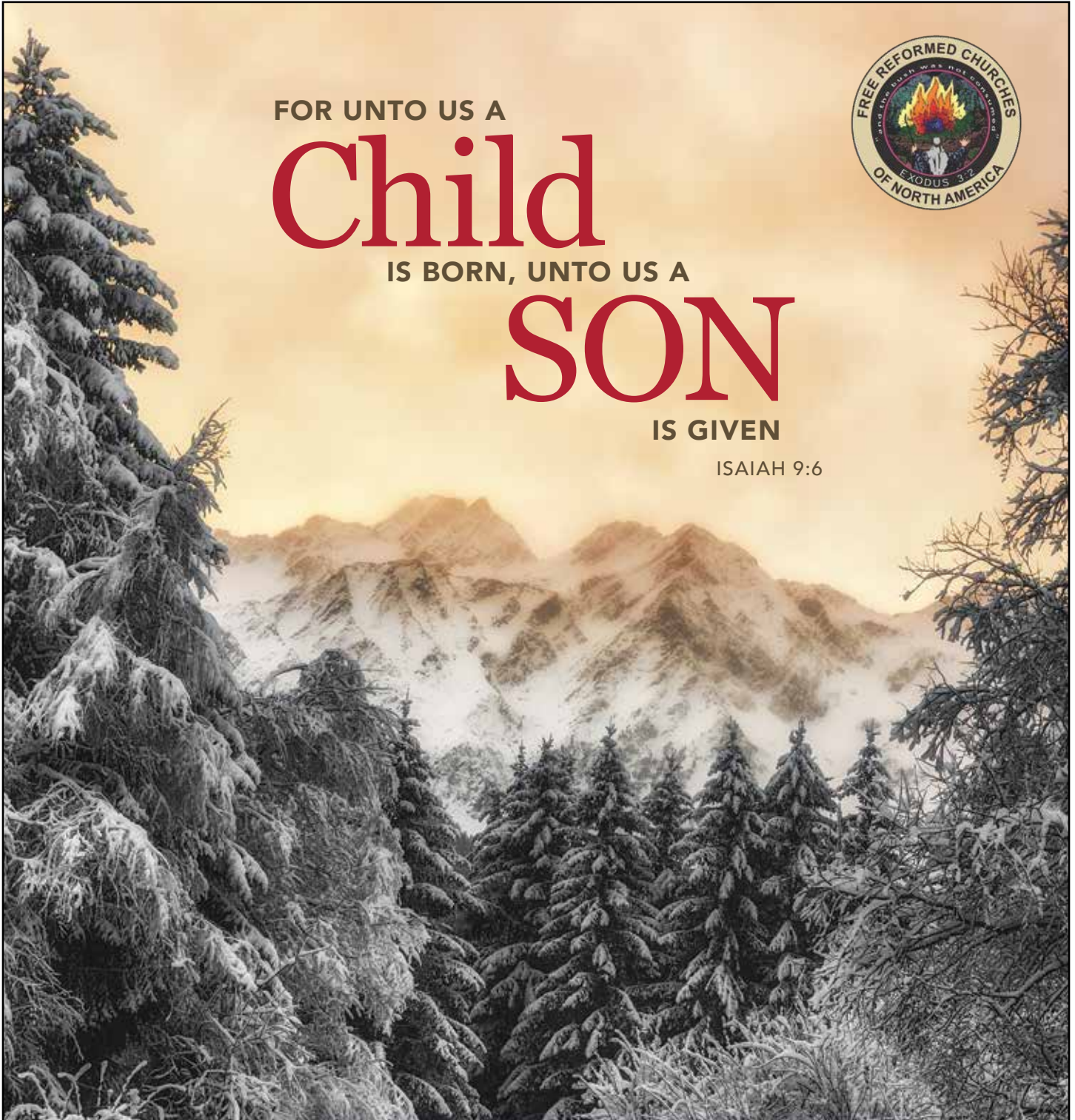


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FOR UNTO US A
Child
IS BORN, UNTO US A
SON

IS GIVEN

ISAIAH 9:6

02 MEDITATION:
SINNERS MADE RICH
THROUGH CHRIST'S POVERTY

06 EDITORIAL:
LOVE TO THE
UNSEEN CHRIST

18 REFLECTIONS:
REFLECTIONS ON THE
INCARNATION OF SON OF GOD



SINNERS MADE RICH THROUGH CHRIST'S POVERTY

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9

Many people today want nothing more than to be rich. To that end, they will do almost anything – including illegal activities. But the riches they gain by such means cannot satisfy. They are, as our Lord said, treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt and thief break through and steal.

True riches can be found only in Christ. This is the clear teaching of 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” Here we learn how we can become truly rich: through the poverty of Christ. Christ became poor that we, poor sinners, might become rich. This is nothing short of astounding.

Christ’s Poverty

How did Christ become poor? In the first place, He became poor in His incarnation. Christ became poor by becoming a man. Before His incarnation, Christ was pure spirit. He was the second person of the Holy Trinity, co-equal, co-eternal and co-essential with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was in the bosom of His Father. He is described in the Scriptures as the only begotten Son of God.

In His incarnation however, Christ added to His divine nature a human nature. Christ became a man. He took upon Himself a body just like ours – a body that was subject to limitations and to the effects of the fall. As such, He knew what it was to become tired, weak, hungry, thirsty, feel pain and loneliness, and even die. He who was infinite became finite.

What is more, by assuming a human nature, He became subject to the law. Christ – the ultimate Lawgiver – had to obey the law and suffer the penalties of the law. This was a form of poverty.

Secondly, Christ became poor in honour. In eternity, Christ enjoyed great honour. He was honoured by the Father and the Holy Spirit (just as He honoured them). He was honoured also by the angels and the glorified saints in heaven who stand before the throne of God praising and blessing Him day and night.

But when He became incarnate, Christ became dishonoured. He was dishonoured in His birth. His earthly parents were Joseph and Mary, two poor, young peasants from Nazareth in Galilee. His birthplace was a stable because there was no room for Him in the inn. His first visitors were poor shepherds. When King Herod

heard that He had been born, he sought to kill Him, forcing Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt

He was also dishonoured in His life. He was rejected by His friends and relatives in Nazareth – at one point they sought to throw Him off a cliff.

