches of grace in Christ’s person and work, the glory of the electing and adopting love of the Father, and the comfort of fellowship with God by the indwelling Holy Spirit. In this way, you will pray not just to receive God’s benefits but to receive God Himself.

3. Believe that God answers prayer. I fear that we often do not believe in prayer as we should. Psalm 65:2 says, “O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” We sincerely come to God only when we believe that He rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). The Lord Jesus taught that the life of asking is a life of receiving, especially of the graces of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:9–13). The very nature of God as Father is to give to His children. On the other hand, James rebukes those who ask God for spiritual wisdom to face trials but do not trust Him to give it generously (James 1:2–8).

A man once set up a tavern next door to a church. The wild parties, late-night hours, sinful indulgence, and morning refuse from the bar so distressed the church that people prayed God would intervene. He did. A tornado took out the tavern and left the church untouched. The tavern owner took the church to court, claiming his loss was due to the congregation’s prayers. Church members claimed innocence, saying that they had no responsibility in the tavern’s destruction. The judge marveled that an unbeliever seemed to believe in the power of prayer more than the church folk did!

May we not fall under the verdict of Isaiah 64:7: “There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.” Instead, we must bestir ourselves to take hold of the living God!

A Cautionary, Encouraging Conclusion

Prayer is amazing, glorious, delightful work. Yet apart from faith in Christ, prayer is also difficult, demanding, and in many ways impossible. There is not a believer on earth that cannot sympathize with that. So, though I may have bordered on the idealistic in these articles, my aim is not to discourage you but to encourage you despite your convictions about your own lack of prayer.

I want to conclude with a caution: do not despair in your prayer life. Do not expect to become a Luther or a Welsh in prayer immediately—if ever. We need to be realistic as well. Luther’s prayer life was legendary even in his own time, and Luther was a legend in many other ways as well. I am sure many of his colleagues, more ordinary men in every other way, achieved less than Luther did in their prayer lives. Luther also had the benefit of long years of training in the discipline of sustained prayer in the monastery. John Welsh’s spiritual life was extraordinary if not unique even in his own time and place. Such men were indeed Daniels, but Daniel stood head and shoulders above any other man of his generation. And all of them—Daniel, Luther, Welsh, or whatever giant we may

have in mind—had to start somewhere and grow into what he eventually became, often through long and hard experience. Learning to truly pray in our prayers is not just a matter of getting more intentional or focused or methodical in prayer. It involves trials, warfare, and the enabling Spirit of God.

Ask God to make you a praying Elijah who knows what it means to battle unbelief and despair, even as you strive to grow in prayer and grateful communion with God. Isn’t it interesting that James presents Elijah as someone quite like you and me? He prayed in his praying, but he could also despair in his despairing.

I share these thoughts because idealism can crush us with its incessant and insatiable demands. The Christian life is not just about being hectored for not praying, giving, or witnessing enough. Though we do need to be goaded forward, we must not turn Christianity into legalistic drudgery, with a long list of chores to do each day. In many ways, thankfulness—especially thankful prayer—is often a better motive for everything. If you are a Christian, praise God that you have something invaluable that a non-Christian lacks—you have a place to go with every need and thanksgiving. Thank God for the throne of grace.

Luther often exclaimed how great and marvelous was the prayer of a godly Christian. How amazing that a poor human creature should speak with the almighty God in heaven and not be frightened, but know that God smiles upon him for Christ’s sake. The ancients thus ably defined prayer as an *Ascensus mentis ad Deum*, a climbing up of the heart unto God.⁷ Aim more for that than for very long prayers.

Pray for grace to believe and be thankful that God decrees, gives, hears, and answers prayer. If we truly believe these things, we discover the motivation we need to undertake the journey from prayerless to prayerful praying, becoming contemporary Elijahs who, like the Reformers and Puritans, truly pray in our prayers to our worthy triune God of amazing grace. He is always worthy of being worshiped, feared, and loved—even to all eternity.⁸

1. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1950), 93 [V.ix/17].

2. Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (London: James Nisbet, 1872), 6:242. Here Manton quoted Augustine in Latin (cf. *Works* 7:21).

3. John Trapp, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, ed. W. Hugh Martin (London: Richard D. Dickinson, 1867), 1:121 [on Gen. 32:9].

4. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1662–1665; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 2:88.

5. *Ibid.*, 2:420–21.

6. John Owen, “Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” (1657), in *The Works of John Owen* (1850–1853; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965–1968), 2:1–274. This excellent book has also been published separately as John Owen, *Communion with the Triune God*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2007).

7. Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, ed. William Hazlitt (London: George Bell, 1900), 156 [CCCXXVIII].

8. For more meditations on how to strengthen your prayer life, see James W. Beeke and Joel R. Beeke, *Developing a Healthy Prayer Life: 31 Meditations on Communing with God* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010).

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This parable is often known as the parable of the good shepherd, and certainly this shepherd is central in this parable. Yet, Christ spends considerable time speaking about Himself as not just the shepherd of this story, but also the door. He speaks at length about thieves and robbers climbing over the wall of the sheepfold. Bringing all these things together, it is better to call this the parable of the sheepfold.

scenery

Context is always important, and this parable is no exception. At the end of chapter 8, Jesus declared Himself not only greater than Abraham but also claimed to be “I am” (v. 58). The divine name “I AM THAT I AM” was first used in the narrative of the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. The people properly perceived that He was claiming full divinity for Himself; in spite of this, however, they rejected Christ by taking up stones to stone Him. Jesus “hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (v. 59).

As Jesus left the temple, however, He continued His ministry. He did something no mere man had ever done: He healed a man born blind (9:7). Christ not only gave the man physical sight, He brought him to confess His name and worship Him as the Son of God (v. 38). In the process, the man was cast out of the synagogue (v. 34; compare v. 22).

In this light, Christ gives us one of the loveliest depictions of Himself. He reveals Himself with two “I am” statements, both that of the “Door” (10:7) as well as “Good Shepherd” (v. 11). These two “I am” statements belong together. As the Shepherd, Christ owns, guides, and provides for His sheep. As the Door, He is the One through whom His people pass into His flock and enjoy the benefits of being one of His sheep. The Old Testament offers backgrounds of these pictures in Jeremiah 23:1-4 and Ezekiel 34, where the Lord portrays Himself as the true Shepherd who re-gathers His people who have been scattered by false shepherds.

Sheepfolds in Christ’s day were often enclosed fields with large walls, sometimes several feet high. At night, the shepherds would often bring their flocks to these enclosed areas. There was also a doorkeeper (porter), usually a hired servant from a nearby village, who would keep watch over the flock at night. The large wall and doorkeeper protected the flock from thieves who would often try to break in and steal sheep. Some say that the custom in

those days was for the shepherd to lie down in the gate of the fold to prevent anyone or any beast from getting in or out. Others find this explanation to be incorrect, though this would give additional significance to the fact that Christ calls Himself the Door.

Christ highlights that the sheep hear the voice of the true shepherd. It was not uncommon for different shepherds to mix their flocks at night; when morning came, it would be their duty to separate their flocks. This, generally, was not a difficult thing to do. Some shepherds carried pitch pipes. Their sheep’s ears were tuned to a specific note or melody, and, when the shepherd blew it, they would separate from the fold. Likewise, shepherds would often give their sheep names and train them to respond when called. The shepherd’s job of leading his sheep out of the fold was relatively easy, and there was no worry that a sheep would respond to another’s call.

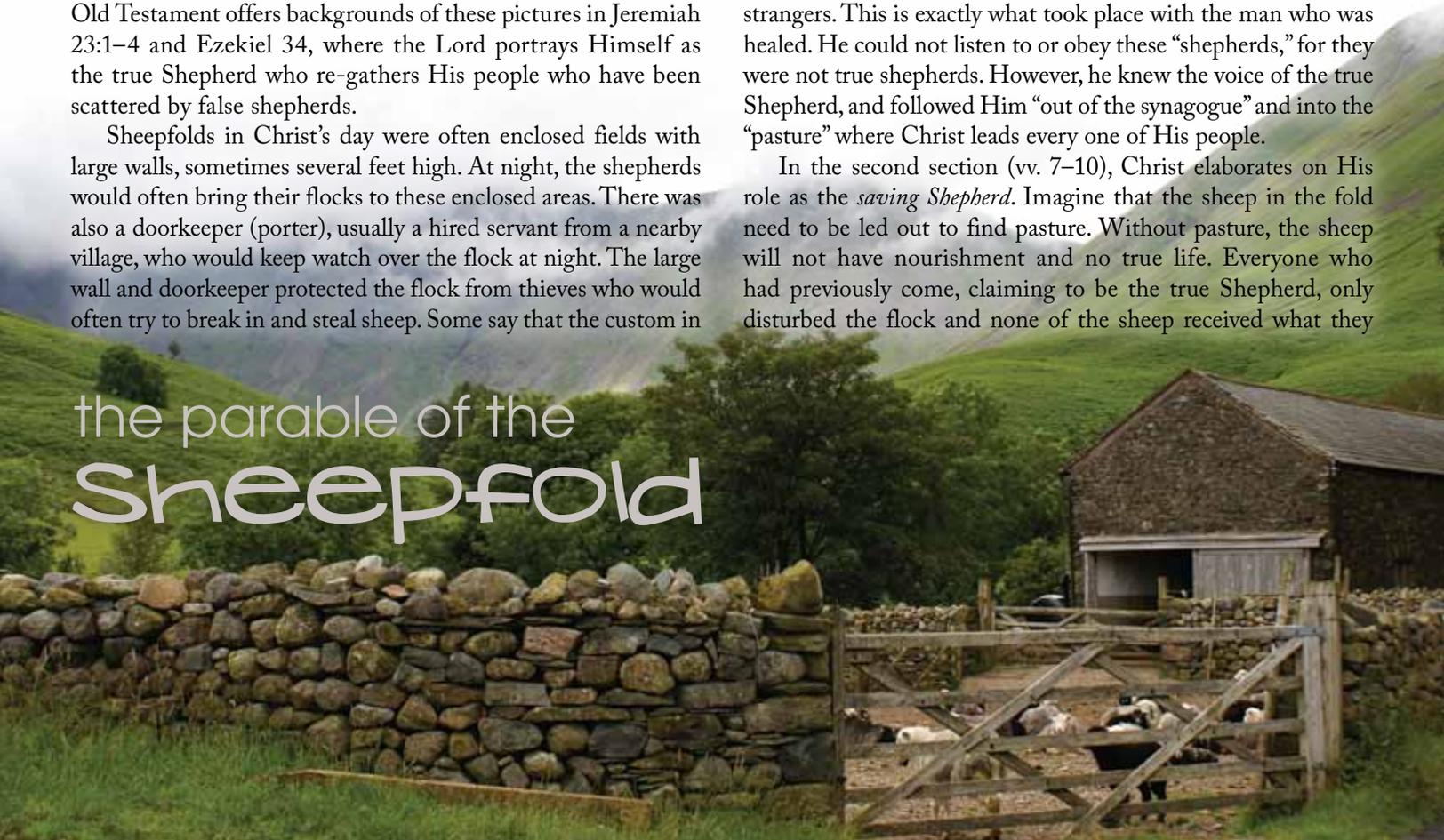
It is also important to note that the shepherd would go in front of his sheep. This was a position of guardianship. Should they run into difficult terrain, robbers, or wild beasts, the shepherd would stand between his sheep and the situation to defend his little flock.¹ This is the scenery for this parable.

substance

Chapter 10:1-18 can be roughly divided into three sections, each with a distinct point. The first section is Jesus’ parable proper (vv. 1-6). Christ introduces Himself as the *true Shepherd* in contrast to the hirelings, or Pharisees. As the true Shepherd, Christ cares for the sheep, knowing each of their names. Because He is the true Shepherd, the sheep recognize His voice when He calls them, as does the porter. This allows Christ full and free access to His sheep. On the other hand, the sheep know that the hirelings have no true concern for the sheep; thus they will not follow these strangers. This is exactly what took place with the man who was healed. He could not listen to or obey these “shepherds,” for they were not true shepherds. However, he knew the voice of the true Shepherd, and followed Him “out of the synagogue” and into the “pasture” where Christ leads every one of His people.

In the second section (vv. 7-10), Christ elaborates on His role as the *saving Shepherd*. Imagine that the sheep in the fold need to be led out to find pasture. Without pasture, the sheep will not have nourishment and no true life. Everyone who had previously come, claiming to be the true Shepherd, only disturbed the flock and none of the sheep received what they

the parable of the
sheepfold



needed. But when Christ came, He came to save and lead His sheep into abundant life. Thus, He was the “door of the sheep” (v. 7). Through true faith in Him, every true sheep passes through this door and is saved. He gives the sheep access to life.

This is a stinging condemnation of the Pharisees. In the previous chapter, they had cast the healed man out of the synagogue, thinking to cut him off from the worship of God and the fellowship of Israel. But Christ makes clear that, through Him, the healed man entered into fellowship with the triune God, and thus abundant life.

