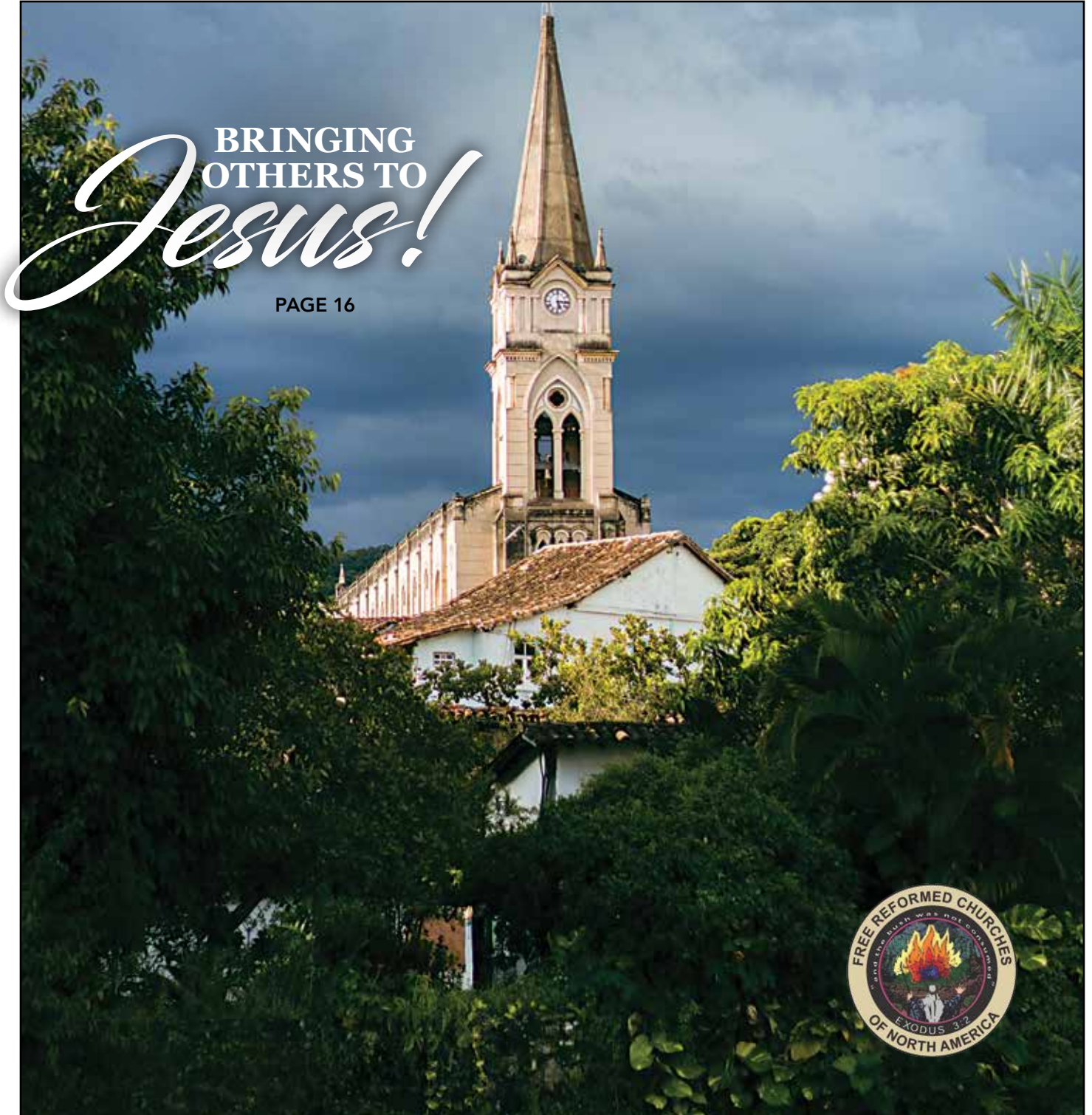


THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



BRINGING
OTHERS TO
Jesus!

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CHRIST, OUR REMEDY

**“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;
but in me is thine help” (Hosea 13:9)**

Failure is a dreadful thing to experience. No one likes to go through the painful experience that a failure might bring. If God’s covenant people fail in one or more areas of life, its purpose must be to teach them something. The Scriptures do not exclude such possibilities in our lives. The prodigal son’s failure in Luke 15 teaches us one of the most important aspects of the gospel. He once was a totally lost son, but as soon as the son returned to his father, everything was restored beyond his expectations. The son showing how lost he was in his sin before such a dramatic change enables us to appreciate the depth, width, height and length of God’s love toward sinners. Even Jesus Christ proved His love for sinners by first dying the most shameful death, and then revealing Himself more gloriously to be Lord and God through His resurrection. He is the Captain and the Author of faith for hopeless failures. He is the hope of all those who follow Him generation after generation.

In the book of Hosea, we first see a similar failure of Israel before we reach the hopeful message of deliverance. In spite of the continual warnings and prophecies against God’s people, the northern kingdom of Israel hardened themselves and came to their end during the 8th century. Assyrian armies invaded Israel and ruined everything. Everything was so different from what God’s covenant people had expected since having a king in the promised land. Who could ever think that a marriage that had once begun with rosy expectations would be dissolved disgracefully and slowly due to adultery? The covenant relationship between God and Israel was illustrated by a marriage between husband and wife, in which Israel committed persistent adultery.

Most of us would think that there is no hope with a holy God for an adulterous and backsliding people. The gospel is not good news if it ends with only destruction without hope for the future. Looking at our own failures, we should be prepared to admit that we ourselves are the cause of the problems in us and around us. The biggest challenge in dealing with our own problems is to see that the problems are within us, not merely outside us. As soon as we see the cause of our failures, we may be able to see and reach the “door of hope” in “the valley of Achor” (Hosea 2:15). God must confront Israel with the reality that the cause of destruction originates in themselves, not out-

side themselves. We find ourselves in a similar situation whenever we realize that there is nothing more we could do when our serious problems lie before our eyes.

We notice two things in Hosea 13:9: the destruction and the remedy. The destruction referenced in this verse concerns the house of Israel. These are the people once saved from Egypt by God's mighty hand. All mankind is born in sin and heading for the judgement of God the moment they are born. But God chose the house of Israel out of all nations to show that God could redeem His people from slavery and punishment. By the time of Hosea, Israel had been in the promised land for a long time. They had their prosperity under their kings, but failed to worship God. They had forgotten who God was to them (Hosea 2:13; 4:6). They had begun to worship idols, which was spiritual adultery.

The world, indwelling sin, and Satan are all enemies to Christians in this world. The world is constantly offering us something attractive to take our attention from God. Our sinful flesh will never leave us as long as we live here on earth. Satan is like a roaring lion wandering to find his victims. But these need cooperation from us to make us fall into sin. "I" is the middle letter of sin, and so the culprit of any sin is found within ourselves.

Israel herself actively commits the besetting sin of spiritual adultery. Though she had been married to Him covenantally, Israel left her divine Husband. No marriage can last long without a close relationship between husband and wife. Broken marriages have shown that adultery is the sinful fruit of a lack of close relationship. To make her betrayal worse, she even replaced her Husband with other lovers, whether they be worldly pleasure, material possession, success, or any other idol gods such as Baal. In this 2700 year-old love letter of the Lord to His wife Israel, we find spiritual adultery to be a terrible state of spiritual disease. It remains still as one of the most dangerous threats for Christians in this 21st century.

This problem makes Reformed ministry in the urban setting even more important. It is a great privilege to work as a home missionary in the greater metropolitan area of New York. Gospel preaching has never been more needed than here and now in the city of diverse cultures and peoples, even when men and women have left God only to destroy their own selves in pursuit of their own lovers and lust like the prodigal son (Luke 15) and the adulterous woman (Hosea 2). The heightened level of individualism, consumerism, and materialism, is much more destructive than whatever these excessive ideas seem to promise to us. Their strength only shows how much self-worship and will-worship is practiced in the face of the God who is alone worthy of His glory and honour. As this adulterous people of Israel, who were symbolized by Hosea's wife, Gomer, destroyed themselves by not returning to God, many more souls are destroying themselves. They must hear the call of the gospel. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14 and 9:25).