He was rejected by the religious leaders of the Jews, the Scribes and Pharisees, who continually sought to discredit Him and undermine His work. They called him a glutton and a winebibber. They questioned the legitimacy of His birth. At His trial, they falsely accused Him and eventually they nailed Him to the cross.

He was especially dishonoured in His death. Christ suffered the most painful and most humiliating death imaginable – death by crucifixion. He became poor in honour.

Thirdly, Christ became poor in possessions. Before His incarnation, Christ owned everything. In Psalm 24:1, David declares, “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” Everything in this world belonged to Christ. He was rich in possessions.

But He became poor. He was born in a stable in Bethlehem. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. When He became a man, He had no place to lay His head; He was completely dependent on the charity and hospitality of others. At the end of His life, even His clothes were taken from Him as the soldiers cast lots for His garment. He did not even have a place to be buried; He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Our Poverty

Christ became poor. Why? Not for Himself. What could He possibly have gained by becoming poor? Nothing.

Why then did He do it? Paul tells us: He did it “for our sakes.” He writes: “for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” Christ became poor that His people might be rich.

The fact that Paul says that believers might be rich implies that we are not rich (at least, not by nature). In fact, we are very poor.

This was the consequence of the fall into sin. Before the fall, we were rich. We had a holy nature. We were created good and in the image of God, in true righteousness and holiness. We had a beautiful home: the garden of Eden, which was filled with wonderful trees bearing fruits and nuts of all kinds as well as plants, flowers, and animals. We had an honoured position: we had dominion over the world and everything in it. All things were placed under our feet. What is more, we enjoyed perfect fellowship and communion with God. God came and walked and talked with man in the garden in the cool of the day.

But whatever riches we had we lost as a result of the fall. We were rich, but we became poor.

We are like the younger son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We had everything going for us: a loving Father, a privileged position, a wonderful prospect, a good home. Everything you could ever ask for was all ours. But we wasted it all. Now we find ourselves among the swine, faint with hunger, with tattered clothes on our back and no shoes on our feet.

But we learn in our text that Christ has made us rich again. How? Through His poverty.

Rich Through Poverty

At first glance, that seems like a contradiction. How can Christ make us rich through poverty? One would think that if Christ was going to make us rich, He would have to be rich Himself. But that is not true. Christ makes His people rich through His poverty. Precisely by divesting Himself of the dignity of His being, His power, His honour, and His possessions Christ made His people rich.

Perhaps someone asks: why was that necessary? Why was it necessary for Christ to become poor? The answer is this: Because this was the penalty He had to pay to make atonement for our sins.

Christ became poor. Why? Not for Himself. What could He possibly have gained by becoming poor? Nothing.

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MEDITATION

When we fell into sin, we became utterly bankrupt. Whatever privileges we had before the fall we lost as a result of sin. To restore to us what we once had, Christ had to become bankrupt in our place. And He did. He became poor so that we might become rich.

What are these riches? There are so many of them. Because Christ became poor, we have the forgiveness of sins; God becomes our Father, and we become his sons and daughters; we become partakers of the Holy Spirit; and we have the gift of everlasting life. These are unimaginable riches, which all become ours by faith in Christ.

In his book, *The Everlasting Word*, Frans Bakker observes that we often speak of a rich Christ for poor sinners – and rightly so, for so He was and so we are.

But he reminds us that the incarnation tells us not to begin with a rich Christ, but a poor Christ – a Christ who became poor so that we sinners, who are nothing and have nothing, might become rich

Are you a partaker of these riches? To partake of these riches, we need to become poor in ourselves.

By nature, we do not like to become poor. By nature, we think we are rich. This was the problem with the church at Laodicea. They said, “We are rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” when in fact they were “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Rev. 3).

How then can we come to see our poverty? This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He causes us to see our poverty not as an end in itself, but so that we might look outside of ourselves to Christ who alone can make us rich. In fact, the more we see our poverty, the more room there will be in our hearts for the Lord Jesus. And the more room there is in our hearts for Christ, the richer we are.

Bakker writes: “In and of themselves, God’s people are beggars. In their poverty, they fit in well at the stable. Ladies and gentlemen do not belong there (nor would they ever go there) for fear of soiling their beautiful clothes. But beggars have rags, and they have nothing more to lose. They come into the stable as poor beggars, but they leave the stable as kings.”

What about you? Are you also such a beggar? Have you seen something of your poverty? Have you also come to confess this before the Lord? And have you learned to look away from yourself to Christ as the only hope and ground of your salvation?

If so, then I have good news for you: Christ has come to make you – and all poor sinners – rich! ¹¹

Pastor J. Schoeman is pastor of Emmanuel Free Reformed Church of Abbotsford, BC.

Bakker writes:
“In and of themselves, God’s people are beggars. In their poverty, they fit in well at the stable.”



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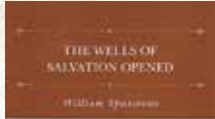
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The Wells of Salvation Opened

By William Spurstowe

In twenty-one chapters, readers will see how Christians can find power in God's certain Word for their daily lives. Spurstowe faithfully reminds us of the promises given in Christ and the gospel. Puritan William Spurstowe (1605-1666) was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

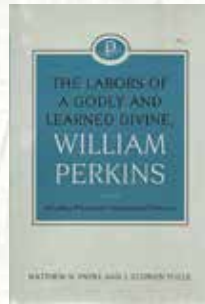
His first pastorate was at Great Hampden in Buckinghamshire, where he was installed in 1638. In 1643, Spurstowe was chosen to attend the Westminster Assembly as a Presbyterian. Spurstowe served the parliament of Richard Cromwell alongside Edward Reynolds, Thomas Manton, and other Puritan ministers. He was also one of the ejected ministers of 1662. Hardcover, 209 pages, Soli Deo Gloria Publications
RBS Price \$23.00



The Labors of a Godly and Learned Divine, William Perkins (including previously unpublished sermons)