Finally, in verses 11–18, Christ elaborates on Himself as the *self-sacrificing Shepherd*. This is where He explains how He is the *good Shepherd*. He immediately connects this with the truth of laying down His life for the sheep (v. 11). On an earthly level, a good shepherd may give his life defending his flock, but the common shepherd does not willingly sacrifice himself for the benefit of his sheep. In fact, the death of the shepherd means danger for the whole flock. Yet, in Christ’s parable, the death of the Shepherd is necessary for the abundant life that the deceivers cannot offer.²

Remarkably, there are two additional matters that Christ raises when He speaks about His sacrifice. First of all, He refers repeatedly to His Father (vv. 15, 17). He does this in order to show that His ministry as Shepherd is not simply of His own initiative and for His own ends; He is the good Shepherd at the behest of His Father and in order to manifest the Father. To confirm this connection, Christ says later in the chapter, “I and my Father are one” (v. 30). The ministry of the true, saving, and self-sacrificing Shepherd was planned within the great Trinity of the Godhead.

Secondly, Christ speaks of the Gentiles. Though few were thinking of them, this Shepherd has them upon His heart. He “must bring [them], and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold” (v. 16). His cross broke down the middle wall of partition, and both Jews and Gentiles would unite in the one fold of Christ.

savior

This parable is a magnificent presentation of Christ’s marvelous relationship to His people.

First of all, He gives His people *access*. This is true in two ways. No one can access Jesus’ sheep but through Him. Every true under-shepherd comes through Him to the sheepfold. The porter, or the Holy Spirit, only grants access to the sheep to the shepherds who come through Christ, the Door. Sadly, there are many who try to come over the wall, but the true sheep of God will not follow them. Moreover, the sheep themselves will come through the Door. Through Christ they will find pasture during the day, as well as safety at night (v. 9). Outside of Christ, there is no access either to the sheep or for the sheep. Many imagine that there are doors of works or law or self-righteousness, but these are only illusions. Christ alone is His people’s access.

Secondly, He is His people’s *deliverer*. Unlike sheep in natural life, God’s people need a Shepherd who will lay down His life for His sheep (vv. 11, 15, 17–18). Without such a sacrifice to make satisfaction, God’s people are under condemnation,

reserved for slaughter. Isaiah 53 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (v. 6). Christ willingly laid down His life for His sheep. Who can fathom the love of this Shepherd?

Thirdly, He is His people’s *life*. Sheep are frightfully dependent creatures. Without their shepherd to lead them, provide for them, nurse them when sick, and fetch them when lost, they will not survive. No wonder that Christ conducts His people every step of the way. In Him is everything that is needed for His people’s lives. Through Him is a remedy from sin. Through His words and call is life and direction. Through His mediation is fellowship with the Father.

searchlight

This parable is comforting to those who are counted among the sheep of God, but it is frightening for those who are outside Christ’s flock. It is comforting for the sheep because of the manifold blessings that God’s sheep receive. They have One who died in their place; they are brought out into green pastures; they are held securely in the Shepherd’s hands; they receive the Father’s love; they are known by the Good Shepherd; and they shall have the abundant life. All these blessings are freely given to the sheep, but those who are not God’s sheep do not have these blessings. Left for them is the non-mediated wrath of God, death, rejection, and being “cast out” from the people of God. This parable of the good Shepherd gives several searchlights that should cause us all to consider our relationship to the Good Shepherd.

1. *Have we entered into life through Christ the Door?* The ancient Israelites left the land of Egypt through blood-sprinkled doorposts, symbolizing that the way out of Egypt is only through the God-provided means of atonement. Likewise, every true Christian enters into life through Christ the Door—through faith in Him and His salvation. The text makes clear that this is not just a one-time event; verse 9 speaks of “going out and coming in.” We ought to know the access through Him on an ongoing basis, every day.
2. *Do we know the Shepherd’s voice?* Jesus makes the startling statement in John 10:26 that the root of unbelief in those who rejected Him was that they did not belong to His flock, not vice versa. He does not say that they did not belong to the flock because of their unbelief; rather, their unbelief is because they do not belong to God’s flock. Unbelief is a sure sign of not belonging to the flock of God. We should be brought to sober self-examination to see whether we have heard and heeded the Savior’s voice. Conversely, we will not follow a “stranger’s voice” (v. 5). Obviously, that does not mean that Christ’s sheep never go astray; the lives of David and Peter and many other true sheep prove that (Ps. 119:176). Nevertheless, the Shepherd’s own voice rings loud and clear to the wandering sheep, and they ultimately recognize it and humbly heed it.
3. *Do we need this Shepherd’s death?* John 9 proves that the life of the sheep of Christ is not an easy one in this world. The

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Contemporary Issues • Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Authorized (King James) Version & New Translations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Here is another thing to commend it to you: this Authorized Version came out at a time when the church had not yet divided into Anglican and Nonconformist. I think there is an advantage even in that. They were all still as one, with very few exceptions, when the Authorized Version was produced.

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

Here, I say, were fifty-four men, scholars and saintly, who were utterly submitted to the Book. You have never had that in any other version. Here, and here alone, you have a body of men who were absolutely committed to it, who gave themselves to it, and who did not want to correct or sit

in judgment on it—whose only concern and desire was to translate and interpret it for the masses of the people.

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

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1900–1981) served as minister at Westminster Chapel, London for thirty years. His ministry and books have had a worldwide impact for good on tens of thousands.



Contemporary Issues • Dr. Michael P. V. Barrett

The King James Version: A Tribute

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the first edition of the King James Version. From its inception to this anniversary, the King James Version testifies to the unfailing providence of God in preserving His Word and in providing a vehicle for disseminating that Word to the entire English-speaking world. The influence of the KJV is incalculable; it helped shape the very language into which it was translated. Its mark on the English language is immeasurable in terms of its use in classic literature and idioms so commonly used even in everyday speech. But most significantly, the King James Version served the advance of Christ's kingdom wherever English was spoken and read. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). For centuries, the KJV was the Word heard by English speakers. Although aspects of the English language have changed over four hundred years, causing many today to regard the KJV as a venerated but irrelevant relic, the value, influence, accuracy, beauty, and understandability of the KJV remain. Notwithstanding its old age, there is no good reason to disregard it or to relegate it to the past. So, in this anniversary year, reflecting on the history, influence, and reliability of the Authorized Version is in order. Its tradition is rich; its textual basis is verifiably sure; and its translation is accurate. In every way, the KJV is an outstanding version of the Scripture, worthy of continued use as well as historic veneration.

Although each of the antecedent English Bibles has its own story generating praise for God's good providence in making His Word accessible, the production of the King James Version is testimony to the way God uses the hostil-

ity of men to accomplish His purpose. If not a matter of overturning outright hostility, it certainly illustrates God's turning a king's heart to achieve an end not in the mind of the king himself.

The relationship between church and state was a pressing issue from the start of King James's monarchy. At the beginning of his reign, a group of Puritan ministers presented him with a petition requesting that certain concerns about the church be resolved. After a delay caused by a deadly epidemic in the country, the Hampton Court Conference convened in 1604 to address these concerns. For the most part, the conference failed to resolve any issues, but, on the last day, John Rainolds made a most unexpected proposal. Rainolds was a Puritan, a Hebrew scholar, the President of Corpus Christi College at Oxford, and not particularly liked by the king. He proposed that a translation of the Scripture be made that would be acceptable to all Protestants. Some summarily dismissed the suggestion because there were already multiple versions available and some were remarkably good. Surprisingly, however, James was favorable to the proposal and gave his moral although not his financial support to the project. He did so with a couple of caveats that give some insight into the reason for his support. He had a deep disdain for the Geneva Bible, which he considered to be the worst of all the English translations. His dislike was not so much for the translation but for the notes, some of which he interpreted to be subversive to the monarchy and the state church. Consequently, he sanctioned the project so long as there would be no notes and nothing that would pro-

mote Puritan and Calvinistic doctrine. Ironically, the king's hatred of doctrines that we hold dear led to the translation of the Bible that we now cherish. What an example this is of God's turning the heart of a king!

The operation of divine providence ruled the entire project; without that divine superintendence, the work would never have been completed. The planned procedure, humanly speaking, did not have much prospect for success; it was going to be a committee project. Whereas earlier English versions were the works of individuals often laboring in secrecy in peril of their lives, this was going to be a collaborative effort of forty-seven scholars and churchmen divided into six groups: two at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster. The chance of any two scholars agreeing on anything is slim. Multiply that slim chance by the number of scholars within each group, and then that by the factor of each group having to approve the work of the other, and the possibility of finishing was not likely. Generally, assigning a project to committee marks its certain death. That we have the KJV at all witnesses to the good providence of God. Without disputation, the KJV is the most remarkable work ever accomplished by a committee.

For most of its four hundred years, the KJV has been the standard text of the English Bible, and its history and tradition cannot be separated from the history of the church in the English-speaking community throughout the world. The KJV has enjoyed that rich tradition until relatively recently when its language and text have been questioned by a new generation of scholars and churchmen. Many, while recognizing the significant history of the KJV, contend that it has no future. The translation that has done so much in shaping and influencing the English language and its literature is now regarded as being archaic, antiquated, and inadequate for communicating to the contemporary English-speaking community.

I reject this assessment and argue that there is no good reason to abandon the use of this version that owns such a celebrated heritage and tradition. I must reluctantly admit that the plethora of modern English versions, some produced by liberal critics and some by evangelicals, has burst the monopoly owned by the KJV for centuries, but I do not believe that it will soon be dethroned as the standard English Bible to which all others will be compared and by which all others will be evaluated. Whereas modern versions use contemporary language to give expression to God's Word, the KJV alone had and has the kind of weight that has affected the language itself. Expressions and idioms abound in current usage and are employed by those who would be clueless regarding their origin. "Feet of clay," "reaping the whirlwind," "scapegoat," "thorn in the flesh," "labor of love," "my brother's keeper," "lamb to the slaughter," "fly in the ointment," "powers that be," "salt of the earth," "sour grapes," "a law unto themselves," "falling flat on one's face," "a broken heart," "a drop in the bucket," and "seeing eye to

eye" are some that come to mind without much thought. It is hard to determine its range of influence objectively, but there is enough evidence to suggest that accusations against its readability may be exaggerated.

Undeniably, some of the vocabulary and syntax patterns are archaic. It is the nature of language that it evolves over time, so that's not surprising. Four hundred years is ample time for semantic shifts to occur and for grammatical composition to change. But these changes are neither severe nor incomprehensible and serve to aid the church, particularly in the liturgy of public worship. Interestingly, the translators intentionally rejected some contemporary idioms of their day in favor of retaining archaic expressions in order to produce a Bible with a sound of dignity, particularly for its public reading. If that were a concern then, how much more is it now? So much of contemporary worship is humanized and brought down to common levels. When pressures from popular culture define so much of public worship, it is imperative to promote and maintain in worship a distinction, dignity, and reverence that directs our hearts and minds to the majesty and uniqueness of our God. The beauty, elegance, and cadence of the KJV—not to speak of its translation accuracy—create dignity and contribute to our perceiving the matchlessness of God's Word and to our worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Whether in ministerial reading or in congregational responsive reading, the KJV is peerless in fostering a spirit of reverence before the Word of God.

Granted, there is a biblical jargon requiring familiarity with the Bible if there is to be understanding. This is not a unique phenomenon caused by the age of the KJV. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, created a biblical jargon understandable to those who knew the Bible but liable to misunderstanding by those who did not. There are several instances in which the translators infused a Greek word with un-Greek significance to include the nuances of the Hebrew word it translated. It resulted in word meanings that would have been understood in the biblical context but misunderstood in a secular. Similarly, the language of the KJV is understandable if given the chance. It does not take much exposure to figure out that "to wit" means to know, "to prevent" means to precede, "quick" means alive, or "conversation" means behavior.

Learning the language of the KJV requires thought, but that is never a bad thing when coming to the Word of God. It is better to retain a translation that has influenced culture positively as has the KJV than to dumb down a translation to reflect the culture. Even more significant than cultural or literary influence is the contribution the AV has made to the sober worship of the Lord. It remains the best liturgical text to meet the needs of the sanctuary. Let the tradition continue.

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Practical Reasons for Retaining the KJV

Here are twelve practical reasons for retaining the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

1. The Standard Text of the English Bible

It is wiser to choose the known over against the unknown. The weaknesses and disadvantages of a particular version of the Bible cannot really be assessed apart from a thorough trial of daily usage over several years. Many who welcomed the New International Version (NIV) with great enthusiasm when it first appeared in 1973 are now prepared to admit its serious weaknesses as a translation.

The KJV is well established in the market-place and in the literature of Christian scholarship. It will continue in production for years to come. Helps and reference works are commonly available. It is not likely that the KJV will fade from view and disappear as have many versions that were expected to supplant it.