The destruction mentioned in our text may not have been foreseen by those who committed such spiritual adultery. One commentator writes, "We are not destroyed by a lack of education, but rather by a lack of in-depth study of the Scriptures, prayer, and living out the truth of God's revealed will in our lives. Consequently, our character is shaped by cultural values and not knowledge of God."¹ What is worse than the consequence of such sin is that many do not know where to find the remedy of their problem. They have destroyed themselves beyond cure and repair (Hosea 5:13).

You may have been disappointed with yourself amid the clear effects of sin. The misery, including pain, guilt, and punishment caused by the sin, all may stay with you while all the unwanted images and memories of sins seem to be engraved on your dull mind more irreversibly than you thought. You may be going through such disastrous results right now. You yourself destroyed yourself, Israel. You cannot put that blame on anybody else but yourself. You have no excuse for your self-destruction.

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The significance of the prophet Hosea’s message is not merely his inspired skill in uncovering the deep wound of the marriage covenant and in confronting such wretched spiritual adultery. If a preacher only exposes and condemns sin, his preaching misses a more important element: healing by the wounded Healer. Thankfully, Hosea does not leave God’s people in dark despair and condemnation, when they already feel so miserable, shameful, hopeless, helpless, and extremely broken beyond repair. Hosea 13:9 emphasizes the contrast between God and us. God identifies Himself as more than a mere passive observer at the scene of destruction. God is more than willing to commit Himself to helping those needy, poor, sick, and self-destroying sinful people. No matter how great the struggles may be, God’s help is far greater than any of those struggles we have in our lives, whether they be diseases, finances, and broken relationships. God’s mercy is always greater than all our sins combined.

The prophecy began by setting out the hopeless situation among Israel. The level of sin was so great. When the prophet was told to go marry an adulterous woman and to have adulterous children in that relationship, it was almost unthinkable that a prophet should marry such an immoral woman. The seriousness of the crime is compounded by the fact that this wickedness was perpetuated through generations.

But God is not saying that there is no hope. When Adam sinned against God despite His clear warning, God did not give Adam another chance. Adam lost everything with his fall. But almost as soon as he fell, the LORD gave him the promise for the coming Messiah, who was the only hope amid his sin and destruction.

God had shown so many mercies and miracles to the Israel in the wilderness. Again and again God encouraged His people Israel to follow Him through the prophets in the promised land. But they did not. In spiritual adultery, they forgot their God and were too proud and self-sufficient to return to Him.

The solution for their spiritual adultery was nowhere else than

But God is not saying that there is no hope. When Adam sinned against God despite His clear warning, God did not give Adam another chance. Adam lost everything with his fall.

in God. When we fail in this world with many things, our only help is in the Lord. “But in me is thine help,” God says. The world seems to offer various bandage solutions to our issues and problems. However, our true help is found in God. Hosea 6:1 says, “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.” Jeremiah also says this: “Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel” (Jer. 3:23).

What is the remedy to all kinds of backsliding?

The one who is backsliding must return. To return means to acknowledge one’s sins and confess them. To return means to deny oneself in order to make room for God’s scalpel to come and do the surgery. To return means to know how destructive one’s sin is. To return means to know how much God is willing to save by sacrificing His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Yes, the consequence of our own sins may still remain with us. We may still feel pain from the returning process. But God wants us to come back still. Are you willing? God wants us to be home from wandering around the lonely and sinful desert. In another words, this is a call to repentance. The problem in our relationship is never God, but always ourselves. The only way of escaping the vicious cycle of sin and spiritual adultery from God is to repent and go back from our sins to God from whom we departed. In Christ, our remedy is found. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” ①

Endnotes

1. Michael Bentley, *Turning back to God* (England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 73.

Rev. Young Jae Lee is a Free Reformed pastor called to home missions in the greater New York area under the oversight of the Free Reformed Outreach Committee. For more information see <http://frcusurbanmissions.org/>.

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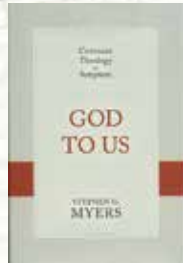
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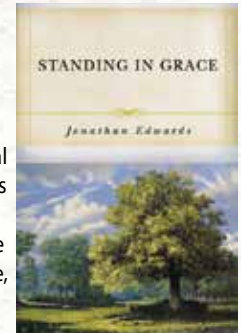
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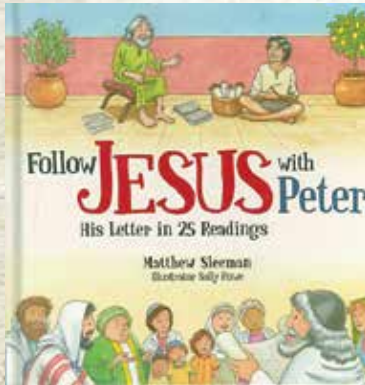


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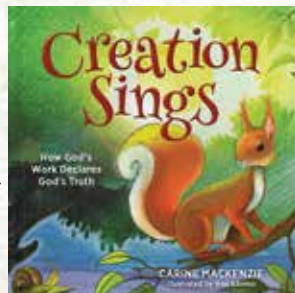


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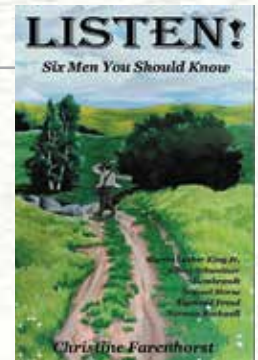
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ABUSE IN THE CHURCH (I): THE SOUL OF ABUSE

It is hard but necessary to speak about abuse in the church. Speaking about it is hard because abuse not only wounds deeply, but also shatters the identity and personhood of those who suffer it. Knowing that this is happening in the church is also hard considering what the church is to be. However, we must speak about it because abuse does happen in the church, and we seldom handle it in the best ways. Ignorance in this case is not bliss – nor is the naïve attitude that this could not happen among us.

I am simply writing to raise awareness. Though I have read much on abuse, I am not an expert on it. If you or your church is dealing with abuse, you need expert help, and you do well to get it from the best sources. There are laws about mandated reporting of abuse of minors, and even when it does not involve minors, it is unwise to ignore the place of law-enforcement. Abuse is not just sin, but often a crime before the law of the land. Scripture teaches that the magistrate is the minister of God, “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4).

The Soul of the Abuser

Abuse is treating another person cruelly or with violence, and especially repeatedly or regularly. Abuse is not just physical, though that may be a component of it. There is sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and verbal abuse. This may happen to a wife (and occasionally to a husband), to a child, or to someone who is elderly or otherwise vulnerable. In what follows I will be focused mostly on domestic abuse, though much of what I say can be transferred with adjustments to other kinds of abuse.

Abuse happens when someone has an abusive mindset, namely a desire to control and exert power over another person. Abuse runs the gamut of sweet talking and drawing the other person in, but then flipping so as to degrade, threaten, rage against, hurt, or abandon the other. Manipulation and making the victim feel like they are crazy (“gaslighting”) are often part of the abuse. All the while, the abuser feels himself superior to their victim, free to degrade, objectify, and manipulate the victim, and even entitled or right to do so.

Note that abuse can range from being more active to more passive, or alternate between the two. The latter involves isolation, silent treatment, and abandonment. In the church, faulty appeals are often made to the Bible. Many abusers in the church

appeal to texts or concepts in Scripture such as headship or submission. It is grievous to see and hear any appeal to the precious Word of God to erode the personhood of another.

What a close and comprehensive reading of Scripture unmistakably shows is that many pages of the Word of God censure abuse in no uncertain terms. The biblical concepts are “oppression,” “violence,” and “cruelty.” God’s Word speaks vividly of “such as breathe out cruelty” (Ps. 27:12), him whose “words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords” (Ps. 55:21), and those who rule “with force and with cruelty” (Ezek. 34:4). Indeed, Scripture teaches the headship of husbands in marriage, but as “saviour of the body,” loving his wife as his own body, a love that “nourisheth and cherisheth” her, “even as the Lord the church” (Eph. 5:25-29). Submission is a Scriptural call for wives to submit to their husbands “as the church is subject unto Christ” (Eph. 5:24). Which of the two is the more difficult calling should be obvious to all: It is for men to love their wives as Christ does the church. For that we need to know our own deep need for redemption from Christ, and to learn of Christ, who is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29).