By Matthew & Stephen Yuille

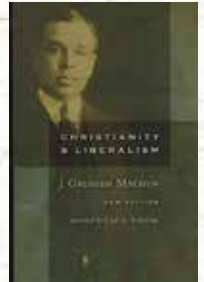
William Perkins's writings were foundational to the spiritual formation of eminent saints including Richard Sibbes, John Cotton, John Preston, William Ames, and more. Now, Matthew N. Payne and J. Stephen Yuille present never-before-published, unedited sermons from The Father of Puritanism. As a companion to his collected works, this volume is indispensable for all who wish to grasp the experiential piety of this godly and learned divine. Hardcover, 487 pages, Reformation Heritage Books
RBS Price \$39.00



Christianity & Liberalism

By J. Gresham Machen

J. Gresham Machen's book *Christianity and Liberalism* has long been a classic defence of the orthodox Christian faith against Liberalism. Published in 1923 at the height of the Liberal onslaught against the orthodox faith, Machen establishes that the traditional teachings of the church on Scripture, God, humanity, salvation, and ecclesiology are not only defensible but preferable to those propounded by Liberals. It is important to keep in mind that Machen is not talking about modern political liberalism, but the religious liberalism many denominations and seminaries were accepting in the early 1900s. Named one of the top 100 books of the 20th century by *Christianity Today*, this work remains timely, relevant, and important. This new edition has a Foreword by Carl Trueman. Softcover, 158 pages, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
RBS Price \$19.00

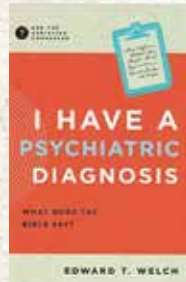


RECENT BOOKS

I Have a Psychiatric Diagnosis: What Does the Bible Say?

By Edward T. Welch

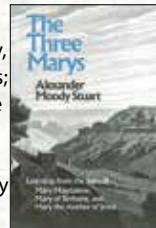
What do you do when you recognize yourself or someone you love in descriptions like "OCD," "bipolar disorder," "PTSD," or "narcissism"? A psychiatric diagnosis can be a heavy burden for you or someone you love. What is next? These struggles can be life-dominating. But we know this: God is not silent when His people struggle. What does God say? This book guides readers in listening to God, who has compassion for those who are struggling in these painful ways. Listening to God through the Bible reshapes psychological descriptions and functions as a corrective lens that opens our eyes. The author is a licensed psychologist and faculty member at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF). He has been counselling for over forty years and has written extensively on the topics of depression, fear, and addictions. The book has discussion questions. Softcover 88 pages, New Growth Press
RBS Price \$10.00



The Three Marys: Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, Mary of Nazareth

By Alexander Moody Stuart

Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and Mary Magdalene all feature prominently in the gospel narrative. But what can Christians learn from the faith displayed by these women? In these moving and engaging chapters, Alexander Moody Stuart draws out their characters and helps readers learn from each one's relationship with Jesus. Perhaps too often known only at the surface level, these three women, brought into sharper focus by Moody Stuart's reflective and often vivid portrayals, have much to teach us about the faithful Christian life. Moody Stuart's preaching and teaching were marked by a keen sensitivity to the human condition and its needs, combined with challenging practical application. This, linked with a deep tenderness and love, well-qualified him to write *The Three Marys*. Softcover, 307 pages, Banner of Truth Trust
RBS Price \$13.00



A Biblical Case against Theistic Evolution

By Wayne Grudem

Why the Theory of Theistic Evolution Conflicts with Christian Doctrine

Even Christians strongly debate Scripture's account of creation, with some declaring that major events in the book of Genesis—from the origin of Adam and Eve to God's curse on the world—were purely symbolic. In *A Biblical Case against Theistic Evolution*, condensed and adapted from *Theistic Evolution*, Wayne Grudem and other leading scholars challenge the belief that Genesis is mostly symbolic, rather than a true, historical narrative. Grudem examines 12 specific events in Genesis 1-3 and explains why acknowledging their historicity is critical to understanding the rest of Scripture. He also emphasizes several foundational doctrines, including God's ongoing involvement in creation, the beginnings of mankind, and the origin of sin and death, to show readers how the theory of theistic evolution undermines essential truths throughout the Old and New Testaments. Softcover, 248 pages, Crossway
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LOVE TO THE UNSEEN CHRIST

In 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul writes: “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Here Paul is pointing to the One through whom true godliness comes. Without Christ, the Son of God in our nature, no one could ever be or become godly; instead, because He took to Himself our nature and accomplished all the purposes of God for Him, children of Adam become children of God, and live in all godliness.

All six parts of Paul’s confession in this verse are glorious. The fifth focuses on the fact that Christ is “believed on in the world.” In other words, through the proclamation of the gospel, applied by the Holy Spirit, lost sinners all over the world come to faith in the Son of God. They rest in Him, His merits and righteousness, for time and eternity. In His suffering and death, they find that the guilt of their sin is propitiated by Him alone. In His resurrection, they find great hope, joy, and exaltation through His righteousness. One thing that marks believers is that they love the Lord Jesus Christ, though they have never seen Him, or will ever see Him with physical eyes on this side of eternity.

Coming to Love Christ

Peter reflects on this truth in his first epistle general. He says that Christians love Christ, even though they do not see Him with physical sight: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:8-9). Peter is writing in the first instance to Christians in Asia Minor (present day Turkey). Unlike himself, they had never seen the Lord in the flesh. Yet, when they had heard the gospel of Christ, they had come to faith in Him. For them it was true what Christ said to Thomas: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Notice, first of all, how *this truth magnifies the power of preaching*. Preaching is the God-ordained means whereby people, dead in sins and trespasses, come to believe in Christ crucified. “How shall they believe in him (of) whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14).

Notice, secondly, how *this truth magnifies the work of the Holy Spirit*. There are many who hear the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ who are not affected for good, but only further hardened in their sin and unbelief. For them the gospel is a “savour of death unto death” (2 Cor 2:16). That is because the Holy Spirit has not quickened them, that is, made them alive. They do not have inward ears to hear what the Spirit is saying. Wherever there is true faith in the soul of anyone, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Canons, “Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of

God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power of ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of that salvation, and actually believe in Christ; but because he who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe, and the act of believing also” (Head 3 and 4; Article 14).