Likewise the KJV is widely studied and commented on in the literature of biblical scholarship. It will always be a standard of reference and comparison for Bible commentators. All other versions are compared to it, contrasted with it, tested by it. Campaigns to sell other versions must attack it, or else claim that a particular new version is just like it. The same cannot be said of any other Bible version.

2. Based on the Full Text of the Hebrew and Greek Originals

Based on the Masoretic Text (Hebrew OT), and the *Textus Receptus* (Greek NT), the KJV gives the most authentic and fullest available text of the Scriptures, with none of the many omissions and textual rewrites of modern translations such as the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the NIV.

The reader may suppose that such is not the case with the English Standard Version (ESV) of 2000. However, the publishers plainly state that the ESV “is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.” Those who remember the RSV can attest that few other versions made greater use of the methods and findings of “Higher Criticism.” A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

- a. *Oldest Does Not Mean Best*—The Westcott and Hort arguments that ‘the oldest manuscripts are the most reli-

able’ and that ‘age carries more weight than volume’ are not necessarily true. It could well be that the two oldest, complete manuscripts were found to be in such unusually excellent condition because they were already recognized as faulty manuscripts in their time and therefore were placed aside and not recopied until worn out as were the reliable manuscripts. This is further supported by numerous existing differences between the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts.

- b. *Volume*—The King James Version New Testament is based upon the traditional text, sometimes called the Ecclesiastical or Majority Text. The vast majority of the more than 5,000 known partial and complete Greek manuscripts follow this textual reading.
- c. *Church History*—The received text has been used by the Christian church throughout history. The churches of the Reformation all used Bibles based on the traditional text. For example, the Dutch *Statenvertaling*, produced by order of the Synod of Dort, is based upon the Ecclesiastical Text.

3. A More Faithful Method of Translation

The KJV translators employed a method of verbal equivalence (‘word for word’) rather than the method of paraphrase or dynamic equivalence (‘meaning for meaning’) used in the NIV. The result is, the KJV presents what biblical authors wrote, not what a translator or a committee thinks they meant.

4. A More Honest Translation

The text of the KJV uses italics to identify every word or phrase interpolated (supplied by the translator) and not given in the original. Such a practice could not be followed in the NIV, because of its “meaning for meaning” approach.

5. A More Precise Idiom

Often attacked at this very point, the KJV actually is a more accurate and helpful translation precisely because of the archaic pronouns (“thou, thy, thee,” etc.). Both Hebrew and Greek distinguish clearly between the second person singular (“thou”) and the second person plural (“ye, you”). In many statements this makes an important difference (e.g. John 3:7). In a sense it is correct to say that in praying the Lord Jesus used “Thou”—God is one, not many!—for He definitely used the Hebrew or Greek equivalent.

6. The Best Liturgical Version

The KJV excels as a version for public worship. That is why it has been used so widely in the churches. The requirements of the sanctuary are not those of the classroom. Students might read several versions, ancient and modern, but none surpasses the KJV as a liturgical version, that is, adapted to the needs and circumstances of public worship.

7. The Best Format for Preaching

The KJV traditionally has been laid out verse by verse on the page, rather than in paragraphs; though for most of the text, paragraphs are indicated by the pilcrow or paragraph mark. The Hebrew and Greek texts, of course, have no paragraphing at all. The verse-by-verse format best serves the purpose of verse-by-verse consecutive expository sermonizing and Bible study.

8. The Most Beautiful Translation

The KJV gives classic expression to many important passages in the Bible (e.g. Ps. 23, Isa. 53, Luke 2, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son). Our seniors need to hear these passages as a comfort and help as they draw near to the end of life's journey and our children need to hear them in the KJV as part of their nurture and education. The KJV is an important part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of all English-speaking Christians, and a key to our greatest literature. Children well instructed in the KJV will be advantaged over other children, spiritually, linguistically, educationally, and culturally.

9. An Ecumenical Text for Reformed Christians

No other version has been used so widely among English-speaking Christians. The KJV is used by preference in many conservative Reformed congregations. The KJV is also used in the Christian schools these churches sponsor. Using the KJV is one way to underscore our unity and identity with other conservative evangelical and Reformed Christians.

10. A Version that "Sounds" Like the Bible

More than any other version, the KJV sounds like the Word

of God, even to unbelievers. The KJV translators aimed at accuracy. They certainly did not impose a "contemporary" style on their translation, as anyone can see who reads the "Epistle Dedicatory," or the introductory discourse of "The Translators to the Reader," found in most pulpit editions of the KJV. Even in 1611 the KJV sounded different, ancient, as a voice from the past. This difference of voice commands a reverent hearing, and implies the timeless and eternal character of God's Word.

11. The Character of the Translators

The fifty men appointed to translate the King James Version were not only well-known scholars, but also sound in the Christian faith. No matter what differences there were among them, they all regarded every word of the Bible as inspired by God, they all affirmed the central doctrinal truths of Scripture. Some modern versions are produced by translators whose qualifications are merely academic, and in some cases, their identity is withheld from the reading public.

12. A Bible for Those Who Walk in the "Old Paths"

Using the KJV is a clear statement that we desire to walk in the "old paths" of God's Word. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). In choosing this version we choose to stand with all that is best in the great tradition of historic Christianity.

The penchant for new translations was part of the program of change which has done such harm to many denominations over the past century. This change to new translations was often part of an effort to strip worship services of dignity, reverence, and beauty, in favor of the casual, the contemporary, and the convenient. It also causes a congregation to lose touch with keeping the Word in memory. Memorization of the Scriptures suffers when each generation uses a different translation.

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healed man was immediately beset by inquisition, interrogation, derision, and expulsion. Nevertheless, the Savior was more to him than everything else. The Savior's death dealt with the root of death, and His life gives eternal and abundant life in fellowship with the triune God. When we, as God's sheep, go through wearisome and painful times, let us consider Him, who willingly laid down His life in order that we might have life now and in full in the future.

QUESTIONS:

1. From the context, discuss why the concept of the door is so important to this parable. In other words, why doesn't Christ focus only on His role as the Good Shepherd?
2. Gather all that Christ says about the false shepherds from this passage and discuss how they show themselves today. What implications are there from the fact that the true sheep do not follow them (v. 5)?

3. Find all the references to the Father in this passage. Why does Christ mention the Father so frequently in connection with His sacrifice for the sheep? How does Isaiah 53:6–10 help?
4. What are some of the marks of true sheep of Christ that this passage gives to us? Should you despair if some or all of these do not hold true for you, or if you find them so sparingly present in your life?
5. Why is the question "Do we need this Shepherd's death?" so vitally important?

1. Much of the above is drawn from Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Vol. 1; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 805–813.

2. See Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 110.

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The planned publication date for this quality Study Bible is the Fall of 2014. Dr. Joel R. Beeke will serve as the General Editor, Dr. Michael Barrett as Old Testament Editor, and Dr. Jerry Bilkes as New Testament Editor. The following contributors are committed to write on various Bible books: Dr. Mark Allison, Dr. Charles Barrett, Dr. Michael Barrett, Dr. Joel Beeke, Dr. Jerry Bilkes, Rev. John Greer, Rev. Pooyan Mehrshahi, Dr. John McKnight, Rev. Alan J. Macgregor, Rev. Maurice Roberts, Rev. David Silver-sides, Rev. John Thackway, and Rev. Malcolm Watts. All of these men are Reformed in their theology, appreciate the experiential tradition of Reformed theology, and use the KJV in their own pulpit and teaching ministries.



The financial undertaking to produce this study Bible is substantial. To bring this massive project to reality will require the constant prayers and financial support of God's people. To launch this project we need to raise \$250,000 in donations; the remainder of the needed money will come from the actual sales of the Bible when it comes out. We are grateful to report that a generous anonymous donor—for whom we thank the Lord—is willing to match your gift. Thus, if the Lord enables us to raise \$125,000, the remaining \$125,000 will also be given. In other words, if you give \$100 it is as if you are giving \$200. If you would like to be a part of this worthwhile project through your donations, please send your gifts to Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525.

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Our Unknown Confession: Celebrating Its 450th Anniversary

It was Sinclair Ferguson who memorably wrote a decade and a half ago that of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit was not the *forgotten*, but the *unknown* member of the Godhead.¹ In that same vein, among the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession (1561) is certainly the most unknown. It is not forgotten, as we see it in the back of our songbooks and as office-bearers sign their names to the Form of Subscription; but it is all too unknown in our churches.

We are familiar through catechetical preaching with our beloved Heidelberg Catechism, which Philip Schaff once described as being “baptized with the pentecostal fire of the great Reformation” and being “the product of the heart as well as the head, full of faith and unction from above.”² I remember the first time I read its opening question, “What is your only comfort in life and in death,” and feeling like the new wine of Reformed truth was entering into me as a new wineskin.

We are familiar with the Canons of Dort as the capstone of our confessions and our armament against Arminianism. We know this document as it gives expression to the “doctrines of grace” or the so-called “five points of Calvinism.” I, too, recall reading the Canons for the first time and being struck by the precision of its doctrines of predestination, the sufficiency and efficiency of Christ’s satisfaction, the nature of sin, the power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and the preserving work of the triune God. At the same time, I was moved by how these doctrines led to devotion, precision led to piety, and exposition led to experience.

Yet we have another confession. In this, the 450th anniversary of its publication, the Belgic Confession needs to be moved from being relegated to unknown status to being celebrated as an equal form of our unity in Christ as Reformed churches. Let me offer three reasons to celebrate it.

Celebrated for its History

The Belgic Confession should be celebrated for its history. Its history is the stuff of legend: a persecuted minority, a repressive regime (Spain), and heroic, itinerant preachers. One of those preachers in the southern Low Countries (now Belgium) was Guido de Brès. The family business was making idols for Roman Catholics. Yet God heard his mother’s prayers, just as he heard those of Monica for her son Augustine, leading de Brès to become a minister of the gospel. His ministry was defined by Paul’s words: “as dying, and, behold, we live” (2 Cor. 6:9). First he would preach in a town for a season, but then he would be exiled: to London, then to Geneva, and then to various cities throughout the Low Countries. At some point, the Reformed churches believed the time was opportune to publicly confess their faith in a document in order to show the Spanish Catholic magistrate that their faith was that of the apostles and ancient church. De Brès’s act of tossing a package containing this Confession over the wall of the magistrate led to a manhunt that eventually led to his death.

Why should we celebrate this history? Very simply: it testifies to us that the doctrine we confess with our lips is worth the price of our lives. Will you celebrate this Confession by professing its truths before a dark and dying world or will you hide its light “under a bushel” (Matt. 5:15)?

Celebrated for its Theology

The Belgic Confession should also be celebrated for its theology. What is this theology? It contains the “old paths” (Jer. 6:16) of the prophets and apostles, of the ancient church fathers, and of the ecumenical councils. It is truly catholic (Christian) theology. Its theology begins with God (art. 1) and ends with the eternal kingdom of God ushered in by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (art. 37), like the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. It speaks of how we know God: “He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word” (art. 2). It speaks of the most blessed and all-glorious triune God who exists as “three persons in one only divine essence” (art. 9). It speaks of His creation and providence (arts. 12–13), man’s heinous sin (arts. 14–15), God’s predestinating work *a la* ancient Augustinianism (art. 16), the person and work of the Son (arts. 17–26), and the existence and reality of a holy catholic church (arts. 27–36).

An inquirer to our church recently summarized for me the theology of the Belgic Confession in this way. After years and years of legalism in evangelical churches, pouring out his heart to God in prayer for the answers his mind and soul wanted and coming into contact with me, he read the Belgic Confession. His response? “I felt like it was Christianity 101 that I’ve always believed.” That was music to my ears. Why? Because “the Reformed faith” is not

some cultic set of doctrines and rituals, not some secret club for a few frozen chosen, and not something that takes immense mental gymnastics to understand. No; Reformed Christianity is Christianity. Reformed Christianity, therefore, is the answer to sinners' deepest longings and needs. But how did this realization bring peace to the soul and experience of grace to the heart of this inquirer? Let me conclude with the answer in our final point.

Celebrated for its Piety

The Belgic Confession should be celebrated for its piety. In the theology of the prophets, apostles, church fathers, and ancient creeds we find the deep-rooted piety our souls need. As Dorothy Sayers once wrote, "The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama."³ The heroic history and catholic theology of the churches under the cross in the Low Countries was not dry, dusty, dead orthodoxy but was a living faith that led to orthopraxy. Listen to how Guido de Brès and the Reformed churches made the profession of theology in a way that expressed what came to be known as *praxis pietatis*, the practice of piety, by the Puritans.