Of all Christians, the Reformed should most readily acknowledge the deep-seated and horrific nature of the sin of abuse, along with all sin. Sin is deeply-rooted in the human heart. It is insidious and camouflages itself. Sin blinds the sinner to the sin. A sinner will not condemn himself apart from the powerful operation of the uncovering grace of God. The sinner will justify himself, appeal to Scripture, rage at God and His image-bearer, and, like Satan himself, seek the ruin of self and others. Sin has destructive results and will not rest until it has – save for the restraining hand of God or the saving grace of God – shattered everything it possibly can. We should fear the hardening nature of sin when not truly repented of.

Of all Christians, the Reformed should most readily acknowledge that the sin of murder includes “envy, hatred, and anger” (Lord’s Day 40; A. 106), and that the sixth commandment calls us “to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness” (Lord’s Day 40; A. 107).

I hope I am not too gloomy when I expect the sin of abuse to grow. The tightening hold of pornography on our society and on many inside the visible church, the withdrawing hand of God evident in churches in the West, the stubborn insistence of men to escape the accountability and scrutiny that there ought to be in the church, and fewer role models of true biblical manhood that is both self-sacrificing and strong are a few of the reasons. May God have mercy on us.

The Soul of the Abused

Those abused at whatever level and however long, especially if this abuse takes place as a child, experience deep trauma, hurt, and pain. Abuse wounds more than the body; it wounds the soul, mind, and emotions. Many speak of it as shattering the self at the deepest levels. Physical wounds are painful, but psychological and mental wounds are much deeper, less visible, and receive much less attention and effort toward healing.

Scripture gives voice to the abused on many of its pages. Whether it is the emotion of fear and anxiety, confusion and loss, isolation and betrayal, overwhelming shame and false guilt, an erosion of identity, and shattered trust, not just to the abuser but to others as well. Especially after abuse trusting God with any consistency is hard, because human beings which you wanted and should have been able to trust have broken that ability to trust.

Many in Scripture endured abuse and the Bible does not hide this. Let us listen to two examples of this voice in Scripture. Psalm 10 is the psalm of one who speaks on behalf of many who have been wronged and oppressed. It begins with a cry to God as the only help against “the wicked in his pride” who “doth persecute the poor” (Ps. 10:2). The anguished cry with which the Psalmist opens is: “Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble” (Ps. 10:1). There is no refuge from this experience of oppression except in God, but the Psalmist

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doesn't feel God's presence. In his cry of faith, the anguish of assaulted faith rings out loud and clear through the whole Psalm. The Psalmist struggles to trust God, yet cannot but keep crying out to God.

The description of the abuser in this Psalm is very precise and fits the profile of an abuser: "His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net" (Ps. 10:7-9).

Jeremiah is another who suffered greatly from abuse at the hands of his family (Jer. 11:21-23; 12:6) and many others (20:3). He was beaten, ridiculed and put into prison, and experiencing mental and physical torture (Jer. 37-38). His tears and weeping have become legendary, and his anguished cries reached heaven and were written in a book: "O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou

During His days in the flesh, the Son of God was made like us in all things, sin excepted. He was wounded, afflicted, and bruised. He was hated, despised, scoffed, scourged, and abandoned by His disciples.

art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me; and a derision, daily" (Jer. 20:7-8). Jeremiah's tears made it into God's bottle (Ps. 56:8).

During His days in the flesh, the Son of God was made like us in all things, sin excepted. He was wounded, afflicted, and bruised. He was hated, despised, scoffed, scourged, and abandoned by His disciples. He was acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3), including the grief of abuse. He cried with "strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7). He is our only hope. For His sake God will hear the needy when they cry. But let us in the church also not turn away from the cries of those who experience abuse, especially not when the Spirit in the Scriptures give voice to many such cries. ①

-To Be Continued

A DEVOTIONAL ON THE 150 PSALMS

IN THE LORD I TAKE REFUGE: 150 Daily Devotions through the Psalms by Dane C. Ortlund. Published by Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2021. Hardcover, 409 pages.

With the current resurgence in availability of Reformed books, there is a renewed interest in the Psalms. A recent Psalm-singing evening at a Canadian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ontario, drew participants from various Reformed churches in the area. Each of the participating ministers introduced one or more Psalms which focused on the redemptive work of Christ: His suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation. The audience responded by singing from the Psalter used by their denomination (Canadian Reformed – Genevan tunes; Free Reformed and other Reformed Churches – The Psalter; Scottish Presbyterian – Psalms, led by a precentor; and United Reformed - Trinity Psalter Hymnal). The singing was appropriately joyful, mournful, and plaintive, accompanied by robust organ playing.

Given the appreciation for the Psalms, it is not surprising that alongside Spurgeon’s classic *Treasury of David* (available in 3 hard-cover volumes), there are several newer devotionals on the Psalms in a briefer format and in today’s language. There is even one for women, entitled *Sing a New Song: a Woman’s Guide to the Psalms* by Lydia Brownback. Another recent one that will appeal to all who love the Psalms is *In the Lord I Take Refuge* by Dane C. Ortlund. A Presbyterian minister, he is also author of *Gentle and Lowly*, which has become a favourite with many.

In Ortlund’s devotional on each Psalm, each of the Psalms is completely reproduced and is followed with a little less than a one-page meditation. In the Introduction, the author states, “The Psalms give voice to our hearts. The wide range of human feelings is here given concrete expression. We are given language to address God with thanks and praise, but also with our feelings of desolation or despair or overwhelming guilt because of our sin” (pp. 7-8).

Each devotion can be read individually on a daily basis, but you may find that the contents stirring a deep response in your heart, making it hard to put the book down. Here are some excerpts:

Psalm 1: “Happily, this psalm and its two ways to live are not a choice between stoic obedience or gleeful disobedience. The first word of the psalm [Blessed] makes clear that true solid happiness – what the Bible calls ‘blessedness’ – is found in God and in His Word. Verse 2 reiterates – ‘His *delight* is in the law of the LORD.’ Nothing can compare with the blessedness—the fruitfulness, the flourishing, the prospering, the delightfulness of a life saturated with the Word of God” (p. 12).

Psalm 2: “With the coming of the Messiah, this psalm’s triumphant portrait of the Davidic throne takes on heightened significance and finds an ultimate meaning. Believers today are the heirs of this psalm and its promise come to rest on the worldwide church and its faith in the true and final Davidic heir, Jesus. Those who take refuge in him have found the only truly safe place in this broken world. Those who persist in resisting God and his rule, even if they are powerful ‘rulers of the earth,’ will be finally defied and justly destroyed” (p. 14).

Psalm 3: “What threatens to overwhelm you today? We have an even greater source of calm than David did, for there is one who did not

strike God’s enemies on the cheek (v.7), but instead let himself be struck on the cheek. Indeed, he experienced the ultimate rejection, being nailed to a Roman cross. Jesus allowed himself to be truly overwhelmed by his enemies. The result is that believers can be confident that every overwhelming experience they face is from a loving Father to help them” (p. 16).

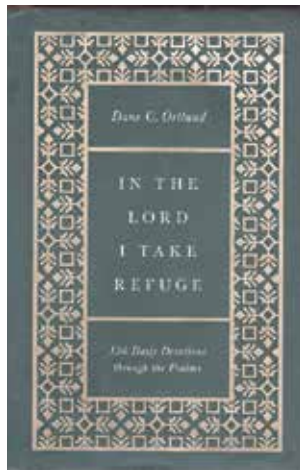
Psalm 44: “Not by their own sword did they win the land nor did their own arm save them, but by God’s right hand and because of His unfailing love (v.3). This is the fundamental message of the Bible. Fallen men and women stand in need of a salvation that comes wholly from outside them. They contribute nothing but their need. When God’s people stand in need of fresh deliverance, therefore, this is all they can plead. ‘Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies’ sake’ (v.26)” (pp. 126-27).