Notice, thirdly, how *this truth magnifies the spectacular effect of faith*. Faith is no work but a simple resting upon the promise of God in Christ for full salvation. Peter stresses how love is the fruit of faith, not the other way around. He writes that they love Christ “believing” (1 Pet. 1:8). In other words, love to Christ is the fruit of faith. Many try to make their love of God or love for Christ the basis of or reason for trusting God or taking refuge in Christ. That is like making the fruit the root rather than seeing the root which brings forth the fruit. The early Christians in Asia Minor had put their trust in Christ and from out of that love flowed, for faith gave them sight to see Christ and ears to hear Christ in the gospel preached by Peter and applied by the Holy Spirit.

These then are three truths that are implied in the love that believers have for an unseen Christ:

1) the power of preaching; 2) the power of the Holy Spirit; 3) the need for faith.

The Loveliness of Christ

Most of all, however, the love that Christians have for the unseen Christ is explained by the loveliness of Christ, which Christians catch a glimpse of by faith. Thomas Vincent, a Puritan, who lived from 1634-1678, wrote a book on this subject called *The True Christians Love for the Unseen Christ*. He is also known for a book on the terrible plague in London in 1667, in which he lost seven family members, entitled *God's Terrible Voice in the City*, as well as a book on Christ's second coming entitled, *Of Christ's Sudden and Certain Appearance to Judgment*. His book on love for the unseen Christ was written to “warm and inflame” the hearts of his readers with love for the unseen Christ.

Vincent charts a beautiful path as he details the loveliness of Christ, first of all, in Himself, then to the Father, and then to Christians. Christ's loveliness in Himself is clear from His Greatness and Authority, His Holiness, His Wisdom, and His Mercy, just to name a few. Secondly, Christ is beautiful to the Father, as related to Him and beloved by Him. He is beautiful to Christians as Captain, Prophet, Priest, King, Benefactor, Brother, and so on. He is lovely since His love is the freest and strongest and surest love. He is lovely in His benefits, giving light and life, pardon and righteousness, peace and joy, and so much else.

Vincent has many exhortations to Christians as well as non-Christians how they may and should have this love to Christ. He deplores as most miserable those who do not love the most lovely One. He urges them to get a knowledge of and trust in Christ as the only Saviour from sin. They must let go of all their loves of self and the world and sin and come through the Spirit to see all loveliness in Christ alone. Christians are urged to seek growth in sincere love to Christ through the Scriptures and prayer, through fellowship with other believers, and other means.

One Particular Way in Which Christ, Though Unseen, Is Most Dear

If we might add a few thoughts to Vincent's marvellous treatise, they would be the following. Everyone who has ever had any love for Christ has come to see Him as the only One who can be their suitable and sure Substitute before a God whom we have provoked by our sin. When we see how we have grieved God by our sin and will continue to do so unless we have someone who can stand in our place, the very thought that there is a Mediator can lift our otherwise sinking hearts. Just as we would love someone who settles an insurmountable and crushing load of financial debt for us, how much more One who secures everlasting pardon and even reconciliation between us and

Vincent has many exhortations to Christians as well as non-Christians how they may and should have this love to Christ. He deplores as most miserable those who do not love the most lovely One.

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EDITORIAL

the God whom we have offended, and gives us a communion we could never have had even in our state of innocency? Such will love Christ, though they do not and cannot see Him with physical eyes.

A Second Way in Which Christ, Though Unseen, Is Most Dear

Next, to have a Saviour who permits us not only to be crucified with Him, meaning that the significance of His death accrues to us, but also to live out of Him, to have His life, to have Him as our Life, to know the power of His resurrection, is most blessed. That there would be someone who could not only forgive our sins, but whose resurrection life can make us alive together with Him, crown us with tender mercy and lovingkindness, so that our youth is renewed like that of the eagle, that is something that will make someone love Christ truly and deeply, though we cannot see Him with physical eyes. We will love Him more than life itself.

A Third Way in Which Christ, Though Unseen, Is Most Dear

Finally, to have a Savior, who intercedes for us in heaven and the Father's right hand, continually, on the basis of His One sacrifice for sin forever; despite all our failings, coldness, unbelief, wanderings, lovelessness; and to plead our cause before His Father and thus bear us upon His high priestly heart in heaven, while being so approachable that He calls us to come boldly to His throne of grace to find grace to help in time of need – how could our souls not love such a Saviour, though we cannot see Him with physical eyes.

A Final Word

Do you love Him? Perhaps, believer, your faith is dim just now. You not only do not see Him with physical eyes; you can barely see Him with spiritual eyes. Yet, He is most loveable, even when we cannot see Him, if we but put our spiritual eyes in front of His Word, and lamenting our pain and misery, our sorrow and doubt, say: "Open my eyes that I might see." ¹¹

**Do you love Him?
Perhaps, believer,
your faith is dim
just now. You not
only do not see Him
with physical eyes;
you can barely see
Him with spiritual
eyes. Yet, He is most
loveable, even when
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Food Relief (Myanmar)

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Sewing Machine (India)

Sewing machine for a women's sewing program graduate.

\$150 CAD
\$115 USD

Home-Based Care (South Africa)

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\$450 USD

Computer (Nigeria)

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\$1,700 USD

Vocational Training Operations Cost (South Sudan)

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Surgical Lights (Guatemala)

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THE ORDER OF SALVATION (14)

JUSTIFICATION (3)

Last time we ended the article on justification with the apostle Paul's statement that the righteousness which God requires of us becomes ours by faith alone. Paul shows that faith is the opposite of works. Yet it is not a substitute for works, contrary to the idea of many who think that faith has replaced works as the requirement of salvation.

Scripture says that God justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5). The moment a sinner believes in Christ, God the Father imputes the righteousness of His Son to that sinner. He charges it to the sinner's account. Legally, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and God views us as if we had never sinned and had always obeyed God's law perfectly (*Heidelberg Catechism*, L.D. 23). Possessing this justifying faith that appropriates the "alien righteousness" of Christ – as Luther called it – is essential for salvation. Luther, Calvin, and other early Reformers vigorously defended the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification

This doctrine has been challenged from the very beginning. Much debate has occurred between Rome and the Protestant churches as well as between the Reformed and their Arminian opponents. To this day, theologians argue about questions such as, is faith a contributing element in justification? Does faith have any inherent merit? The *Heidelberg Catechism* deals with these questions in Lord's Day 23 and asks, "Why do you say that you are righteous by faith only?" and answers: "Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only" (Q.&A.61).