- We do not just confess that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, but that they are because "God, from a special care which He has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants...to commit His revealed Word to writing" (art. 3). When you read the Word at home and hear the Word read in worship, do you realize that you are experiencing God's special care for your soul?
- We do not just confess that the Trinity is true because of a list of Bible proof-texts. The Confession even says our Christian experience is a testimony to the reality of the Trinity: "Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons *towards us*. The Father is called *our* Creator by His power; the Son is *our* Savior and Redeemer by His blood; the Holy Ghost is *our* Sanctifier by His dwelling in *our hearts*" (art. 9; emphasis added). And although our sense of experiencing our Triune God's work in us will wax and wane in this life, we "expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in heaven" (art. 9).
- We do not just confess the doctrine of original sin and that it is not washed away by baptism, but is "by [God's] grace and mercy...forgiven them." Affirmation leads to action: "Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death" (art. 15). Do not despair because of your original sin, but desire deliverance from it.
- We do not just confess the doctrine that Jesus is our Mediator at the right hand of God in the Apostles' Creed: "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." This confession is of immense practical benefit for our assurance. Our Mediator "ought in no wise to affright us by His majesty or cause us to seek another according to our fancy," as Roman Catholic theology implies with Jesus as Judge and the many saints and intercessors besides him (art. 26). Instead, the Confession says, "For there is no creature, either in heaven or on earth, who loveth us more than Jesus Christ... If, then, we should seek for another mediator who would be well affected towards us, whom could we find who loved us more than He who laid down His life for us, even when we were His enemies?... And who will sooner be heard than the own well-beloved Son of God?" In our sinful hearts, though, we convince ourselves of the contrary: "But I'm too sinful, too unlovable, to unworthy." Yet listen to this: "Let us not forsake Him to take another, or rather to seek after another, without ever being able to find Him"—and here's my favorite line in all of the Confession—"for God well knew, when He gave Him to us, that we were sinners" (art. 26). Doesn't that cause you to sing: *Amazing love! How can it be? That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

These are just a few of the gems of piety that flow from the doctrines contained in this historic Reformed Confession. I trust the Belgic Confession will no longer be to you our unknown Confession.

For further reading:

N. H. Gootjes, *The Belgic Confession: Its History and Sources*, Texts & Studies in Reformation & Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

Daniel R. Hyde, *With Heart and Mouth: An Exposition of the Belgic Confession* (Grandville: Reformed Fellowship, 2008).

1. Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1996), 11–12.

2. *The Creeds of Christendom*, ed. Philip Schaff, rev. David S. Schaff (1931, repr.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:542.

3. Dorothy Sayers, "The Greatest Drama Ever Staged," in *The Whimsical Christian* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1978), 11.

Daniel R. Hyde (Th.M., Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary) is the pastor of the Oceanside United Reformed Church in Carlsbad/Oceanside, California. He is the author of nine books, including *Why Believe in God?* (P&R, 2011) and *Welcome to a Reformed Church* (Reformation Trust, 2010).



an open letter to parents of teenagers regarding **facebook**

When Mark Zuckerberg was named Person of the Year for 2010 by *Time*, it reflected the impact that Facebook is having on our society. As a nineteen-year-old sophomore at Harvard, Zuckerberg started a Web service that was billed as “an online directory that connects people through social networks at colleges.” The idea was to reflect the kinds of interactions that students may have with one another. This year, Facebook added its 550 millionth member and is currently growing at a rate of about 700,000 people a day. One out of every dozen people on the planet has a Facebook account and, by the end of 2010, the site accounted for 1 out of 4 American page views.

Why is it Important?

So what? Why worry about it and whether our teenagers are on the site or not? Is this not something that teenagers do, and that will go away as they grow up? Teenagers have always met together as groups and interacted about every imaginable aspect of their lives. They have always met people at school and elsewhere that we, as parents, have had no idea about. They have shared pictures, music, and talked about issues. Whether they use physical pictures, texts, phones, or now Facebook, are they not simply doing what teenagers have always done?

Some of the Dangers of Facebook

These, in my view, are fair questions to ask. In one sense, I would agree that teenagers are no different now than they have ever been. While there are real benefits to Facebook, there are also real dangers. Rather than go into details in this short letter, let me suggest a few:

Permanence

What is posted on Facebook can be seen by others, and may be there for a very long time. Even President Obama, in a September 2009 televised address to American schools, advised them to “be careful what you post on Facebook. Whatever you do, it will be pulled up later in your life.”

Perhaps all of us as teenagers did things that would now embarrass us. The difference, however, is that the consequences of these things are almost certainly long gone. The same cannot be said of Facebook, whose records may linger far longer than we might imagine. Employers, college admission tutors, and others now check Facebook. What happens when they come across that picture or that comment that was posted by our children in a moment of folly?

Intrusion

Would you not want to know about your child’s friends if they were visiting the home? With Facebook, you are essentially

inviting them into your home and onto your children’s computer, cell phone, or other device. You are allowing them in and giving them the capacity to share in your children’s everyday lives as well as your family life, since at any moment teenagers may well post information about what is happening in the family circle.

Obsession

Facebook can easily become addictive! That is the genius of the site. Why it is addictive is another matter, and one that psychologists can argue about. But teenagers (and others!) are compelled to share. This generation is known to be open and share details of everything! They want to know what’s going on with friends and need to think that others care about what they are doing and thinking. As with texting, there seems to be a need to check Facebook several times a day (hour?). Some of the games on Facebook are equally addictive. Witness the meteoric rise of games such as Farmville or Mafia Wars. Perhaps these are not issues unique to teenagers, but the issue of potential addiction is real nonetheless.

Identity theft

Teenagers are particularly prone to be without qualms about self-disclosure and what kind or how much information they share. In a 2009 study, researchers developed a tool to score the information disclosed on Facebook. What they found was that as age increases less personal information is disclosed. In other words, older people are more cautious when disclosing personal information. We should be concerned that teenagers are getting roped into revealing most of their identities. The most common and important danger is identity theft; many fake profiles have been created based on live information from real people’s profiles.

Entrapment

The following news report of a trial that took place in Manchester, England, helps us to understand the dangers: “A pedophile terrorized a schoolgirl on the social networking website Facebook after duping her into accepting him as a ‘friend.’ Robert Sumner stalked the teenager online and bombarded her with texts demanding she meet him. When she refused he told her he knew where she lived—and threatened to rape her.... Judge Iain Hamilton said the girl’s mother had ‘wrongly’ allowed her daughter access to the social networking site and said the case highlighted the dangers of youngsters using them.”

Creating a false existence

One commentator explains that “at university, I knew students who spent hours cultivating their Facebook pages every day.

They had to look popular and busy on the website, because on some level they thought it would translate into real life. But strangely, it was always those with hundreds of Facebook ‘friends’—or thousands of Twitter followers—who seemed to be the most lonely.... A ‘parallel existence’ online means sitting, on planet earth, in front of a computer screen.”

What is Facebook All About?

One of the things that we need to realize is that Facebook is not an altruistic, innocent venture. It’s all about money! Even if its creator Mark Zuckerberg is said to be indifferent about his fortune, Facebook backers are not, and the fact that it is worth over \$50 billion is important to them. Facebook makes its money through advertising; this is its genius. Advertising on television may be somewhat indiscriminate. Online advertising with Google is somewhat more discriminate as it requires someone to click on a link, with the assumption that the pundit is interested in what he has clicked on. With Facebook, however, advertisers can be targeted by interest, gender, age, and a host of other things. Advertisers can see what friends like or do not like. We live in a world where 1 in 12 people are connected through a single social network, and advertisers love this! The holy grail of advertising is getting friends to recommend products to others. This is exactly what Facebook can provide. Making money is not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to be aware of what motivates sites like Facebook.

Are There Any Benefits?

There are indeed benefits. To some, perhaps most, it is simply an innocent and relaxing pastime, connecting with friends and family, some of which may live in another country altogether. In an article in the *Journal of Adolescent Research*, one researcher concluded that “benefits of online interaction for teens outweighed the dangers.” The article goes on to say that “in online discussions, teenagers have the opportunity to develop critical thinking and argumentation skills. They can find support from online peer groups, explore questions of identity, get help with homework, and ask questions about sensitive issues they might be afraid to ask face to face. They can develop their skills in understanding issues from the perspective of others.”

For the Christian church family, it can provide the opportunity to stay in touch with missionaries, for example, who might otherwise feel very isolated. Some use Facebook as an opportunity to post Bible verses and other helpful quotations. For others, it can help provide real insight into the emotional state of a friend and then to provide support and help.

What Should Parents Do?

This is a decision that needs to be made individually and as a matter of conscience. Some parents have decided that Facebook should not be part of their family life. Others have limited time on the site (as far as they can tell!), and some have an open policy. Whatever decision is made, however, it must be made after carefully considering the potential dangers and benefits, all weighed up in the light of our understanding of

our own children. What we must avoid is a tendency to either completely ignore or exonerate Facebook of any potential danger, or to blame Facebook for all our woes. Sin is from within, though we must also be wise in exposing our children to harm. For some, banning Facebook will work, but for many, it will not, as teenagers will probably find a way to create and maintain a Facebook presence anyway.

Some common sense advice may help, however. We should:

- > Ask our teenagers how much personal information they have revealed. We should check their security settings on Facebook with them to make sure that they are only sharing information with friends.
- > Explain that they should be wary of revealing information such as age, sex, location, height, weight, measurements, address, and school location for online strangers to see.
- > Ask them to stop and think before posting any information online.
- > Insist that they never post photos that could be embarrassing in the future and negatively affect situations such as educational or job prospects. The rule should always be: if in doubt, don’t post it!
- > We need to remind them not to believe everything you see on the Internet.
- > We should not be afraid of talking to them about Facebook. In fact, one of the best ways of doing this may be to open a Facebook account ourselves and use it in a constructive way—such as getting in touch with missionaries.
- > We need to also be consistent. It’s no good getting annoyed with our teenagers for spending too much time on Facebook if we are equally obsessed by anything else—be it e-mail, sports, or a myriad of other distractions. For example, some have adopted a “phones on the fridge” while at home for every member of the family. This may stop our teenagers from texting too much, but would be hypocritical if we were unable to avoid the temptation to check our BlackBerry for that important e-mail we have been waiting for! Let’s be consistent.

Above all, let’s be involved. Teenagers by nature want to push against the boundaries, explore everything, and lack self-control. But they also want to know that there are boundaries! Raising children is a hugely difficult undertaking. But in a church family, there are usually others who have been through what we are experiencing. We should not be afraid to ask for their advice and prayerful support (Titus 2:4–8).

Let’s take to heart what the Apostle Paul says: “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).

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Lewis Bayly

(c. 1575–1631)

Lewis Bayly was born around 1575 at Carmarthen, Wales, where Thomas Bayly, who probably was his father, was

serving as curate at that time. Lewis and his first wife, who was probably Judith Appleton, had their first son in 1595, followed by four additional children. Bayly secured the living of Shipston-on-Stour in Worcestershire in 1597, and three years later was presented to the crown living of Evesham in the same county, where he served as headmaster of the grammar school.

Bayly soon became known for his preaching and was appointed a chaplain to Prince Henry within a few years of King James's accession. In 1606, he was presented to the rectory of Llanedi, Carmarthenshire, but remained largely at Evesham. Though he was a conformed Calvinist who respected the authority of the church, Bayly emphasized Puritan-like piety. Shortly after his wife passed away in 1608, he began to work on turning some of his sermons into what would become a Protestant classic, *The Practice of Piety*.

In 1611, Bayly became treasurer of St. Paul's Cathedral. In that same year, he earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Oxford and a doctorate in divinity in 1613. About that time, he succeeded Henry Mason at St. Matthew's Friday Street in London. He was made prebendary of Lichfield in 1614 and, two years later, chaplain to the king. In December 1616, he was consecrated as bishop of Bangor, a position he held until his death.

Bayly's Puritan convictions occasioned frequent conflict both at court and in his remote diocese of North Wales. In 1621, he was imprisoned for several months for his opposition to the *Book of Sports*. Fresh charges, endorsed by Archbishop William Laud, were brought against him in 1626 but resulted in nothing more than continued harassment. In 1630, Bayly was accused of ordaining clergy who had not fully accepted the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. He successfully defended himself. He died in October 1631, survived by his wife and four sons.

The Practice of Piety

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Bayly's classic Protestant work, *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian Walk, that He May Please God*, was one of the most universally read English devotional books after John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan himself traced the beginning of his spiritual convictions to the reading of Bayly's handbook. One Puritan pastor even complained that his flock regarded the devotional as equally authoritative as the Bible.

First published in the early 1600s (the exact date is unknown, but was probably 1611), *The Practice of Piety* was

reprinted in 1612 in an amplified form. By 1643 it had reached its thirty-fourth English edition; by 1714, its fifty-first English edition; by 1792, its seventy-first English edition. In 1842, Grace Webster produced an edition with biographical notes. Throughout these centuries, *The Practice of Piety* has been translated in most European languages, including Dutch (1620), French (1625), Welsh (1629), German (1629), Polish (1647), and Romansch (1668). New England Puritans even translated it into the language used by Native Americans in Massachusetts (1665).

The Practice of Piety is filled with scriptural and practical guidelines on the pursuit of holy living. The author begins his work with "a plain description of God [in] his essence, person, and attributes." This doctrine is the basis for piety; every grace that sinners need springs from the gracious character of God.