Psalm 118: “The stone thrown onto the rubble heap as useless has now become the most important building block of all, the very cornerstone...This is how God works. He comes near to us in all of our distress, taking what the world rejects and dignifying us with eternal significance. It is not our doing in any way. It is all of grace. ‘This is the LORD’s doing’ (v.23). And we marvel at this grace. Most of all we stand in awe of the supreme instance of his taking what the world rejected and turning it into an occasion for eternal significance—Jesus Christ, rejected by the religious elite, has become the cornerstone of the true and final temple, the church, of which each of us believers is a fellow stone (Matt.21:42; Eph.2:19-20)” (p. 331).

We could go on, but conclude with an excerpt from Psalm 150: “As the Psalter comes to an end, we are being led as the readers of Scripture to ponder the character of God and the extent of his great grace toward his people, so reflected throughout the entire Psalter.... Given the God who is portrayed throughout the Psalms—is merciful and gracious, a God who will not ignore the needy or helpless, a God who hates wickedness and will execute perfect justice one day, a God who heals the brokenhearted, a God who is a refuge and shelter for his troubled people, a God who understands his people’s internal highs and lows of living in this fallen world—what can we do but offer our lives and hearts unreservedly to him? He is our Shepherd, our Friend, our Deliverer” (p. 409).

In the Introduction, the author states: “The devotional content is meant to facilitate fellowship with God in the words of the Psalms... The devotionals are therefore intended ... to help the reader move deeply into this book of the Bible—and thereby to move deeply into communion with the triune God” (p. 7). One can most heartily agree with the author’s desire and aim that many will discover or re-discover the Psalms for their devotional life to express their deepest spiritual emotions, needs, repentance, faith, and joy in the LORD. M

This book may be purchased in Canada at Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario, and at Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



THE ORDER OF SALVATION (3)

DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE EFFECTUAL AND EXTERNAL CALLS

Last time, we learned that the Order of Salvation begins with the divine call to faith and repentance, and that this call is either external or also effectual in nature. The difference is that the effectual call results in the salvation of the person who is called, while the recipient of the external call remains in his natural state due to his unbelief. While both calls are different in result, they are not different in content. We may view them as two aspects of the same calling.

According to the late professor Louis Berkhof, both the inner and outward call are mediated by the same preached Word, which is heard by both listeners. However, in one of them, the external call passes into an internal one through the powerful application of the Holy Spirit. William Heyns, predecessor of Berkhof at Calvin Seminary, dealing with the same subject, wrote:

The Call is distinguished as an external and an internal call... Sometimes, as in Matthew 22:14, it makes use of the word ‘call’ in a general sense, in the sense in which sinners are called, admonished, and invited in the Gospel to be saved, and this is what we call the external call. But sometimes also, as in Romans 8:30, this word is used in a special sense, in a sense in which it can only concern the elect and includes the participation in spiritual benefits, and this is what we call the internal call.

Heyns cautions us, however, that the difference between the external and internal call should not be sought in their content, as if the latter is richer and fuller than the former. The content of both, he insists, “is the Gospel message, the rich and full offer of grace, Christ with all His benefits and treasures. Nor is the difference to be sought in well-meaningness, as if the internal call were well-meant and the external call not; for the external call, as a divine call, is most certainly well-meant.”

Iain Murray on the Free Offer of the Gospel

Iain Murray, in an article, “The Free Offer of the Gospel Viewed in the Light of the Marrow Controversy,” makes the point that the term “offer of the Gospel” was used already by the Reformers and occurs in the Reformed Confessions. He quotes Calvin as saying: “God invites all indiscriminately by outward preaching and in this invitation the grace of God is offered to us.”

All the Reformed Confessions, Murray says, endorsed Calvin’s

Editorial Note: The first installment of this series (September 2022) stated “The Scottish Presbyterian theologian, John Murray, includes assurance as an additional blessing” in the order of salvation. This should have stated that Murray included “adoption as an additional blessing.” The last installment of this series continued to draw from John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 54, 205, 106; Anthony Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, pp. 54, 86; and D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans* Chapter 8:17-39, pp. 206-207.

position. The international Synod of Dort affirmed in Head II, Article 5, “Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel.” Similarly, The Westminster Confession says: “He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him that they may be saved” (Chapter 7, Article 3). Murray goes on to say that this universal and well-meant gospel call is the only warrant or permission sinners have to come to Christ.

What gives a guilty, hell-deserving sinner the right to come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? This question was hotly debated in the early eighteenth century Scottish Marrow controversy. On the one side were Thomas Boston, Ebenezer Erskine, and his brother Ralph. These men believed in the universal call and offer of the Gospel. They were opposed by members of the Synodical party who denied the Free Offer who said only the convicted and contrite sinners have a warrant to come to Christ. Sinners needed inward qualifications, not just the outward divine command and promise.

Against this position, the Marrow Men stressed the Free Offer of the Gospel as the only ground for sinners to come to Christ. According to Boston, “Christ invites all without distinction, even the worst of sinners, to this spiritual feast: Isaiah 55:1, ‘Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters,’ and ‘whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.’ Rev. 22:17. These are Gospel-invitations, clogged with no conditions, comprehending all who are willing to receive Christ, whatever their case is or has been.”

The Marrow Men saw this call and offer also as a particular offer, addressed to every individual who hears it. Says Ebenezer Erskine: “God speaks to every sinner as particularly as though He named them by name and surname. Remission of sins is preached to you, we beseech you to be reconciled, the promise is unto you, and for my part I do not know what sort of a Gospel men make who do not admit this Gospel Truth.”

Brakel on the Free Offer

Another strong supporter of the Free Offer is the Dutch Second Reformation theologian Wilhelmus á Brakel. In answer to the question of whether God calls all lost sinners who are under the ministry of the gospel or only calls the elect, he writes:

God calls all and everyone who live under the ministry of the gospel.... Had the guest at the wedding feast who came without the wedding garment been invited? He most certainly was. It was not that he came at the wrong time, but that he came in the wrong way; i.e. without a wedding garment... There is a general and unconditional declaration, to him who thirsts, who is without money, and who wills (Isa. 55:1-2; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). Since many reject the gospel, it is necessarily offered to them, for whatever is not offered cannot be rejected.... Since

Christ is offered to all who are under the ministry, it not only follows that everyone may come and no one needs to remain behind for fear whether he is called or not, but it also follows that everyone is obligated to come to Christ and to receive Him in order to be justified, sanctified, preserved, and glorified.

The above quotations from Scripture, Reformed Confessions, and well-known respected theologians show that God is sovereign in effectually calling those He has decided to save and at the same time promising to save whoever calls upon His name (Romans 10:13).

Opponents of the Free Offer of Salvation

While most Reformed and Presbyterian ministers as well as Reformed Baptists whole-heartedly endorse the preaching of the Free Offer of the gospel, some strongly oppose this doctrine. Although they whole heartedly support the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, they take exception to what they believe is not only dangerous but also illogical. Some of these men were contemporaries and successors of English puritans and Dutch Further Reformers. Had they not read Brakel, Boston, and the Erskines as quoted above? They must have, but did not agree with them or at least did not follow their example in preaching the offer of salvation as freely and generously as these respected and beloved authors had.

According to C. Harinck, Dutch emeritus pastor in the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, this opposition to preaching the free offer had to do with significant changes in the spiritual climate during the second half of the eighteenth century — changes that led to a fierce controversy in the Reformed community about the contents of the gospel and how it was to be preached. The origin of this controversy, Harinck says, lay in the spiritual decline that came over the Netherlands, affecting both church and society. In this age of Enlightenment, which replaced revelation with reason and traded godliness for loose living and tolerance for widely divergent views, especially in religion and ethics. The Synod of Dort had condemned Arminianism, but as time went on it crept back into the churches and led to outright liberalism. A diminishing number of faithful preachers wanted to stay with the foundations of the faith as outlined in the Reformed confessions, especially the Canons of Dort. They strongly emphasised the doctrines of election, man’s inability, and limited atonement. The salvation obtained by Christ was offered, but only to those who possessed the marks of grace.