The authors of the Catechism had in mind Rome's teaching that Christ has merited for us the gift of faith through the sacraments and that if we believe in God and His Son Jesus Christ our faith is *rewarded* with the blessing of justification. Rome sees faith as a work which produces additional works such as love, joy, peace, kindness, and patience. The Catechism rejects this teaching, as do most Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their creedal statements.

Salvation by a New Law?

Another, more subtle form of this false teaching is practiced in many evangelical Protestant churches. In their view, faith is part of a new law which God has given to the New Testament church. They appeal to passages such as Romans 3:27 where Paul writes: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."

These “new law” advocates interpret Paul this way: There are two ways whereby man may become righteous in God’s sight. The one is by works and the other by faith. In the Old Testament, people tried to earn salvation by observing the law of works but could not keep it. So, God brought in a new law and said, I will no longer demand that you keep the law that I gave you through Moses because you cannot keep it. Therefore, I ask you to do something that lies within your power. All you need to do as New Testament people is to believe in My Son Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It’s all very simple and easy; a child can understand and do it. That is the Good News.

But Paul knows nothing of a law of faith that has replaced the law of works. He knows that no sinner has ever been saved by keeping the law, because we have all been lawbreakers from the beginning and deserve everlasting punishment. If we ask the *Heidelberg Catechism* if there is a way by which we may escape that punishment and be again received into favour, the answer is, “God will have his justice satisfied, and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves, or by another” (Lord’s Day 5, Q.&A.12).

Full satisfaction “by ourselves” cannot be attained. We may keep the external precepts of the law to a degree, but since the real character of the law is spiritual, God does not only demand our outward but also our inward conformity to His law.

The Reformers on Preaching the Law

Therefore, the biblical doctrine of justification calls for serious preaching of the law. As Paul writes in Romans 3:20, “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” Gospel preachers must proclaim the Good News in such a way that their hearers are made aware of their sin and misery by confronting them with the demands of the law. The same apostle who told the Romans that the knowledge of sin comes by knowing the law writes to the Corinthians: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

Sad to say, this apostolic emphasis on the terror of the Lord is largely missing from preaching today. Actually, it has been missing from most pulpits for many years already. John Murray, commenting on Paul’s statement: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom.1:18), wrote in 1955:

Far too frequently we fail to entertain the gravity of this

fact. Hence the reality of our sin and the reality of the wrath of God upon us for our sin do not come into our reckoning. This is the reason why the gospel of justification is to such extent a meaningless sound in the world and in the church of the twentieth century.

While the proclamation of God’s law and holiness is essential to sound gospel preaching, it is equally important that they be proclaimed in love. The declaration that God so loved us that He

gave His Son to die for us may not be held back or merely whispered by any gospel preacher. After mentioning the terror of God, the apostle Paul makes sure to add: “for the love of God constrains us.”

At the same time, we should not stress the necessity of divine love for sinners as if love is God’s only attribute so as to downplay God’s holy demands in his law. In our *Form for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper*, we read that “the wrath of God against sin is so great that (rather than that it should go unpunished), He has punished the same in His beloved Son Jesus Christ with the bitter and shameful death of the cross.” This points to the necessity of the law to reveal our sin and misery by awakening

our conscience. However, as important as the function of the law is, it lacks the power to give us spiritual life. The law cannot break our hearts. That is the Spirit’s work. He alone can pour out the love of Christ into our hearts so that we flee with a broken and contrite heart to the all-sufficient Saviour.

Law and Gospel Must be Balanced

Preaching on justification requires a biblical and balanced presentation of law and gospel. Although we are not *able* to fulfil the law, the Lord commands us to do so. But what fallen sinners have never been able to do, Christ has done for us, in our place. As our penal Substitute, He suffered and died on the cross of Calvary. There He took the punishment that we deserve on Himself. As Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “for He [God] hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Thus, the blood of Christ is the ground of salvation and justification.

What is often forgotten, however, is that Christ not only took the punishment that we deserved on Himself, but He also obeyed the law in our place. We must make a distinction between Christ’s passive and active obedience. Christ’s passive obedience means that He *paid for our guilt*; Christ’s active obedience means that He *obeyed the law in our place*. He has satisfied in His own person for all our sins and fulfilled all righteousness. We who believe in Christ, whether with strong or weak faith, are righteous and complete in Him!

Many believers, struggling with weak faith, often hesitate

Full satisfaction “by ourselves” cannot be attained. We may keep the external precepts of the law to a degree, but since the real character of the law is spiritual, God does not only demand our outward but also our inward conformity to His law.

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THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

when asked whether they are righteous in Christ. They dare not say they are justified by faith. Yet that does not mean they *are* not saved. In an excellent article on justification, Dr. Peter De Vries writes:

There are no justified unbelievers or unjustified believers. The very moment a sinner regenerated by the Holy Spirit flees to Christ, he is justified. Calling, regeneration, justification and sanctification are different blessings, but they cannot be separated from each other in time.... The sinner who believes in Christ is also the man who is made a new creation. Justification is never without sanctification and sanctification

The sinner who believes in Christ is also the man who is made a new creation. Justification is never without sanctification and sanctification never without justification...

never without justification... [But] there are no stages in justification. This is one of the essential differences between justification and sanctification. Every believer is equally just in the sight of God. Every believer has received complete forgiveness of sins. As Bishop J.C. Ryle said: 'I hold firmly that the justification of a believer is a finished, perfect and complete work; and the weakest saint though he may not know and feel it, is as completely justified as the strongest... Every believer is complete in Christ.' 11



COMPASSION CARE
FREE REFORMED ASSOCIATION

Introducing Compassion Care Free Reformed Association
We are a non-profit organization serving the Southern Ontario Reformed community. We provide in home/institution nursing services, PSW care, companion care and respite to families who are caring for elderly (or not so elderly) family members. This is a paid service. We also plan to hold education sessions directed towards the elderly and their families – to help them prepare for the future while navigating the sometimes difficult stages of aging. We have been in operation for just over one year now and have recently been formally incorporated. We are currently serving Southern Ontario with a view to expanding as we get more caregivers.