Bayly arranges his work around the two destinies of mankind. We are either traveling the broad way to destruction or, by divine grace, are on the narrow way leading to life eternal. The unrepentant sinner has misery as his constant companion in infancy, in youth, and especially in adulthood and the later years of life. From the tragic scene of hell as a bottomless lake reserved for those who die unregenerate, Bayly turns to the unspeakable glories of heaven. Stressing the necessity of true faith and holy living, he concludes: "Get forthwith the oil of piety in the lamp of thy conversation, that thou mayest be in continual readiness to meet the bridegroom."

The rest of the book explains how to attain and maintain readiness for Christ's second advent. Bayly shows how to overcome seven obstacles: wrong teaching, the bad example of prominent persons, God's patience in delaying a sinner's punishment, presuming upon God's mercy, ungodly company, the fear of piety (as if it made its possessors depressed), and the illusion of a long life. Bayly then stresses how piety is to be cultivated, offering wise advice on the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, psalm-singing, Sabbath-keeping, stewardship, the commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and walking daily with God. He shows how to guide our thoughts, words, and actions in times of health as well as times of sickness and affliction. He provides directives to protect us from despair and the fear of death. In short, this is a book about how to live godly and die well.

Bayly's book, which has been credited as a fundamental influence in the rise of pietism (*Oxford DNB*, 4:463), is not without shortcomings. It lacks a strong evangelical emphasis, and consequently says little on how one becomes a Christian. At places, it tends to foster the type of introspective meditation that leads to the very melancholy he sought to avoid.

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Christ is Altogether Lovely¹

Experiential Christianity

Samuel Rutherford



Christ is a well of life; but who knows how deep it is to the bottom? This soul of ours has love and cannot but love some fair one. And oh, what a fair One, what an only One, what an excellent, lovely, ravishing One is Jesus! Put the beauty of ten thousand thousand worlds of paradises, like the garden of Eden, in one. Put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness, in one. Oh, what a fair and excellent thing would that be! And yet it would be less to that fair and dearest Well-beloved, Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths.

Oh, but Christ is heaven's and earth's wonder! What marvel that His bride says, "He is altogether lovely!" (Song 5:16). Oh that black souls will not come and fetch all their love to this fair One! Oh, if I could invite and persuade thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand of Adam's sons to flock about my Lord Jesus and to come and take their fill of love! Oh, pity for evermore, that there should be such a one as Christ Jesus, so boundless, so bottomless, and so incomparable in infinite excellency and sweetness, and so few to take Him! Oh, oh, you poor, dry, and dead souls, why will you not come hither with your toom² vessels and your empty souls to this huge and fair and deep and sweet well of life, and fill all your toom vessels? Oh that Christ should be so large in sweetness and worth and we so narrow, so pinched, so ebb, and so void of all happiness.

And yet men will not take Him! They lose their love miserably, those who will not bestow it upon this lovely One. Alas! These five thousand years, Adam's fools, his waster heirs (Prov. 18:9), have been wasting and lavishing out their love and their affections upon black lovers and black harlots, upon bits of dead creatures and broken idols, upon this and that feckless³ creature, and have not brought their love and their heart to Jesus. Oh, pity, that Fairness has so few lovers! Oh, woe, woe to the fools of this world who run by Christ to other lovers! Oh, misery, misery, misery, that comeliness can scarce get three or four hearts in a town or country! Oh that there is so much spoken and so much written and so much thought of creature vanity and so little spoken, so little written, and so little thought of my great and incomprehensible and never-enough-wondered-at Lord Jesus! Why should I not curse this forlorn⁴ and wretched world that suffers my Lord Jesus to lie by Himself? O damned souls!

O mickenning⁵ world! O blind, O beggarly and poor souls! O bewitched fools! What ails you at Christ that you run so from Him? I dare not challenge providence, that there are so few buyers and so little sale for such an excellent one as Christ. (O the depth and O the height of my Lord's ways, that pass finding out!)

But oh, if men would once be wise and not fall so in love with their own hell as to pass by Christ and misken Him! But let us come near and fill ourselves with Christ, and let His friends drink and be drunk and satisfy our hollow and deep desires with Jesus. Oh, come all and drink at this living well; come, drink and live forevermore; come, drink, and welcome! "Welcome," says our fairest Bridegroom. No man gets Christ with ill will; no man comes and is not welcome. No man comes and is sorry for his voyage; all men speak well of Christ who have been at Him. Men and angels who know Him will say more than I can do and think more of Him than they can say. Oh, if I were misted⁶ and bewildered in my Lord's love! Oh, if I were fettered and chained to it! Oh, sweet pain, to be pained for a sight of Him! Oh, living death; oh, good death; oh, lovely death, to die for love of Jesus! Oh that I should have a sore heart and a pained soul for the want of this and that idol! Woe, woe to the mistakings of my miscarrying heart, that gapes and cries for creatures and is not pained and cut and tortured and in sorrow for the want of a soul's-fill of the love of Christ! Oh that Thou wouldst come near, my Beloved! O my fairest One, why dost Thou stand afar! Come hither, that I may be satiated with Thy excellent love. Oh, for a union! Oh for a fellowship with Jesus! Oh that I could buy with a price that lovely One, even suppose that hell's torments for a while were the price! I cannot believe but Christ will be sorry for His pained lovers and come and ease sick hearts who sigh and swoon for want of Christ.

1. *Letters*, no. 226, 446–48.

3. *feckless*: worthless

5. *mickenning*: disregarding, ignoring

2. *toom*: entirely empty

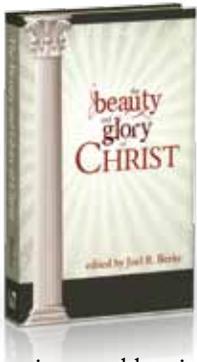
4. *forlorn*: prodigal

6. *misted*: lost like one in a mist

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), Scottish theologian, Covenanter, and a prolific writer, is best known today for his *Letters*. This article is drawn from a new volume of Profiles in Reformed Spirituality titled, "The King in His Beauty": *The Piety of Samuel Rutherford*.

BOOK TALK

JAY T. COLLIER & JOEL R. BEEKE

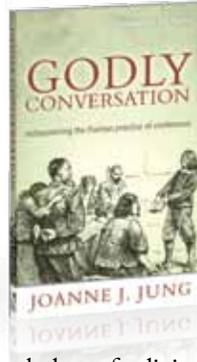


The Beauty and Glory of Christ

Joel R. Beeke, ed.

Enjoy the spiritual feast served in *The Beauty and Glory of Christ*, a compilation of the addresses given at the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary's annual conference in August 2010 at Grand Rapids, Michigan. Each essay sets before readers the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ, the hope of our glory and the glory of our hope. Topics include Christ's beauty prophesied and typified in Isaiah and Song of Solomon; Christ's glory in His incarnation, earthly ministry, and death on the cross; Christ in historical theology and everyday life; and Christ's glorious exaltation in His resurrection and in His triumph in the book of Revelation. Contributors include David Murray, Iain Campbell, Richard Phillips, Gerald Bilkes, David Carmichael, Albert Martin, Joel Beeke, William VanDoodewaard, Ray Pennings, and James Grier.

(256 pages, HB) \$25.00 | \$19.00



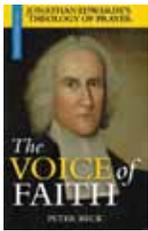
Godly Conversation: Rediscovering the Puritan Practice of Conference

Joanne J. Jung

Our understanding of Puritan spirituality gets another boost from Joanne Jung in this fine study of a significant cluster of devotional practices. While personal experience of God's grace was essential to that seventeenth-century movement, Puritanism also fostered spiritual growth in the covenanted community through godly conversation and "conference" meetings. The book will find appreciative readers among scholars of religious history as well as pastors and other Christian leaders. These spiritual practices developed in the seventeenth century will provide depth to today's emphasis on small group ministry, Bible study, mentoring, and spiritual direction.

(224 pages, PB) \$25.00 | \$19.00

Other New Books

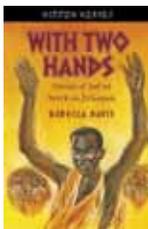


The Voice of Faith: Jonathan Edwards's Theology of Prayer

Peter Beck

This volume masterfully presents Edwards's view on prayer by interweaving his theology of prayer through a Trinitarian paradigm, through his own biography, and through his views of revival. This book will move all who read it to see and savor the primacy of prayer for Christian theology and living.

(Joshua Press, PB, 304 pgs) \$30.00 | \$22.50

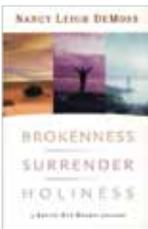


With Two Hands: Stories of God at Work in Ethiopia

Rebecca Davis

Why would a crippled old man wait by the side of the road every day for twenty years? Why would a slave and a witch doctor walk for three days to hear about a man called Jesus? Why would a lame man purposely walk to a tribe where he knew he could be killed? Sixteen captivating episodes from one Christian mission in Ethiopia show the power of God in the midst of darkness.

(Christian Focus, PB, 176 pgs) \$9.00 | \$7.00

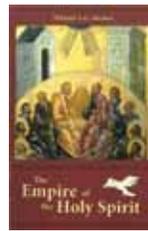


Brokenness, Surrender, Holiness: A Revive Our Hearts Trilogy

Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Nancy Leigh DeMoss is one of the most vocal female Christian voices today. Thousands of women have profited from her daily radio program, *Revive Our Hearts*. This trilogy compiles three of her best books on sin, repentance, and sanctification. In a world where femininity is under attack, DeMoss reminds readers what it is to be a biblical woman.

(Moody, HC, 432 pgs) \$20.00 | \$15.00



The Empire of the Holy Spirit

Michael Haykin

Haykin's work covers a rich cluster of subjects on the Holy Spirit from various biblical, historical, and theological perspectives. Whether addressing the Spirit's role in sanctification, in revival, in the Great Commission, in the exercise of genuine success, or in promoting Christian unity, Haykin's thoughts, tethered to Scripture, offer an exciting read.

(BorderStone, PB, 208 pgs) \$20.00 | \$15.00



Rest in God

Iain Murray

Of all the commandments of God, one of the most blatantly ignored is the fourth. This is to be expected from an ungodly world, but what about the church? Many see Sabbath observance as no longer necessary, and to return to it is to return to Jewish ceremonies. Murray doesn't believe this is true, and in this short booklet he confronts the main challenges to God's continuing law. This book will shed some much-needed light on the Sabbath issue for the church today.

(Banner, PB, 35 pgs) \$3.00 | \$2.50



Expository Listening

Ken Ramey

Many people assume that if they get nothing from a sermon it's the preacher's fault. But that may only be half true. The Bible teaches that listeners must partner with the preacher so that God's Word accomplishes its intended purposes. This book is aimed at that end, to help readers know how to listen and receive the Word as they should. Highly practical and readable, this book will change the way you think about preaching.

(Kress, PB, 128 pgs) \$12.00 | \$9.00

the benefits of Good Habits

As you grow up, your parents and teachers do their best to teach you what is good and right. They teach you what is good for your body, your soul, and your mind. Your parents cannot guarantee perfect health and strength for you, but teaching you good eating habits and making sure you get enough exercise and rest gives you the foundation for good health. In the same way, your parents, teachers, and church leaders cannot give you salvation, but they can teach you what God requires of you and what habits tend to spiritual health and which ones tend to death and destruction. We cannot earn our salvation since it is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). Doing good works or “being good” will never bring you salvation. That does not mean, however, that we should not try to obey God’s laws. God created man perfect and commanded him to obey Him and glorify Him perfectly. God’s commands did not change because we fell into sin. “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 20:7). We must be obedient. We must glorify God. Some people try very hard to be good and make the deadly mistake of becoming satisfied with their good deeds. Other people may be tempted to think, “If I am totally depraved, incapable of doing anything to please God, then why should I even try?” Both of these are wrong. What must we do then? We must try to obey God’s commands and discipline ourselves to keep up godly habits. Certainly, we will commit many sins and often neglect to do what God commands, but that should drive us toward the Lord, asking for forgiveness and a new heart that seeks to glorify God in obedience to Him.

The Bible tells us very clearly how we ought to live. There are many “good habits” we should develop to help us seek the Lord. A habit is a pattern or routine that we do over and over. There are habits or routines that God commands us to do; they are not optional. One of these is to spend time reading God’s Word. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). How can we know what God is telling us if we don’t read His Word? We can also find many wonderful promises in the Bible that encourage us to keep seeking the Lord. Another thing we must do is to gather with God’s people, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). We

must attend worship services on Sunday, but we must also choose our friends carefully. Do your friends draw you closer to God or pull you away from Him? Do your friends help you obey God’s laws or do they hinder your obedience to Him?