Among those who took such a rigid stand for orthodoxy was Johannes van Woensel, a prominent member of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam. In 1779, this lay theologian published a book titled *Moral Reservations regarding the General Well-Meant Offer of the Gospel*. In it he takes issue with those who, in God’s name and with the most persuasive promises, offer to all who live under the gospel the salvation accomplished by Christ. Van Woensel raised strong objections against the term *offer* of grace, insisting that it was not biblical, for Scripture speaks



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THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

of proclaiming and presenting the call of the gospel. Van Woensel claimed that many Free Offer preachers of his day told their hearers that everyone who hears the gospel is duty-bound to believe not only that Christ is *offered*, but also that He is actually *given* to the hearer as Saviour. In other words, all those who hear the gospel offer must believe that Christ died for their sins. But how can we truthfully say that God wills something which He in reality does not will (namely, to save all men)? The doctrine of limited atonement teaches that Christ did not die for all who hear the gospel but only for God's elect. Can God in the person of Christ genuinely declare that He wants to be the Saviour both of those chosen to salvation as well as those left in their misery?

According to van Woensel, the basic problem for those who preach a well-meant offer of grace is that they posit two opposing wills in God. According to His hidden or secret will, they say, God wants to save only His elect, but according to His revealed will, He wants to save all who hear the gospel. This is wrong, van Woensel insisted. There can only be one offer of grace in the preaching and it must be addressed to those whom God actually wants to save—namely, His elect. Faithful ministers must therefore restrict the gospel offer to those who manifest the marks of election.

Van Woensel's Influence

Van Woensel's strong objections to the Free Offer concept gained much support in The Netherlands, not only during his lifetime, but also after his death. His influence, along with that of other hyper-Calvinists (which is what they basically were) was considerable in the Secession Church of 1834, which almost split over the so-called well-meant offer issue, and later in the Churches of the Cross. Many of them amalgamated with the Ledeboerian congregations and formed the Netherlands Reformed Congregations led by Rev. G. H. Kersten. Although this able theologian in his early years preached a rather generous gospel message offering Christ to sinners in general, this weakened under the influence of Dr. C. Steenblok who was an ardent follower of Woensel and other anti-free offer advocates.

The debate regarding the proper addressees of the gospel promises spread from The Netherlands to North America, where many members of the Secession and Doleantie churches settled during the mid 19th and early 20th centuries, bringing their theological differences with them. Among the participants in this debate were Herman Hoeksema and William Heyns, and others who fought long and hard until the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 ruled in favour of the Free Offer doctrine and deposed Hoeksema, who, with his supporters, founded the Protestant Reformed Churches. Though Hoeksema may not have drawn from van Woensel, his theological position *viz a viz* the well-meant gospel offer has similarities with that of van Woensel.

Next time, we will examine both the strengths and the weaknesses of both parties in this (ongoing) debate. Most Reformed theologians subscribe to the Free Offer of the Gospel. Does this mean that their opponents have nothing of value to say? We must always be fair and like the Bereans “search the Scriptures daily whether those things are so” (Acts 17:11). ☺

ReformedBookServices

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Reformed Book Services (RBS) is a Christian bookstore located in Brantford, Ontario, serving the Canadian market. I'm sure you have seen our ads many times in *The Messenger* and *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*. The origins of RBS go back to the late 1970's. John Schuit and Jack Westerink, both teachers at Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown, felt a need to encourage our



An anticipated rendering of the renovated building

people to read (more) Reformed and Puritan books by making them available at discounted prices. A few years later, they were joined by Ryk Naves, in whose basement the books were stored. Most books were sold at weekday church gatherings. After running this "store" for some 10 years, they sold it to John and Henny Pennings of the St. Thomas Free Reformed Church, who continued in a similar fashion for the next 20 years.

Around 2009, several avid readers of the Brantford, Dundas, Hamilton, and St. George FRC's got together to consider taking over the book ministry and making it more accessible to the public. At the outset, and many times since, we have observed the Lord's blessing in this endeavor. Early in 2009, RBS was incorporated as a not-for-profit entity. Soon a store was opened on Lynden Road in Brantford in a nicely renovated space rented to us at a significant discount by a member of the Dundas FRC. The store in its initial stage was managed by Wilma Droogendyk. Trudy Schuit took over the helm in 2017. These capable managers were assisted by a board of directors and a team of able volunteers and staff. In 2018, we opened a depot in the Niagara Region. Besides the store operations, many books are sold at various conferences; in one year, we attended 32 conferences. Throughout our history, Reformation Heritage Books in Grand Rapids has assisted us with invaluable counsel and sizeable discounts. Our board now has a member from the Heritage Reformed Congregations and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as well.

Since the onset of Covid in 2019, sales have increased rapidly. The main reasons, it seems, are an increased appetite for good books throughout Canada, especially in the West; the shutting down of several nearby Christian bookstores; and the use of

better website software. On average, at least one new customer is added each business day. With sales increasing, we are running out of space. Our dreams were to get charity status by the end of 2022 and then look for larger premises. In one week during late spring, two wonderful things came together: we received charity status and our landlord informed us of a 7200 square foot building that

was for sale just around the corner. A building committee was formed and the building on 16 Roy Street was visited. An estimate for renovations was made (about \$200,000), resulting in the board making an offer to purchase for \$1,700,000. Within two weeks, sufficient financing was secured, all from supporters in our Reformed community. We hope to close the purchase of the property on October 27. Most of the back part of the building will be rented out to the current tenant. We will start out using about 35% of the building, which is almost three times the space we currently have.

While funds for the purchase are in place, we need money to renovate and furnish the building and to increase the inventory to better serve our customers. The board does not view RBS as a business, but rather a ministry. As stated in our logo, we seek to promote godliness, revival, and reformation in individuals, families, churches, and in our communities. We could tell you many stories of how new customers come in who have just discovered the doctrines of grace as well as stories of people who hardly know anything about Christianity and are looking for something deeper. During Covid, the puritan paperbacks were our bestsellers. Our hopes and prayers are that the sale of Bibles, good books, and tracts will be a great blessing to many. As part of our expanded mission as a registered charity, we also plan to hold seminars, book presentations, and the like, in the near future.

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Connor Keuning serves as president of the RBS board and as an elder in the Hamilton Free Reformed Church.

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF PASTOR CHRIS MOURIK IN CALGARY FRC



On the evening of Thursday, September 22, approximately 100 people gathered at the Calgary Free Reformed Church to witness the ordination and installation of Pastor-Elect Chris Mourik.

Elder Bill Bakker welcomed all who were in attendance for this joyous occasion and reminded them that the Lord calls a minister to a congregation and provides him by His hand.

Pastor Joel Overduin (who mentored brother Chris during his internship at Vineland FRC) led the first part of the ordination service. Those in attendance confessed their faith through the Canons of Dort, First Head of Doctrine, Articles 1 to 3. An offering was taken to support the ongoing work of theological education via Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Pastor Joel Overduin then expounded 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5, especially verse 2: **“Preach the word!”** He showed that the King of the church is at work tonight and here in this place. In the text, the Lord Himself instructs every minister as to what he is called to do. It was preached that every pastor is to be much in prayer and to minister to the congregation, but his chief task is to preach the Word!

The call to, “Preach the Word,” is a **solemn charge**: it is an order from the Most High. God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, are a witness to that call here tonight. At His second coming, the Lord Jesus will judge the living and the dead. He will judge the wicked and the righteous. The preached Word will have eternal consequences for all of the hearers. Pastor Overduin reminded all in attendance that those holding office in the church will receive a stricter judgement.

Pastor Overduin went on to say that preaching the Word is a **challenging task** in its nature. To preach is to “herald,” and the words that a minister preaches are not to be his own but the Lord’s words. Prayer and the working of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the preparation of the message. The minister is to be bold in preaching, “in season and out of season.” Sometimes the message is difficult to deliver and it can be hard to point out uncomfortable truths (think of the prophet Nathan confronting King David in the aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba). Sometimes the minister is faced with the disappointment of a person turning away from God. These challenges and disappointments are to be met head on.

Pastor Overduin concluded by pointing out that the liberty to “Preach the Word,” is a **glorious privilege**. The Lord is pleased to find lost sinners and to transform them out of the finished work of Jesus Christ through gospel preaching. His grace is sufficient and the Lord strengthens all His ministers to serve. A pastor is enabled to unfurl the glorious banner of the good news of the gospel! They can herald the only way of escape from our sins and miseries in this world.