If you have a heart for service and align with our mission of wishing to fulfill the mandate of Galatians 6:2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ", we welcome you to apply for a part-time position as a caregiver. A PSW certificate or nursing license is optimal but there is also a need for Companion Care which requires no formal education. If you have a need in your family, don't hesitate to reach out & inquire about our services. All inquiries may be directed towards our Director of Services, Tanya Kleinjan (905)-519-2829 or compassioncarefrc@gmail.com.

Our goal is to keep our clients' fees low while paying our caregivers a fair wage. In this regard, we gratefully accept donations of any size to help realize this goal. Do note that we do not have charitable status at this time and so cannot issue tax receipts. Donations may be sent to our treasurer: Tracey Gritter 11 Baker Rd. N. Grimsby, ON L3M 2W9. E-transfers also accepted at: compassioncarefrc@gmail.com.



REFORMED EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH

INTERNATION PLOWING MATCH & RURAL EXPO 2023

The International Plowing Match was held on September 19-23 in Grand Valley, Dufferin County, Ontario. A total of 68,336 visitors visited the Match. The Reformed Evangelistic Outreach Committee, together with volunteers, set up a booth in the "Tent City." Thousands of tracts and calendars with Bible texts printed on them were handed out to the visitors. A wide selection of books was made available to the visitors, with many being sold or handed out.

Many schools bussed their children to the IPM and many of them visited our booth. Bibles, attractive bookmarks, and pens with Bible texts printed on them were handed out to the children. Most of the children that received a Bible didn't know what a Bible was! On several occasions a child would ask for a second Bible because, "My mother doesn't have a Bible either!" How blessed we are to have the Word of God in our homes, schools, and churches!

Let us remember in prayer all the children and adults who now have Bibles, calendars, and tracts in their home. May God, in His grace and mercy, bring many to salvation.

The International Plowing Match 2024 will be held at Lindsay Exhibition Grounds in Kawartha Lakes from October 1-5, D.V.

Reformed Evangelistic Outreach has been a witness at the International Plowing Match for many years. For more information see <https://reoutreach.com/>.



Christian Ministry to Israel commits over \$15,000 CDN annually to support missionary couple Albert and Esther Knoester and their work at a drop-in coffee shop in downtown Dimona in the Negev Desert. Read more about this couple and their work in our next newsletter.

We are committed to spreading the Gospel of CHRIST JESUS among the people of Israel and Jews worldwide. Help us to spread the Gospel through your prayers and donations. Please donate by cheque or online at www.cmisrael.org



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TIME IS SHORT

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.” -- 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.



In these words, there is [this] *doctrine*: The shortness of time should make believers sit loose to all things under the sun.

I. *The shortness of time.*

Time is short in two respects.

1. *The time a believer has to live in this world is very short.*

(1) *The whole lifetime is very short.* From the cradle to the grave is but a short journey: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). Half of men die before the age of twenty. Even when men lived for many hundred years, it was but a short life – a moment, compared to eternity. Men are short-lived, like the grass. All flesh is as grass (Isa. 40:7) “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

(2) *How much is already passed away.* Most believers spent their first days in sin. Many hearing me gave their best days to sin and the world. Many among you have only the lame, and the torn, and the sick, to give to God. All of you can look on the past as a sleep, or as a tale that is told. The time since I came among you appears to me just like a dream.

(3) *What remains is all numbered.* All of you hearing me have your Sabbaths numbered – the number of sermons you are to hear. The last one is already fixed upon. Your years are numbered. To many this is the last year they shall ever see in this world. Many will celebrate their next new year in glory. The disease is now in the body of many of you that is to lay you in the dust; and your grave is already marked out. In a little while, you will be laying quietly there. Yes, dear brethren, “*the time is short.*”

2. *The time of this world’s continuance is short:* “The end of all things is at hand.” “The fashion of this world passeth away.” A believer stands on a watchtower: things present are below his feet and things eternal are before his eyes. A little while, brethren, and the day of grace will be over: preaching, praying will be done. Soon we shall give over wrestling with an unbelieving world. Soon the number of believers shall be complete, and the sky open over our heads, and Christ shall come. His parting cry was: “Surely I come quickly.” Then we shall see him “whom, having not seen, we loved.” A little while, and we shall stand before the great white throne. A little while, and the wicked shall not be; we shall see them going away into everlasting punishment. A little while, we shall be like Him; we shall see Him day and night in His temple; we shall sing the new song, without sin and without weariness, for ever and ever. In a little moment, brethren, all this shall be: “For a small moment have I for-

saken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.”

II. *The believer should learn from this to sit loose to all things under the sun.*

1. *Sit loose to the dearest objects of this world:* “It remaineth, therefore, that they who have wives be as though they had none.” Marriage is honourable in all. Husbands should love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.” Still, it must not be idolatry. A married believer should be, in some respects, as if he were unmarried. “Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” You cannot be too kind, too gentle, too loving to the parents whom God has given you; yet be as though you had none. Parents, love your children, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; yet feel that the time is short. They are only a loan from the Lord. Be not surprised if He takes His own. Esteem your ministers highly in love, for their work’s sake; yet be as if you had none. Lean as entirely on Christ as if you had never seen or heard a minister.

Brainerd mentions an instance of one woman, who, after her conversion, was resigned to the divine will in the most tender points: “What if God should take away your husband from you? How do you think you would bear that?” She replied: “He belongs to God, and not to me; He may do with him just what He pleases.” When she longed to die, to be free from sin, she was asked what would become of her infant; she answered, “God will take care of it; it belongs to Him – He will take care of it.” Rutherford says: “Build your nest upon no tree here; for you see God hath sold the forest to Death, and every tree whereon we would rest is ready to be cut down, to the end we may flee and mount up, and build upon the Rock, and dwell in the holes of the Rock.” Live nearer to Christ than to the saints, so that when they are taken from you, you may have Him to lean on still.