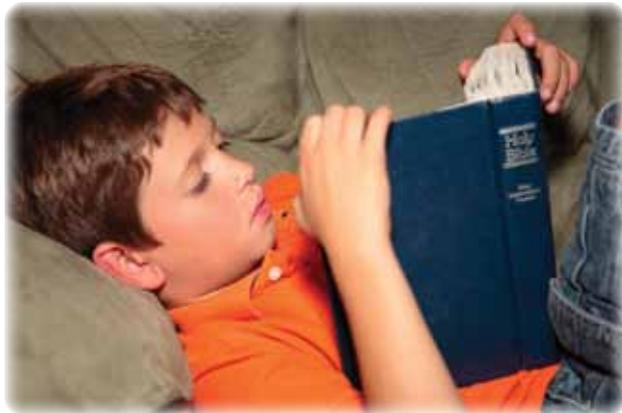
A third thing we must do is make time to pray. “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17). We hear from God in His Word and in church, but we may not ignore Him and refuse to answer Him. God wants us to confess our sins and ask Him for a new heart. He wants us to ask for His help in daily things but also spiritual things. We simply cannot obey God without His help; we cannot obey Him without receiving a new heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. God does not want outward obedience; He wants obedience that flows out of thankfulness for the gift of salvation.

A fourth thing we can do is sing or listen to other people sing. “I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 104:33). Singing psalms and hymns focuses our mind on the Lord. Some of the psalms are prayers and others are songs of praise. Singing can help us express our thoughts to God and bring us hope and joy when we are feeling discouraged.

Developing these good habits of prayer, Bible reading, gathering with godly people, and singing will not ever earn you salvation, but these habits will help prevent you from developing bad habits that will lead you away from God. These good habits are sometimes called *the means of grace*. The means of grace are the ways most often used by the Holy Spirit to save people. Though you cannot buy your salvation by having good habits, you have a responsibility to use them. There are many passages in the Bible that instruct us to live in obedience to God. The Israelites had many bad habits: they had a habit of worshiping idols and doubting God’s power. This led them away from God and brought His anger upon them. Their lives would have been much more blessed had they lived in obedience to God. True, their hearts and ours are inclined to all evil, but if they would

have cried out to God for help, He would have sent His Spirit to give them willing and obedient hearts. “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

Good and godly habits are not meant to make us proud, for there is nothing in us that is



pleasing to God. As we try to live in obedience to God, we will hopefully soon realize that everything we do is full of sin and selfishness. This should not stop us, however, from trying to obey God, but it should make us go back to the Lord again and again to ask for a heart that obeys Him out of love and thankfulness. We must ask the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us all things necessary for complete obedience and love. We need a new heart so that we can have the right heart attitudes. Then we can truly glorify God, because then our obedience flows out of a thankful heart, and not out of mere duty.

Dear children, it is so important to establish these good habits in your youth. It will become more and more difficult to seek the Lord as you grow older. No time in your life is so full of temptation as your teen years. You are children now, but soon you will be teenagers. You are not strong enough to resist the temptations of your own heart, of Satan, and of the wicked world around you. You must establish a habit of using the means of grace. You need good habits, but, most of all,

you need the Holy Spirit and the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God. You must develop a habit of calling out to God, reading His Word, gathering with His people, and singing His praises. You will save yourself much grief, sorrow, and pain if you seek the Lord in your young years. Do not let anything or anyone come between you and the Lord. Do not turn away from the godly habits that your parents, teachers, and church leaders are attempting to teach you. Flee daily to the Lord; cry out for the Holy Spirit to work in your heart repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then your good habits will be habits of praise and thanksgiving, and you will serve the Lord with gladness. “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14–15).

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
Story For Children

At the close of a sermon titled “Abiding in Christ,” Rev. A. T. Pierson¹ invited anyone present who was impressed with their need of Christ to meet in the inquiry room.² A young man of about thirty responded. The minister approached the stranger and spoke kindly. “I assume you are here to talk with me about your spiritual interests. Will you tell me what troubles you?”

“Well, sir,” said the young man, “this may surprise you, but I am an unbeliever. You will probably think I’m a hopeless case.”

“Oh, but there must be some things you believe. Do you believe that the Bible is the Book of God?”

“No, sir, I don’t.”

“Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you believe in a God?”

The young man thought for a moment. “There might be a God. I can’t say I believe there is—I don’t know. I have heard you preach tonight, and it seems you believe what you preach.”

“I certainly do!” exclaimed the minister.

“It also seems to give you peace and comfort.”

“That it does!”

“Well, I don’t believe anything, and I am miserable. Can you show me the way to believe what you believe? Maybe I can find some happiness then.”

Rev. Pierson was silent for a few moments, asking God for special guidance. Then he said, “I understand what you are asking me, and I can help you if you will do as I suggest.”

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
an unbeliever
Convinced

The young man let out a sigh of relief. “I hope you can help me soon, because I don’t think I can carry this burden much longer. I am a law student, but I am so troubled I cannot study. I wandered over here tonight and heard the organ playing in your church. I went in expecting to hear some fine music. I heard nothing but simple congregational singing, but curiosity made me stay and hear what you had to say. One thing impressed me: you have faith in somebody or something, and you are happy in your faith. I am jealous of you, and that’s why I’m asking for your help. Is there something I should read?”

The pastor pulled his chair closer to the young man and put his arm around his shoulders. He felt compassion for this unhappy man. “I would have you read nothing but the Bible. You have been reading too much; that is partly what is the matter. You are full of the misleading reasoning of the skeptics. Read the Word of God.”

“But what is the use of reading the Bible when I do not believe it is the Word of God?”

Opening his Bible to John 5:39 and putting his finger on the verse, Rev. Pierson slowly read, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.’ That means if you diligently search the Scriptures, you will find that they truly are the words of the living God, and that the Lord Jesus Christ truly is the Son of God.”

“All right,” agreed the young man. “I’ll read the Bible. What else?”

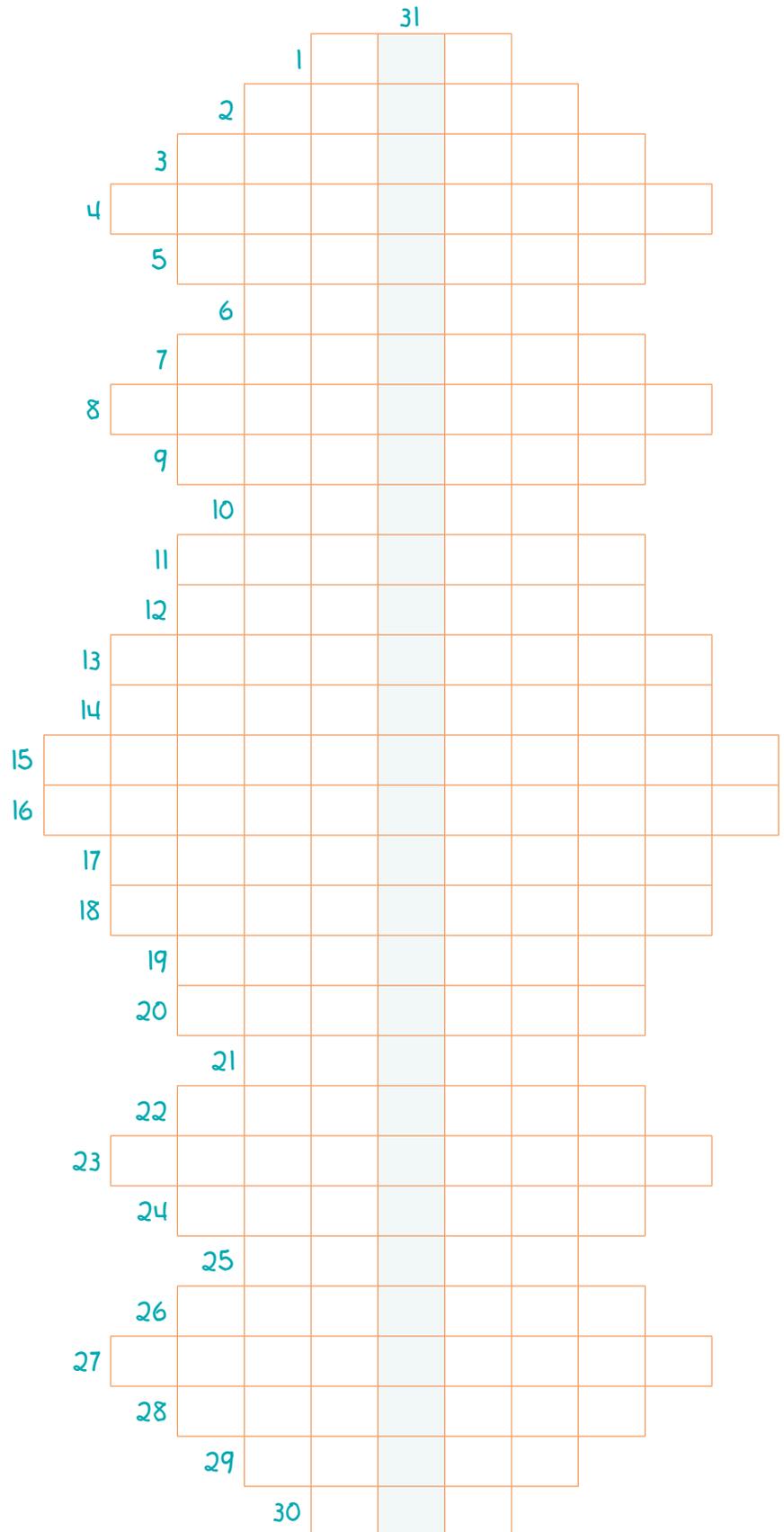
continued on page 173

Puzzle

Look up the texts to find the missing word and place it in the puzzle. All answers go across. When you are finished, you will find an important message going down the center (number 31). I hope you will make time to read these texts in their complete form, and take their message to heart.

1. "_____, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7).
2. "_____ not into the path of the wicked"
(Proverbs 4:14).
3. "Come, ye children, _____ unto me" (Psalm 34:11).
4. "Bringing into captivity every thought to the _____ of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).
5. "And that _____, which knew his lord's will..."
(Luke 12:47).
6. "And _____ one that heareth these sayings of mine..."
(Matthew 7:26).
7. "Do according to all that is _____ therein" (Joshua 1:8).
8. "And be not _____ to this world" (Romans 12:2).
9. "_____ with meekness the grafted word"
(James 1:21).
10. "Psalms and hymns and spiritual _____"
(Colossians 3:16).
11. "With all thy _____ get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).
12. "I shall _____ it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34).
13. "By taking heed thereto _____ to thy word"
(Psalm 119:9).
14. "So shall I keep the _____ of thy mouth"
(Psalm 119:88).
15. "Bind them _____ upon thine heart" (Proverbs 6:21).
16. "His commandment is life _____" (John 12:50).
17. "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy
_____ judgments" (Psalm 119:164).
18. "Praise God in his _____" (Psalm 150:1).
19. "The flesh profiteth _____" (John 6:63).
20. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of _____"
(James 1:25).
21. "Flee also youthful _____" (2 Timothy 2:22).
22. "_____ be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself
pure" (1 Timothy 5:22).
23. "Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill _____ of my
mouth" (Psalm 119:108).
24. "Let us _____ ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh
and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1).
25. "_____ on these things" (Philippians 4:8).
26. "Consider one _____ to provoke unto love and to
good works" (Hebrews 10:24).
27. "Keep thy heart with all _____" (Proverbs 4:23).
28. "Remember now thy _____ in the days of thy youth"
(Ecclesiastes 12:1).
29. "I have led thee in right _____" (Proverbs 4:11).
30. "Such as _____ their hearts to seek the LORD"
(2 Chronicles 11:16).
31. "_____"

_____"
(Luke 13:24).



Please send your puzzle answers to:

Banner Puzzles and Questions
Attn: Mrs. Diana Kleyn

540 Crescent St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
e-mail: cdkleyn@charter.net

The minister turned to Matthew 6:6, and read, “‘Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.’ That means, when you sincerely pray to God, He will reveal Himself to you.”

Again, the student protested, “What use is it to pray to God if I don’t believe there is a God?”

“That is a good question,” agreed the minister. He again prayed silently for direction, and then a thought flashed across his mind. “Be sincere in your prayer. Even if you are only feeling after God, it may be that you will find Him who is not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27).³ God will not deny His own word. ‘Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you’ (James 4:8a).” This you may do by prayer to God in the name of Jesus and by searching the scriptures.

“Anything else?” asked the student, as he wrote down the passages quoted.

“Yes,” replied the minister, turning to John 7:16–17. “Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.’ That means that when you use the means God has given you, God will give you more light. In God’s school, we never are taught a second lesson until we practice the first. ‘Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD’ (Hosea 6:3).

“I have given you three texts already to ponder and study. I wish to add one more: Matthew 11:28–30: ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ That means that when you come directly to Jesus Christ, He will give you rest. Now notice these four texts. One bids you to search the Scriptures; one to pray in secret; one to put into practice whatever you know; and the last to come to Jesus Christ for your salvation.”