Pastor Joel Overduin concluded his message by asking the Triune God to strengthen Brother Mourik in his ministry and praying that the congregation of Calgary would receive their new pastor with praise and with gladness.

The Form for the Ordination and Installation of a new minister was read by Emeritus Pastor Hans Overduin, former pastor of the

Calgary congregation. Brother Mourik verbally confirmed his acceptance to the contents of the form.

Brother Mourik knelt while Elder Don Fraser and Elder Bill Bakker held the Bible above his head. Laying on of hands was performed by Pastor Ben Van Liere (Pastor of Langley FRC), Pastor Jan Neels (Pastor of Blackfalds FRC), Emeritus Pastor Hans Overduin, Pastor Joel Overduin (Pastor of Vineland FRC) and Pastor Jack Schoeman (Pastor of Abbotsford FRC).

After the laying on of hands upon the new minister by the various ministers present, the congregation stood to sing Psalter 246:3 (Based on Psalm 90 and with noted Psalter pronoun changes in this case.)

*“So let there be on [him] bestowed
The beauty of the LORD our God;
The work accomplished by [his] hand
Establish Thou, and make it stand;
Yes, let [his] hopeful labor be
Established evermore by Thee,
Established evermore by Thee.”*

A charge was given to Pastor Mourik and the congregation of Calgary FRC. To Pastor Mourik: “Love Christ and feed His sheep.” To the congregation of Calgary: “Hold your minister in esteem (Philippians 2:29) and receive the Word, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).”

The newly ordained and installed Pastor Mourik preached on Ephesians 3:1-12, especially verse 8, under the heading of, **“Preaching the Good News!”** Pastor Mourik highlighted that grace is given to unworthy people and that we are only made holy

and acceptable before God through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All Christians are not just called, but commanded to be witnesses of the good news of the gospel. The preaching of the Word gives us all a glimpse of Jesus Christ. Pastor Mourik highlighted that, in this life, the unsearchable and inexhaustible riches of Christ can only be seen in part. Christ made Himself of no reputation despite His glorious attributes, which Pastor Mourik drew from the words of the Athanasian Creed. Pastor Mourik reminded us that the Lord Jesus Christ was both actively and passively obedient to the Father, gave Himself wholly for His calling as Saviour of sinners. Should not our response be also to give ourselves wholly for Him and His praise and service?

After the Benediction and the singing of Doxology Psalter 354:6, the ordination and installation service was formally brought to a close.

Elder Bill Bakker then led the greetings and acknowledgements, speaking a special word of welcome on behalf of consistory and congregation to Pastor Mourik, his dear wife, Connie, and their children Jesse, Connor, Olivia and Tyson. We look to the Lord for a blessing upon the ministry of Pastor Mourik.

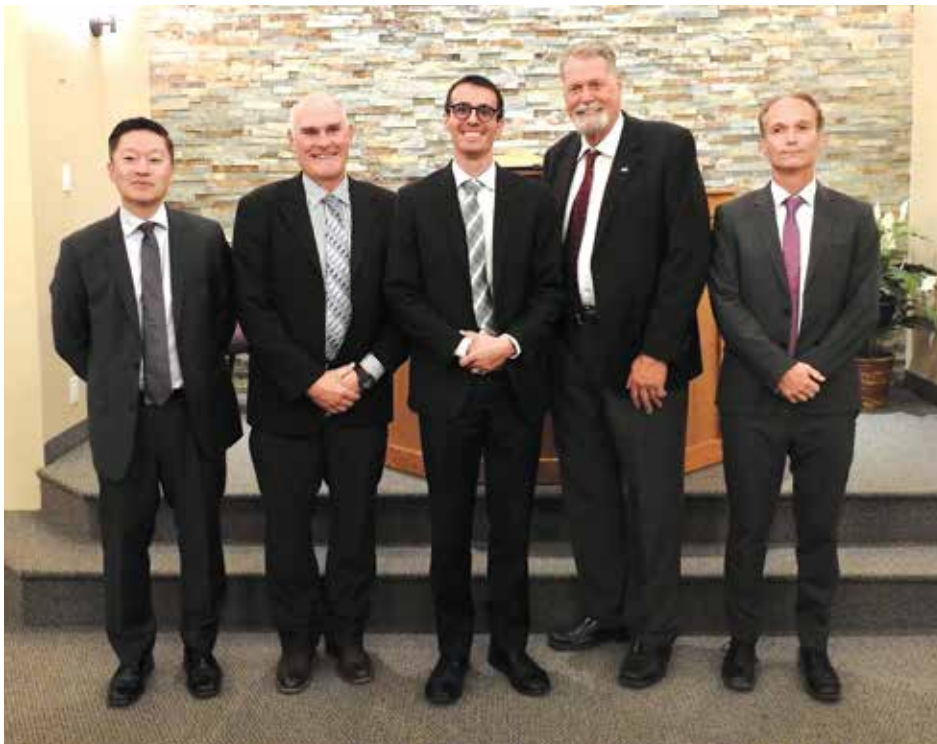
Letters of blessing and congratulations were received from the Heritage Reformed congregation of Chilliwack and the Free Reformed Churches of Abbotsford, Bornholm, Brantford, Chilliwack, Fenwick, Grand Rapids, Hamilton, London, Mitchell, Monarch, Oxford, St. Thomas, and Vineland. These were received with appreciation and would be posted on the church front hall bulletin board.

Calgary FRC’s church counselor Pastor Jan Neels gave a welcome and asked for a blessing upon Pastor Mourik and his wife and children. Pastor Jack Schoeman brought greetings as Chairman of the Theological Education Committee and as a representative of Synod.

Pastor Mourik then gave a response to the greetings received and, among others, thanked the denomination, the Theological Education Committee, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and the Grand Rapids and Vineland FRC congregations for their support during his training. He gave special mention to Connie and the children for their love and support during the years past. Thanks be to God for all of these blessings.

The ordination and installation evening with Pastor Mourik was concluded with the singing of Psalter 196, followed by a time of some refreshment and joyful fellowship. ①

Elder Mike Harbour serves as clerk of the Calgary Free Reformed Church consistory (clerk@calgaryfrcna.org).



BRINGING OTHERS TO JESUS



In Mark 1:16–20, Jesus approached Peter, Andrew, James and John, and called them from their profession as fishermen to a new task of being “fishers of men.” Jesus would send them to draw people out of the darkness of sin and Satan by throwing out the net of the Gospel to catch men. This should be fundamental to our view of the ministerial calling. God makes ministers “fishers of men.” To change the analogy, they are ambassadors of Christ the King, and in his name they beseech men to be reconciled to God. Christians in general too are to be fishers of men. Though you may not be called to the work of the holy ministry, because you love Christ and desire to see him glorified, and because you love your neighbour as yourself, you will have a burden to see them saved that should motivate you to action.

We see this illustrated in Mark 6:53–56, when Jesus stepped off a boat in Gennesaret, and people began to run throughout the whole region, to bring those who were sick to Jesus, so that they might touch him and be healed. The passage challenges us to be bringing people to Jesus.

Bringing People to Jesus Urgently

In verse 54, the people recognized Jesus. Gennesaret was an area

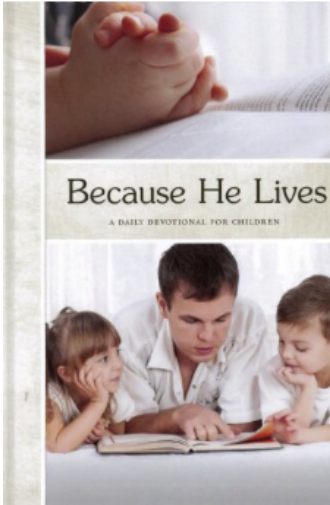
where he had performed many miracles and they knew that Jesus was able to heal. Perhaps some of them had previously been healed. When they saw Jesus, their minds immediately went to others who were sick, and they ran (verse 56) with urgency through the whole region to bring them to Christ. Would, that we would respond like them to address the physical needs of others. If a doctor with a 100 percent success rate of curing all his patients came to our community offering his services for free, we would run to our sick friends and relatives to put them in the way of the physician. Yet we struggle to see the spiritual needs of others and therefore we lack the same sense of urgency to bring them to Christ. Our hearts need to be impressed with the awful condition of souls all around us who are perishing in sin and then we will begin to run with urgency to bring them to Jesus.