2. *Sit loose to the griefs of this world.* They that weep should be as though they wept not. This world is the vale of tears. No sooner is the tear dried up on one cheek that it trickles down another. Those that are in Christ should weep as though they wept not; “for the time is short.” Do you weep over those that died in the Lord? It is right to weep: “Jesus wept.” Yet weep as though you wept not; “for the time is short.” They are not lost but gone before. The sun, when it sets, is not lost; it is gone to shine in another hemisphere; and so have they gone to shine in a brighter world. “The time is short,” and you will follow. A few days, and you may be leaning together on the bosom of Jesus; you

are nearer them today than you were yesterday. “The time is short,” and you will meet with all the redeemed at the right hand of Christ. We shall mingle our voices in the new song, and wave together the eternal palm! “Weep as though you wept not.”

Do you weep over those that died out of the Lord? Ah! there is a deeper cause for weeping here; and yet the time is short, when all this will be explained to you, and you will not be able to shed a tear over the lost. A little while, and you will see Jesus fully glorified, and you will not be able to wish anything different from what has happened. When Aaron lost his two sons, he held his peace.

Do you mourn over bodily pain, poverty, sickness, and the troubles of the world? Do not murmur: “The time is short.” Think you the dying thief would complain of his pains when he was within a step of paradise? So it is with you. Your hell is dried up, and you have only these two shallow brooks to pass through: sickness and death. You have a promise that Christ shall not only meet you one day, but go with you, foot for foot, and bear you in His arms. When we get to the presence of Jesus, all our griefs shall look like children’s griefs: a day in His presence will make you remember your miseries no more. Wherefore take courage and run with patience.

3. *Sit loose to the enjoyments of this world.*

It is quite right for a believer to use and rejoice in the things of this world. None has such a right as the believer has to be happy. He has a right to use the bodily comforts of this world – to eat his meat “with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.” He has a right to all the joys of home, family, and friendship. He has a right to all the pure pleasures of mind, intellect, and imagination. God has given him all things richly to enjoy.

Still, he should “rejoice as though he rejoiced not, and use this world as not abusing it;” for “the time is short.” In a little while, you will be at your Father’s table above, drinking the new wine with Christ and have pure joy in God through ceaseless ages. Do not be much taken with the joys that are here. I have noticed children about to go to a feast eat sparingly, that they might have a keener appetite for the feast; so, dear friends, you are going to a feast above, do not dull your appetite with earthly joys! As you walk through a flower garden, you never think of lying down, to make your home among its roses. Smell the flowers in passing; but do not tarry. Jesus calls you to His banqueting house; there you will feed among the lilies. Brethren, if you are ever so much taken up with any enjoyment that it takes away your love for prayer or for your Bible, or that it would frighten you to hear the cry: “The Bridegroom cometh;” and you would say: Is He come already? then you are abusing this world. Oh! sit loose to this world’s joy: “The time is short.”

4. *Sit loose to the occupations of the world.* It is right for Christians to be diligent in business. I often wonder how unconverted souls can be so busy – how, when you are bustling along, filling up all your time with worldly things, it never occurs to you that there will be none of this in eternity. How can I be so busy for my body, when my poor soul is unprovided for? But those in Christ may well be diligent.

(1) They have a good conscience that oils the wheels: “A merry heart

doeth good like a medicine.” A light heart makes easy work.

(2) They love to honour their Lord. They would not have it said that a believer in Jesus was an idler or a sluggard – the love of Jesus constrains them to all that is lovely. Yet a believer should “buy as though he possessed not;” for “the time is short.” Oh! believers, ye cannot be misers; for you are but stewards. All that you possess here is your Lord’s; and the day is at hand when He will transfer you to take care of another property in a brighter land. Be ready to leave your desk for the throne of Jesus and your pen for the palm of victory; be ready to leave the market below, for the street of the new Jerusalem. If you were in a sinking ship, you would not cling hard to bags of money – you would sit loose to all and be ready to swim. This world is like a sinking ship, and those who grasp at its possessions will sink with it. Oh! “Buy as though you possessed not;” for “the time is short.”

III. *What the unconverted should learn from the shortness of time.*

1. *Learn your folly in having lost the past.* Although life be very short, it is all saving time. The longsuffering of God is intended for our salvation. God gives men time to hear the Gospel, to pray, to get saving conversion. But unconverted souls have wasted all the past. Think how much time you have lost in idleness. How many golden opportunities for prayer, hearing the Word, and meditation have you lost! If you saw how short your time is, and how death and hell are pursuing you, you would have fled to Christ; but you have not. Think how much you have spent in sin, at the tavern, in vain company, or in sins of which it is a shame even to speak. God gave you time for saving your soul, and you have spent it ruining your soul. God gave you time to flee to Christ; and you have spent it in fleeing toward hell. Think how much time you have spent in business, without one thought for eternity. Think how you have lost your best time. Youth is your best time of being saved. Many of you have lost it. “The harvest is past, the summer is ended; and we are not saved.”

2. *Consider what value they put on time who are now in hell.* Once they cared as little for it as you – they could see their years pass away without caring – they could let their Sabbaths slip away. But now they see their folly. What would they now give for such an opportunity as you have this day? What would they give for another year of grace – another week – another day? It is probable that some of your friends or companions, now in hell, are wishing they could come back to tell you how precious is an inch of saving time!

Oh! brethren, be wise. “Why stand ye all the day idle?” It has come to the eleventh hour with some. Your unconverted head is grey and your feet are tottering. If you saw a man condemned to die, lying in chains, with three hours to live; if you saw that man playing at dice or singing filthy songs, would you not be shocked? You would say he was a hardened wretch. Ah! are there none among you the same? Your days are numbered – you are hanging by a thread over the mouth of hell; and yet you are slashing at the hand that holds you. In a little moment, brethren, it will be all over. Throughout the never-ending ages of eternity, you will remember the few days we spent together. Ah! the remembrance will add fuel to the flame and be a never-dying worm in your poor soul. ④

Robert Murray M’Cheyne (A condensed sermon)

EXPERIENTIAL PREACHING: ONE THEME, TWO EVENTS

Free Reformed Pastor's Retreat (October 18-19, 2023)



The Free Reformed Pastor's Retreat is an event which Free Reformed Pastors look forward to each year – sometimes in part because of a new speaker and sometimes in part because of a familiar speaker. This year our speaker was a familiar one who has served us several times throughout the years: Dr. Arie Baars, emeritus professor of our sister Churches and former pastor of the Dundas Free Reformed Church. He said he was thankful he had not lost his fluency in English, and so were we, because the content was worth hearing.