“Is that all?”

“That is all. Will you promise me to follow this simple prescription?”

“Yes, sir, I will.”

After kneeling in prayer together, the student left. Several weeks later, at the close of the service, the minister saw the young man again. The same young man came almost running toward Rev. Pierson with both hands extended and his face beaming. “There is a God, and I have found the Lord Jesus Christ! I am so happy!”

He told the minister all that had happened in the past several weeks. He had gone home that Sunday night and taken out of his suitcase the Bible his mother had put there when he left home. He had opened it and knelt before “the unknown God.”⁴ He simply and sincerely asked that if there were a God at all and if the Bible were really the Word of God and if Jesus Christ truly was His Son, it would be shown him plainly. As he read and prayed, the Holy Spirit shed light on the words he read. He humbly tried to follow every ray and walk in the light, and the path became clearer and plainer, the light fuller and brighter, until his eyes rested in faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ. His burden rolled away, just like Christian’s did in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The young man knew without a doubt “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15b). He believed at last that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) and found the happiness he had craved.

1. Arthur Tappan Pierson (1837–1911) was born in New York City and preached in America and England. The meeting with this young man occurred while he was pastoring in Detroit, Michigan, in 1876.

2. An inquiry room was a place where people who had questions and concerns about their souls gathered after the service to speak and pray with the pastor and other church leaders. This was a common practice during times of revival.

3. “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”

4. Paul noticed an altar to the unknown God in Athens (Acts 17:23).

Adapted from *A Guide to Faith and Salvation*, by H. F. Wood. Guildford, England: Stent, Clarke & Co., Ltd., n.d., 37–39.

Answers to last month's puzzle

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|--------------|
| Across: | 36. ever | 13. doing |
| 1. which | 37. come | 14. first |
| 4. know | 38. taken | 16. hands |
| 7. cloud | 40. appear | 19. Christ |
| 9. highly | 43. such | 20. throne |
| 11. pray | 44. or | 22. even |
| 12. needs | 45. great | 25. priest |
| 15. right | 47. am | 27. Son |
| 17. do | 48. heaven | 29. save |
| 18. received | 49. Lord | 30. Father |
| 21. seen | | 32. ascended |
| 23. hand | Down: | 34. dead |
| 24. hear | 2. high | 35. Jesus |
| 26. intercession | 3. mount | 39. them |
| 28. no | 5. nor | 40. all |
| 29. set | 6. why | 41. power |
| 31. name | 8. died | 42. risen |
| 33. raised | 10. Lords | 46. two |
| 35. joy | 11. parted | 47. and |

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

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Robert Boatwright | Henry Duhart (3) | Sara Stubbe |
| Leah Boerkoel | Barry J. Holcomb | Hanna Sweetman (2) |
| Phillip Boerkoel | Jacob Koppert | Janine Sweetman |
| Silvia Boerkoel | Rachel Koppert | Kara Sweetman (2) |
| Abigail Boesterd | Matthew Kranendonk (2) | Leah VanBeek |
| Andrew Boesterd | Samuel Kranendonk (2) | Nathan VanBeek |
| Justin Boesterd | Hailey Meerdink | Meghan VanDalen |
| Katelyn Boesterd | Elijah Meschke | Melanie VanDalen |
| Becky Boot | Lukas Meschke | Mark VandenBerg |
| Shelly Boot | Nick Meschke | Rosanna VandenBerg (2) |
| Steven Cable | Joseph Mol | Samuel VandenBerg (2) |
| Don R. Cox (2) | Savannah Mol | Jason VanWoudenberg |
| William Coy | Thomas Mol | Luke VanWoudenberg |
| Lorenzo Cue | Joe Mosqueda (2) | Alex Velting |
| Sophie Dedert | John Rea Session | Curtis Verboom |
| Alexander DeHaan | Irene Stam | Tyler Verboom |
| Lucas DeHaan | Kaitlyn Stubbe | Harold Vidac |

OBITUARIES

VELLENGA, Calvin Lee, aged 53, passed away very unexpectedly on Monday, April 11, 2011, in Kentwood, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his infant brother, Christopher. He is survived by his mother, June Vellenga, and father, Gerald Vellenga. Brothers—Curtis (Donna) Vellenga, Keith (Mary) Vellenga; Sister—Julie Bos; several nieces, nephews, uncles and aunts. (Rev. Peter TeWinkle).

HUISJEN, Donald Phil, aged 65, passed away on May 1, 2011, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his mother, Lucille. Surviving are his father, Philip Huisjen; Brother and Sister—David (Kay) Huisjen, Cheryl (Matt) Fowler; Nephews—Robert (Carol) Huisjen, Steven (Laurenda) Huisjen, Cody Fowler; uncles, aunts, grand nieces, and nephew; special friends, Dave and Beth Engelsma. (Dr. J. R. Beeke, Hebrews 9:27–28; Rev. F. VanderZwaag, 1 Cor. 15:55–57).

VANDEN TOORN, Marvin, aged 88, passed away Saturday, May 14, 2011, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Marie. Surviving are his wife, Margie; Children—Howard and Karen VandenToorn, Sue and George Lubbers, Russ and Carol VandenToorn; Step-children—Sally and Arlin Post, Carolyn and Karlin Bleeker, Larry and Pam VanVeldhuizen; Brother and Sister-in-law—William and Joanne VandenToorn; 10 grandchildren, 19 step-grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren. (Rev. F. VanderZwaag, Psalm 71:16; Rev. Greg Lubbers, Revelation 14:13).

TEACHERS NEEDED

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Providence Christian School invites applications for the position of Principal and Elementary/Jr./Sr. High Teacher for the 2011/2012 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 Providence Christian School, Box 240, Monarch, AB T0L 1M0. For more information, e-mail: admin@pcsmoarch.com; phone: 403-381-4418 (school); fax: 403-381-4428.

JORDAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Jordan Christian School is inviting applicants for a one-year secondary maternity leave. As we are considering both full-time and part-time solutions, all applicants will be considered for best possible fit into our present teaching team. Please send your resumé, philosophy of education, and statement of faith to principal Mark Fintelman: jcschool@talkwireless.ca, or Education Committee secretary John Berman: john@tremontwood.com.

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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.

HRC SYNOD 2011 MINUTES SUMMARY

Following are the abridged minutes of the HRC Synod meeting, recently held in Hull, Iowa on Friday, April 15, 2011.

OPENING OF CLASSIS

Rev. Johnny Serafini opened the Synod meeting with the reading of Romans 9:1–6, 16–23, and 10:1. When we consider this passage, we can hear Paul opening his heart and revealing his great desire to pray for this people. In this we see three things that prayer confesses: trust in God's sovereignty, the power of preaching, and love for souls.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Synod noted the following events since the last meeting: Dr. Brian & Lanae DeVries were united in marriage; Harrison, AK became an HRC congregation; Student Marty & Jessica Slingerland were united in marriage; Scott Dibbet and Marty Slingerland graduated from PRTS; Rev. Cees & Mirjam Molenaar were blessed with baby Moses; the Franklin Lakes congregation purchased a new church building in Kinnelon, New Jersey; Rev. Maarten & Jen Kuivenhoven were blessed with baby Judah; Student Marty & Jessica Slingerland were blessed with baby Jonah; the Chilliwack congregation moved to new accommodations; Rev. Don & Jodi Overbeek were blessed with baby Carissa; Rev. Brian Kamwendo's wife passed away; and a grandson of Rev. Jan & Gail Neels was born premature but passed away.

CREDENTIALS AND OFFICERS

Credentials for the delegates were received and the following officers appointed:

Chairman:	Rev. Mark Kelderman (by vote at the previous Synod)
Vice-Chairman:	Rev. Bartel Elshout
Clerk:	Dr. Brian DeVries
Treasurer:	Deacon Gib Van Hill (appointed by Hull, Iowa)
Recording Clerk:	Elder Neil DenDekker
Standing Clerk:	Rev. Don Overbeek

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND PREVIOUS MINUTES

Synod approved the agenda with several rearrangements to aid discussion.

SPIRITUAL WELFARE REPORTS

Synod heard reports from and offered prayer for each congregation and church plant. It is evident that the churches are being blessed under the faithful proclamation of God's Word and the regular observance of the sacraments. Our members are participating in Bible studies, youth minis-

tries, and numerous outreaches, and the Lord is blessing them with increased hunger for His Word, repentance, and faith. Participation in Christian schools, choir ministry, and various committees continues. Our desire is that God will use these efforts to the furtherance of His kingdom and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While these are certainly encouraging, the congregations also expressed areas of concern. There seems to be a level of worldliness creeping in and challenges with church attendance. A few churches revealed they are dealing with discipline issues. We pray that the Spirit will do His transforming work to conform us all to the image of Christ. At the conclusion of the reports, the chairman thanked each delegation and requested the singing of Psalter 174.

VISITORS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Synod welcomed the following guests to address the delegates: Revs. Todd DeRoy, James Sinke, and Don Donovan of the United Reformed Churches; Rev. G. I. Williamson of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; and Rev. Lawrence W. Bilkes of the Free Reformed Churches. The reports of Approved Denominational Missionary Endeavors were also received.

OLD BUSINESS

Several items were addressed from previous meetings:

- While waiting for a call, the credentials of Rev. James Greendyk remain valid in the HRC to Dec. 31, 2011.
- An official Ministerial Credentials Form was approved.
- Synod adopted with several modifications the recommendations of the "Ad Hoc Study on Utilizing HRC Ministers and Seminary Graduates without a Charge."
- Synod decided that responsibilities of the Denominational Accountant will include work associated with receiving PRTS donations in Canada and that this accountant work closely with the Burgessville consistory to ensure all CRA reporting and receipting requirements are met. The Denomination Accountant will be remunerated up to \$5,000 USD per year from the denominational operating fund.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Synod took the following actions after reviewing each committee report, in addition to approving each of the budgets:

- Rev. Johnny Serafini was appointed to the Article 49 Committee as an alternate deputy.
- Rev. Mark Kelderman was appointed to the Church Correspondence Committee and Synod approved the proposed *Level Five* (of Ecclesiastical Fellowship) with several modifications.

- Synod approved the Church Correspondence Committee budget of \$4,000 for 2011.
- Synod appointed Dr. Martin Faasse (Grand Rapids) and Mr. Steve Tanis (Kinnelon) to the Denomination Fund Committee.
- Synod approved a \$1,000 per month stipend for Candidate Scott Dibbet to continue for six months, or until he becomes fully supported by a calling church, whichever comes first. Synod moved that the Student Support Fund determine the updated stipend for Student Marty Slingerland.
- Synod requested the Emeritus Benevolent Fund research emeritus issues and submit a proposal to the 2012 Synod.
- Synod appointed Mr. Daniel Lipsy (Kinnelon), Mr. Stan McKenzie (Grand Rapids), and Mr. Doug Post (Hull) to the Gospel Trumpet Committee.
- Synod moved to ask Mr. Martin Dendekker (Burgessville) to provide recommendations on how the HRC can more effectively interact with the government. This will assist Synod 2012 in determining the future of the Canadian Committee. Synod appointed Candidate Scott Dibbet and Mr. John Bosch (Kinnelon) to the US Government Correspondence Committee.
- Synod appointed Rev. Johnny Serafini, Mr. Bill Klyn (Burgessville) and Dr. Cornie Bleeker (Hull) to the Mission Committee. Synod approved Ms. Jane Korevaar as an HRC mission worker, to work at Mukhanyo Theological College and to also assist in fundraising for the Mission Committee.
- Synod appointed Mr. Bill Tanis, Sr. (Kinnelon) to the Office Bearers' Conference Committee.

SEMINARY COMMITTEE REPORT

Synod approved the following points from the TSC meeting report:

1. Two new members were chosen to serve on the Board of Trustees; we thank the members of this Board for their labors and pray for God's continued blessing.
2. HRC student David VanBrugge was forwarded to his second year of study.
3. The BOT-proposed mentorship program was approved in which the BOT would pair a newly ordained minister with a mentor who has at least ten years of experience in ordained ministry. With the Spirit's blessing, the new minister may avoid potential pitfalls and profit from godly encouragement and advice.

4. A mentorship was passed for student Marty Slingerland that will be under the oversight of Rev. VanderZwaag and the Grand Rapids HNRC Elders. We pray for God's blessing upon this effort for the good of Marty Slingerland and the church.

5. The PRTS 2011–12 budget was approved looking to God who has provided wondrously for the Seminary in the past year.

6. TSC officers were elected and re-elected to two-year terms. Elder Jim Beeke was chosen as president and Elder Peter Koppert and Rev. Don Overbeek were re-elected as vice-president and secretary respectively.