Bringing People to Jesus Physically

Paying attention to the verbs when you read Scripture is always profitable. Here not only do people run throughout the region, they carry people on beds and lay them in the way of Christ. Essentially, they do two things. First, they take Christ to men. Jesus has arrived in the area and they go to make it known. We are

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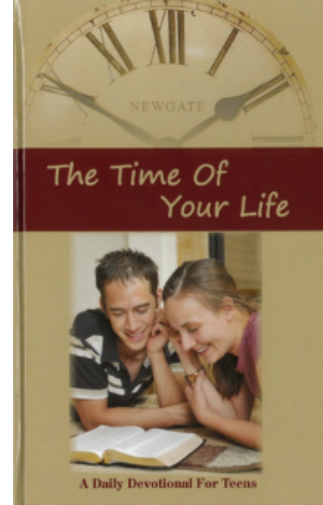
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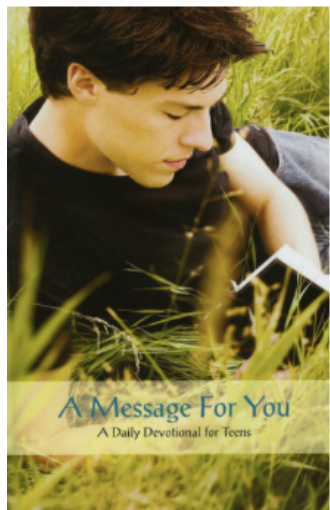
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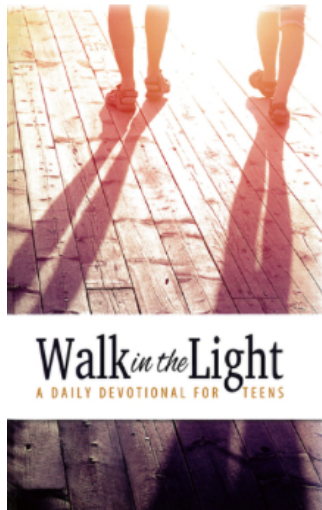
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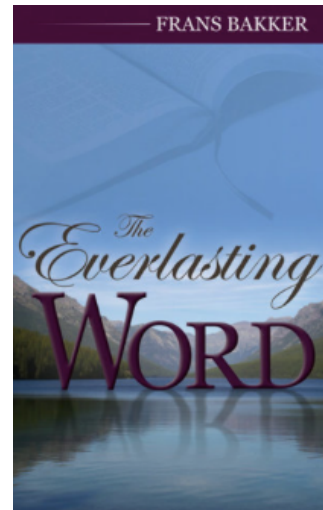
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EVANGELISM

not to imagine that they enter a village and abduct all the sick folk against their will. There must have been some communication: “I have good news,” they might have said, “Jesus has returned! The one who is able to heal!” Christians are to take Christ like that to their fellow men. Knowing they are needy and knowing Jesus is able, you take the Word of Christ to them where they are. The Gospels are replete with exhortations to us to “Go” with the message of the Gospel to those who are lost and perishing (Luke 14:15–23; Matt. 28:19).

Not only do we take Christ to men but we also take people to Christ. The sick were picked up and carried to places where it was known Jesus would be. The urgency and energy of their friends was directed to bring the needy to Jesus. Now we do this in a sense when we bring God’s Word to the lost, however Jesus has told us where to bring people so they can find him. He promises that where his church meets, he is present. The means of grace are provided in the church, and Christ has appointed the preaching of the Word there to be the power of God unto salvation. The church does not save, only Jesus saves. Yet Jesus saves in the church, and that is why it is so important that, while we take the Gospel to those who are outside the church, we should also aim to bring them physically under the sound of the Gospel in the church for Jesus to bless them.

Bringing People to Jesus Prayerfully

When the people brought their sick friends to Jesus, their work was not over. In verse 56, “they besought” Jesus on their behalf. If we believe that Jesus alone can save sinners then we will bring them to him; likewise we will pray him to do what is totally beyond our power to do, but sometimes we fail most at this point. Christians can be so excited when someone they witnessed to shows an interest or comes to church, that somehow in that excitement we forget to pray. The people in Gennesaret prayed, and they prayed earnestly, “beseeching” Jesus that the sick might touch him.

The urgency and energy that is needed to reach out to others to bring them to Christ must pervade our prayer that Christ will save them. We pray with feeling and we also pray with faith, knowing that Christ is well able to save. Our Gennesaret friends remind us of this too in their request that their sick friends might just touch the border of Christ’s garment to be healed.

Bringing People to Christ Successfully

“As many as touched were made whole.” This does not tell us that everyone who was brought to Christ was healed, but only as many who touched Him. We would like to think that none were so foolish as to let this opportunity for healing pass them by, but we know that many who hear the Gospel do so. Sometimes sinners do not feel their need but often, even though they are convinced of their need, unbelief and a refusal to repent will deny them the remedy they need. We bring people to Jesus and pray for his blessing, but still some will believe the Gospel while others will not (Acts 28:24).

However, many did touch Jesus by faith in Gennesaret, and as many as touched him were made whole. Irrespective of what



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their particular sickness was or how long they had it, the Great Physician healed them. So it is in the Gospel—the church is a hospital for sin-sick souls, and all who touch Jesus in faith are made whole. He gives the blind their sight, he makes the deaf to hear, he makes the lame man to walk, and raises the souls of dead sinners. We move among these tragically sick souls every day. If we only had eyes to see their plight, we would bring them

to Jesus urgently, physically, prayerfully, and with the blessing of God, successfully. ¹¹

Rev. Gavin Beers, a native of Northern Ireland, serves as pastor of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in Mebane, North Carolina. Article is taken from <https://www.grangerepress.com/2020/03/04/bringing-others-to-jesus/>.



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ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF PASTOR JEFF OVERDUIN IN MONARCH FRC



On September 23, 2022, the Free Reformed Church of Monarch, Alberta, witnessed the ordination and installation of candidate Jeff Overduin to the high calling of teacher, pastor, and shepherd. After a vacancy of two years and much prayer to the Great Shepherd of the church, in dependence and reliance on God and on His Word, the congregation was filled with joy and thanksgiving to God as they received the response from Candidate Overduin that the Lord had made it clear to him that Monarch was to be the flock that he was to shepherd and serve. Despite the insufficiency he felt within himself, candidate Overduin stated that he looked forward to ministering the Word of God to us with joy, knowing and trusting that “our sufficiency is of God” (2 Cor. 3:5-6) and trusting the Lord’s promise to be with us wherever we go in obedience to Him.

The service of ordination and installation was led by Pastor Eric Moerdyk of the St. Thomas Free Reformed Church, who had both served as Student Overduin’s internship mentor and our former pastor. After opening with the singing of Psalter 402: 1,4,6, Pastor Moerdyk read 2 Timothy 1:1-2:1, of which chapter 2:1 formed the text for the sermon: “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Our confession was taken from the Canons of Dort, Head 1, articles 1-3, where we are instructed “...that God mercifully sends messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified.”

Pastor Moerdyk then preached the ordination sermon, summarized below:

In our text, Timothy is called to be strong in Christ, and we

see: 1. The Weakness of the Person Called, and 2. Christ’s Provision in This Call. Who is sufficient to this call? We need the strengthening hand of the Lord. Humanly speaking, we are in the jaws of a lion. Yet we must run the race and fight the good fight. Oh Lord, transform our hearts! Lord, send revival to our churches, or we will wither away. Pastors and congregation, struggle together! Pray that Christ will work repentance and faith. We are to be empowered by the grace of Jesus Christ, who is the fountain that never runs dry. Congregation, show your bonds of love to your pastor. Candidate Overduin, be strengthened by the congregational bond of love in the Lord. God will provide oceans of grace. Paul himself could say: God stood by me! Remember that this grace mentioned in our text is a person; it is the Lord Jesus Christ! Rutherford wrote: “God gives all His children a fresh daily allowance of His grace.” Christ is at no time absent from us! Now my son, be empowered in the grace of Jesus Christ. We can never overdraw from Christ’s bank account. “O church of our God, sing His praises, for with you and in you He dwells; O sing Hallelujahs before Him, Whose glory all praises excels (Psalter 374:5).