POINTS

Synod took the following actions after considering points submitted by various congregations:

- Synod approved that the work of Miss Sarsih Kegel in South Africa be added to the Denominationally Approved Mission Endeavors list.
- Synod requested Rev. Bartel Elshout, Rev. Foppe Vander Zwaag, and Rev. Michael Fintelman to review and update the *Church Visitation: Rules and Records* booklet.
- Synod gave approval to proceed with calling a pastor to Leslie, AR, establishing this as an outreach, and to work with the tent making committee to explore how the funding for this and our other outreaches can be improved.
- Synod approved changing the policy of supporting small churches or church plants that require extra funding to operate and that these ministries be regularly budgeted into the HRC Mission Fund for their financial needs.

CUSTOMARY QUESTIONING

Synod moved to authorize the Mission Committee to extend the support of Rev. Cees Molenaar past the six month period as per policy, according to their good judgment.

NEXT MEETING AND CLOSING

The Lord willing, the next Office-Bearers' Conference, prayer service, Theological Seminary Committee meeting, and Synod will be held on March 27–30 in Burgessville, Ontario with Burgessville as the calling church. Rev. Maarten Kuivenhoven will lead the Synod prayer service, and Rev. Foppe VanderZwaag will chair the Synod meeting.

As chairman, Rev. Mark Kelderman acknowledged the Lord for His provision throughout the day and thanked Vice-chairman Rev. Bartel Elshout for leading the evening session of the meeting. The meeting was closed with the singing of Psalter 392 and prayer.

NATIONAL NEWS

BIBLES BANNED FROM CLASSROOMS

Schools in White County, Tenn., will ban the Gideons from distributing Bibles to students in classrooms, according to a deal announced today by the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee. Hedy Weinberg, Executive Director for ACLU-TN, said her organization received a complaint that members of the Gideons handed out Bibles at Doyle Elementary School in Doyle, about 100 miles east of Nashville. The Gideons came into the classroom and students were invited up to get a Bible if they wanted one. A student said she didn't want to take one but felt pressured to do so. Her mother later complained to school officials and then to the ACLU, according to a statement from the civil liberties group. "White County Schools' decision to enter into this agreement reinforces the important constitutional guarantee of religious freedom," Weinberg said. "Their efforts ensure that all students will be treated fairly, regardless of their religious beliefs."

FUNDING FOR MOSQUE CONSTRUCTION

A recent report from a Georgia TV station has gone viral with the news that the Obama administration is using our tax dollars to refurbish mosques overseas. The \$770 million program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, which is run by the State Department. A Washington Post article notes that the U.S. military is also funding "mosque refurbishment projects" in Afghanistan. This program has been going on for some time. A July 2009 audit by the Office of the Inspector General questioned the constitutionality of the program, which, according to the *Washington Times*, is prohibited from refurbishing structures used for "inherently religious activities." Writer Gary Bauer comments, "The left doesn't hesitate to ban prayers in schools, at football games, and graduation ceremonies, and prohibits the posting of the Ten Commandments or crosses on public grounds. But it has no problem using our tax dollars to fix up mosques?" (Gary Bauer in Campaign for Working Families)

GAY COMMUNITY REJECTS TARGET ENDORSEMENT



Target stores agreed, as part of a marketing deal with a popular Hollywood celebrity, to support the gay community in exchange for her paid endorsements. However, Target's efforts were not deemed sufficient by the celebrity, despite protests by Target executives, and her endorsements have been withdrawn. She stated, "Our relationship is hinged upon their reform in the company to support the gay community and to redeem the mistakes they've made supporting those (anti-gay) groups." Subsequent financial endorsements by Target stores of an anti-abortion gubernatorial candidate further fueled her anger. (MSN)

HAWAII HOPES CIVIL UNIONS BILL WILL ATTRACT VISITORS

The *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* says the signing of Senate Bill 232, making it legal for same-sex and heterosexual couples to enter a civil union, will help create economic benefits from the measure. Hawaii is trying to capture part of the \$84 Billion Gay Travel industry, but Hawaii is competing with destinations like Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the District of Columbia that already allow same-sex weddings. (Mediaventures)

ANTI-ABORTION BILLS ADVANCE IN STATE LEGISLATURES

Dozens of bills are advancing through statehouses nationwide that would put an array of new obstacles—legal, financial, and psychological—in the paths of women seeking abortions. The tactics vary: mandatory sonograms and anti-abortion counseling, sweeping bans on abortions after twenty weeks of pregnancy, etc. To abortion-rights activists, they add up to the biggest political threat since the *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 that legalized abortion. (GR Press)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

CHRISTIANITY NEARS EXTINCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

According to the Egyptian Federation for Human Rights, more than seventy Christians emigrate from Egypt every week due to Islamist threats. The only Middle Eastern country in which the number of Christians has grown is Israel. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics reports that the Christian community has grown from 34,000 in 1949 to 163,000, and is expected to reach 187,000 by 2020. In the rest of the Middle East, the drive for Islamic purity is seeking to banish all traces of the pre-Islamic past.

According to a Report on Religious Freedom compiled by the U.S. Department of State, the number of Christians in Turkey declined from two million to 85,000; in Lebanon, they have gone from 55% to 35% of the population; in Syria, from half the population they have been reduced to 4%; in Jordan, from 18% to 2%. In Iraq, if trends continue, they will soon be exterminated altogether. Benjamin Sleiman, archbishop of Baghdad, is talking about "the extinction of Christianity in the Middle East."

Should the exodus of Christians from Bethlehem continue in the next two or three decades, there may be no clergy left to conduct religious services in Jesus' birthplace. In Iran, Christians have become virtually non-existent since 1979, when Khomeini ordered the closure of Christian schools.

In Gaza, the 3,000 Christian residents are subject to persecution. In Sudan, Christians in the south are forced into slavery. In Lebanon, the Maronites, the only Christians to have held political power in the modern Arab world, have been reduced to a minority because of Muslim violence and Hezbollah's rise. In Saudi Arabia, Christians have been beaten or tortured by religious police. Should the Islamists prevail, it is believed the Middle East will be wholly Islamic by 2048, except for Israel, unless God intervenes. (Barach Maoz in *MaozNews*)





Perseverance:

Running with Patience

Have you ever started running a race only to find that you were winded part way into it? Maybe you wondered why that happened. You look back on your training and you start to find faults: lack of sleep, poor diet, low oxygen, poor conditioning, and sprinting instead of pacing yourself for the distance. So often this is a picture of the Christian life. We are poorly equipped through our own negligence. Christians often run or sprint but soon find themselves spent for a variety of reasons.

The writer to the Hebrews makes several important points about the doctrine of perseverance in the Christian life in Hebrews 12:1–3. First of all, when we are Christ’s, we are real and active participants in the Christian race. As such, we must take care that we run with patience. We must condition ourselves for this race, laying aside every hindrance. No runner wants to run with excess weight; it will drag him down. Our minds, souls, and bodies must be shed of the baggage of sin that clings to us. Cutting away sin is part of the life of perseverance.

We must nourish our minds and souls for “long distance running.” That means our spiritual diet must be nutritious and wholesome. A Christian’s diet must be the Bread of Life, Christ Himself as revealed in Scripture. Many distance-runners train at high altitudes in order to increase oxygen uptake and performance. How many of us train at heavenly altitudes to increase our performance below in the world? The sad reality is that many people think Christians are sometimes too heavenly minded for earthly use, but the opposite is true. Time and again Scripture calls us to set our affection on things above where Christ is (Col. 3:1–3). The more heavenly minded we are and filled with Christ, the more fit we are for the race in this world.

We read in Hebrews 12:1, “Let us run with patience.” So many nominal Christians get impatient, thinking that

the Christian life is a sprint to the heavenly finish. They start out well but end miserably. The word “patience” really means steadfastness or endurance. A lack of endurance results when we are not looking to Christ, believing in Him and finding our strength in Him. If that’s the case, we miss a vital part of perseverance in the Christian life. We lack Christ Himself, and a race without Christ ultimately cannot be won.

So far in our series, we have seen how each part of the order of salvation is tied to Christ. Without that life-giving union with Christ, there will be no election, no regeneration, no justification, and no perseverance. We need Christ from start to finish. Hebrews 12:2 counsels us to run with patience, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Christ is the source of strength, endurance, and energy in the Christian race, and we need Him because that race is not easy. It involves suffering, shame, and crosses, but it also has eternal joy as its prize. The reward of joy keeps the difficult race in perspective.

There is one other notable aspect to the Christian race of perseverance. It’s not a typical race; we are not in it to compete against one another, but to help one another because the race will not be easy. Just as the writer to the Hebrews counsels his fellow Christians to look to Jesus, we must encourage one another in the race to look to Jesus, “lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3).

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.



BANNER OF TRUTH TRACT MISSION

From a friend in prison:

I greet you in the name of our sovereign King and LORD Jesus Christ. I wrote to you a few months ago about being in a small prison facility where no ministers or volunteers of the Reformed faith come. There are lots of religious activities and services, but they are all Arminian in its many different extremes and manifestations. The true gospel of free sovereign grace is not brought in this place at all. I requested you put me on your mailing list and you graciously did so. I have been receiving the wonderful sermons weekly. Thank you so much. There are about six of us now who meet for prayer and Bible study several times per week and we comb through your sermons as a group. I study them prayerfully at night in private and make highlights and take notes. I look up other Scriptures and add for our consideration when we meet and define terms some of the men are not familiar with. I am richly blessed by your help and we *all* are grateful.

From an inmate at Fort Leavenworth:

Thank you that over several years you have been sending me your sermons. I have benefited from them a lot. Just for your reference, the ones the Lord used for me the most were the sermons I read on the Heidelberg Catechism. I was able to drink them down like water. This was after I prayed to the Lord to show me His covenant as I was reading Psalm 25:14: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Around that same time I found your liturgy and church order in our library and found some of the most precious tools for my Christian walk: the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism. I was sceptical at first, but I searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were true. As a result I experienced the power of the Lord, feeding me pure spiritual milk, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep up your ministry, stay encouraged, don't quit even when you do not see the results of your ministry all the time. The Puritans understood God's Word and knew what they were talking about. Your work is a gold mine. I do not know you all, but my heart goes out in love for you since I share with you all in the common salvation.

INHERITANCE PUBLISHERS

From a friend in prison:

Your kindness touched my heart and has brought me comfort and joy in knowing there is still Christian love for people in prison. I am acutely aware that Paul the Apostle, and many others that brought us the Word of God, spent time in prison. To read the books of Ephesians or Philippians and see the great joy and happiness in the words is very uplifting, but

to realize Paul was in chains while he wrote these beautiful epistles is very humbling and motivational. I am reading in the Bible daily and enjoy the sermons from your church.

I know that I am a "baby" Christian and have much to learn, but God has blessed me and shown me mercy since coming to prison. I forsake everything I ever knew and embrace my current station in life, all for the endless eternal riches of knowing my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I don't deserve anything but death and eternal damnation for all my sins were against God and at every turn I was selfish, covetous, prideful, and at enmity with God. He still chose me, an ungodly sinner! He chose me to show mercy and give me life, a worthless person; He taught me the words of truth. Now I understand and I truly know I am blessed.

Take care and keep up your work for the Lord as it is changing lives—this I can say with confidence! God bless.

PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

From a friend:

Thank you so much for the copy of *Living for God's Glory*. The preface itself is beautiful. I've begun to read the book and find it enlightening and encouraging. (Incidentally, I'm nearly finished reading volume one of Calvin's *Institutes*.) Truly, Calvinism, or as I'd rather think of it, the teaching of Scripture, is so comforting and warming of the heart. Our God is such a great and *good* God.

Again, thank you. I praise our God for the ministry of PRTS and for all of you associated with that and its related ministries. May He bless you all abundantly, both materially and spiritually.

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From a friend in prison:

Thank you so much for such a wonderful book as *Living for God's Glory*. I've hardly been able to put it down since I purchased my copy! Usually, I pass my books around the circle of Reformed men in prison with me. Not so with *Living for God's Glory*! I'm not letting this one out of my sight!

God bless you and thanks again for such an inspiring, informative book.

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I BELIEVE THE BIBLE

I believe the Bible, it taught me how to pray,
Jesus heard and answered, took my sins away;
Gave me peace and pardon, wrote my name above,
Glory hallelujah! for His wondrous love.

I believe the Bible, it teaches me to sing,
Moses' song of vict'ry o'er the tyrant king;
Or with Paul and Silas, midnight brings release,
Glory hallelujah! for His perfect peace.

I believe the Bible, of holiness it speaks,
Gracious gift of Jesus to the one who seeks;
Tells of keeping power, 'neath the cleansing flood,
Glory hallelujah! for the precious blood.

I believe the Bible, it teaches me to run
In this royal highway till the prize is won;
Shows the crown awaiting, if I win the race,
Glory hallelujah! for His saving grace.

I believe the Bible, and then the world will see
We have been with Jesus more like Him to be;
With His Word abiding in our hearts made new,
That will prove the blessed Book is always true.

I believe the Bible, O it is divine!
Heaven's golden sunlight in its pages shine;
Lights my way to glory, and I'm surely going thro';
I believe the Bible, for 'tis ever true.

—EDWIN S. UFFORD

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