The “Form for the Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments” was read by candidate Jeff Overduin’s father, Pastor Hans Overduin, Emeritus Pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Calgary, Alberta. Candidate Jeff Overduin responded to the three questions put before him, with: “Yes, truly, with all my heart!”

As our new pastor knelt, and two elders of the Monarch congregation held the open Bible overhead, we witnessed the laying

on of hands by the seven FRC pastors present, each in their turn providing a passage of encouragement from God's precious word. This was followed by the congregational singing of Psalter 354: 2,6 and the reading of the "Charge to the Minister," "Charge to the Congregation," and "Prayer" by Pastor Hans Overduin.

After the congregational singing of Psalter 262, Pastor Jeff Overduin opened with prayer and read from Acts 10: 34-43 as the text for his inaugural sermon, summarized below.

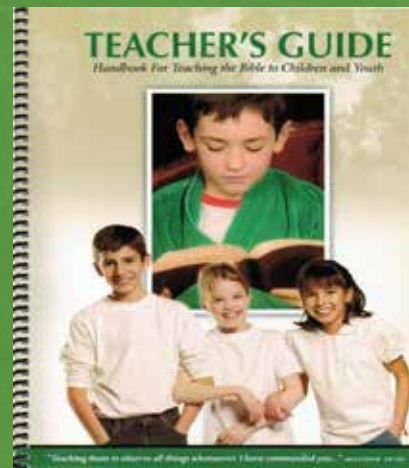
In Acts 10, we have the great transition in the book of Acts where the Lord makes clear that the gospel comes to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Congregation, we are beginning a new relationship as pastor and congregation. The Gospel message, as the message of peace through Jesus Christ, is what I hope to bring. The theme for this sermon is "The Gospel Message of Peace Through Jesus Christ". Let us look at three things here: 1. The Gospel is a Message Sent by God, 2. The Gospel is a Message about Jesus Christ as the All-sufficient and All-glorious Mediator, and 3. The Gospel Proclaims the Forgiveness of Sins to Everyone who Believes in Him. Under the second point, the following four things about Christ as Mediator were highlighted from the text: He is the mediator with universal authority, the mediator with almighty power, the mediator with divine approval, and the mediator with the final word. There will be no other judge. Let us obey the gospel and call on our glorious Mediator who brings peace to our hearts! We are never too great a sinner. We must not ignore Him. We must cling to Him by faith! Will you not take Him as your own? Will you not do it tonight, before it is too late? Will you not follow Him, through whom and by whom we have peace with God? Sin separates us from God. Can I be forgiven? Yes, if I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He restores believers to fellowship with God. This proclamation is to whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ (v.43). Peace with God is the message of the Gospel! This is the message I am called to bring to you. It is a message which you and I both need! The Holy Spirit is the one who must work, through the Gospel message of His word, to cause it to produce fruit, just like he did with Peter's sermon to Cornelius and his household. Who is a God like this triune God?

Following Pastor Jeff Overduin's inaugural sermon, the congregation responded by singing Psalter 176: "O God to us show mercy and bless us in Thy grace." He then pronounced the benedictory blessing upon the congregation and we sang as Doxology Psalter 427:6: "This is the day of full salvation."

The chair of the consistory of Monarch, Elder Marvin Van Maanen, welcomed Pastor Jeff Overduin as our pastor and noted that we are now his flock to teach and to lead us to Christ. When prodigal sons and daughters return to God, may all glory be to Him! Pastor, pray much for our congregation and, congregation, pray for our pastor. Pray that his work will be to the honor and

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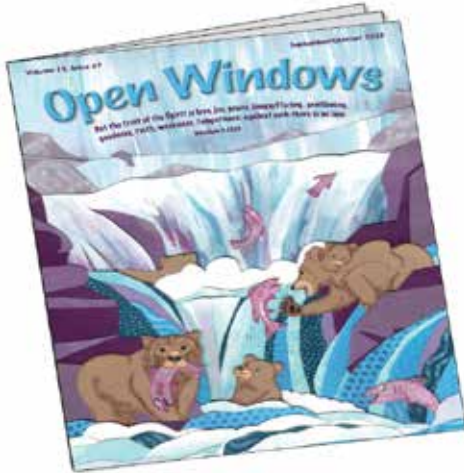


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"Let the people praise Thee, O God; let ALL
 the people praise Thee" Psalm 67:5

ORDINATION

glory of God! (Psalm 27:14).

Pastor Neels, our church counselor, comforted our young pastor as follows: the God who calls you equips you, His Holy Spirit will enable you, and His Son Christ Jesus is in you. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Congregation, when Pastor Overduin's message has powerfully spoken to you, say: What a Saviour we have!

Pastor Schoeman spoke on behalf of the Theological Education Committee and Synod of the FRC. He said, Pastor Overduin, you have been a conscientious and diligent student, learning to preach in a seasoned manner. The Lord has given you gifts and to Him we give all the glory. Continue as you began this evening, earnestly preaching the gospel, and may the Lord continue to strengthen you by His Word and Spirit. We all share in the joy of the congregation of Monarch, having received a minister of the gospel from God's hand. Congregation, as was mentioned earlier, may you heed an old saying: "When you pray your preacher full, he will be enabled to preach you full!" To Pastor Hans Overduin and his wife Nelly: You now have two sons in the ministry, and the father and grandfather were ministers of the gospel as well. We see the covenant faithfulness of the Lord! It is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. To Him be all the glory!

Closing remarks were made by Pastor Jeff Overduin. I have many people to thank! Mitchell confirmed my sense of call, the professors and staff and fellow students at PRTS were a rich blessing to me in learning, in fellowship, and especially as we were able to pray together. I am thankful for the support received from the Theological Education Committee, and the instruction from Pastor Moerdyk during my internship in St. Thomas, as well as his much needed and appreciated words of encouragement tonight! To my congregation of Monarch, thank you for your kindness already shown to me: for the call, for the love, care, patience, support, and help in getting us settled. I look forward to working with all the brothers of consistory and as a family getting to know the congregation better over time. Thank you to all the pastors here this evening and to my wife's parents and my parents. Thanks especially to my dear wife and to our children. Above all, thanks be to God who has brought us together as pastor and congregation. His ways are mysterious, but they are always marvelous. Praise Him from Whom all blessings flow!

With the singing of those words from our familiar doxology, the service was concluded, and a time of refreshments and fellowship followed. May the Lord continue to bless the work begun in Monarch through His faithful servants Pastors Meijer, De Lange, Schoeman and Moerdyk. May we all heed the words of Hebrews 2:3: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him..." ①

Elder René Barendregt serves as Vice-Chair of the consistory of the Monarch Free Reformed Church.

AND THE **BOW** SHALL BE IN THE CLOUD;
 AND I WILL **LOOK** UPON IT, THAT
 I MAY REMEMBER **THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**
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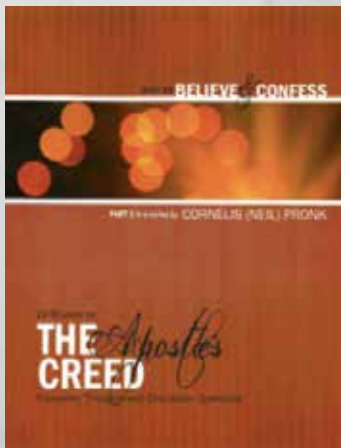
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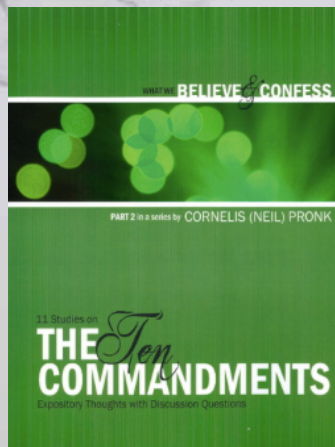
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