Around twenty of us gathered in Ingersoll, Ontario, on a sunny October day. After Pastor H. Bergsma led us with his pan-flute in singing a Psalter selection, Pastor E. Moerdyk opened the retreat and then invited Dr. Baars to address us as we sat behind tables. His first lecture was "What is Reformed Preaching? Challenges and Perspectives." His second topic was: "Covenantal Preaching: Dilemmas and Practical Implications." His third topic was "Conditions for Powerful Preaching."

In these lectures, he emphasized the importance of experiential preaching. He noted that within the Dutch Reformed community, there are three streams: orthodox (focused mainly on confessional doctrine), modern (often loose in doctrine and practice), and experiential (emphasizing both the knowing of truth and experiencing of grace). He noted that churches have been rapidly shifting from orthodox to modern because the truth has not been experienced. God's word flows from God's heart and is directed to our hearts, so that we would experience its power and live its truth.

What does experience involve? He cited a favourite passage of John Calvin: "Indeed, with experience as our teacher we discover that God is exactly as He has revealed himself in His Word" (*Institutes* [1559], 1.10.2). This experiential preaching is also covenantal, for at the heart of God's covenant is His promise: "I will be your God, and you shall be my people." That is why experiential preaching is covenantal preaching which conveys the covenant promises and demands, calls and threats, blessings and curses to the covenant congregation.

I said that we look forward to the retreat in part because of the speaker, because the other main part of the retreat is the opportunity to connect together, whether by going for a walk with a colleague, having a delicious dinner at a table with several others, or being present at the sharing time with everyone. During this sharing time, each has the opportunity to share their personal, familial, or congregational joys and challenges. In such times, we realize both the aged emeritus pastors and the recently ordained young pastors (and those in between) have their own struggles and things for which to thank God. Then there is the opportunity to pray together about the various things raised.

As pastors, we express our gratitude to the denomination for





making this retreat possible.

Puritan Reformed Trustees Lecture Series (October 24-26)

The following week, Dr. Baars travelled to Grand Rapids, where he served as guest speaker and preacher in the inaugural Puritan Reformed Trustees Lectureship Series. This new biennial lecture series is meant to honour the service of the Board of Trustees. This board is comprised of ten members, three of whom are Free Reformed (presently, elder Connor Keuning, Rev. Eric Moerdyk, and Elder Garry Postma).

The Trustees Lecture Series structure extends beyond the conventional practice of delivering lectures by having not only two lectures, but also including a worship service at a local church as well as a Puritan Reformed chapel time. The goal is to teach both the theory and practical application of Puritan preaching, ensuring that it is not just theoretical but directly applicable to those who attend.

Since the board of trustees has called for a focus on homiletics over the next years, this inaugural Trustee Lecture Series had as its theme: “Reformed Experiential Preaching at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities.” Tuesday evening, Dr. Baars focused on the challenges and Thursday evening on the opportunities of experiential preaching. In terms of the opportunities, he emphasized that experiential preaching is not just the fruit of a course on experiential preaching, but must flow out of the Word and through the preacher himself. That is why he emphasized the preacher must:


- be convinced the Word is powerful
- be a spiritual man
- live a holy life
- immerse himself in the Word of God
- be a man of prayer above all else
- have a keen pastoral eye for the needs of those under his care

- have compassion with his people
- be fully dependent on the triune God

I share this list with you to stir you to pray for your pastor and all pastors.

Wednesday morning, Dr. Baars led a chapel on Luke 10:38-42, in which he emphasized the necessity and grace of sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus, listening to His words of life, communing with Him, and finding rest in Him. Also at Seminary, we can become cumbered with much serving and forget “one thing is needful.”

Wednesday evening, the Grand Rapids Free Reformed Church had a worship service in which Dr. Baars preached on 2 Timothy 4:7-8: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” The Lord’s faithfulness in enabling to endure unto the end and His grace in giving a crown to all who love His appearing was exalted.

Thinking of how that expectation has become reality for one who once stood on our pulpits, Rev. P. DenButter, is such a reminder both of the power of God’s grace to raise up and use weak men strengthened by Him, as well as to keep them to the end, and present them faultless before His throne through the work of Jesus Christ. Let us pray that God would continue to do so among us, and that not just pastors, but that we all may be enlisted in His army to fight the good fight and keep the faith, because we experience God to be exactly who He reveals Himself to be in His Word. 

Dr. D. Kranendonk is a Free Reformed professor serving at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

REFLECTIONS ON THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD



What a wonder!

“What a wonder that two natures infinitely distant should be more intimately united than anything in the world...That the same person should have both a glory and a grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity! That a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe and a suffering man; the incarnation astonishes men upon earth, and angels in heaven.”

“He had both the nature which had offended, and that nature which was offended: a nature to please God, and a nature to please us: a nature, whereby he experimentally knew the excellency of God, which was injured, and understood the glory due to him, and consequently the greatness of the offence, which was to be measured by the dignity of his person: and a nature whereby he might be sensible of the miseries contracted by, and endure the calamities due to the offender, that he might

both have compassion on him, and make due satisfaction for him. He had two distinct natures capable of the affections and sentiments of the two persons he was to accord; he was a just judge of the rights of the one, and the demerit of the other.”

– Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

The Excellency of Christ in the Incarnation

Having shown wherein there is an admirable conjunction of excellencies in Jesus Christ, I now proceed to show how this admirable conjunction of excellencies appears in Christ's acts.

1. It appears in what Christ did in taking on Him our nature. In this act, His infinite condescension wonderfully appeared, that He who was God should become man; that the word should be made flesh and should take on Him a nature infinitely below His original nature! And it appears yet more remarkably in

the low circumstances of His incarnation: He was conceived in the womb of a poor young woman, whose poverty appeared in this, when she came to offer sacrifices of her purification, she brought what was allowed of in the law only in case of poverty; as Luke 2:24. "According to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." This was allowed only if the person was so poor that she was not able to offer a lamb (Lev. 12:8).

And though His infinite condescension thus appeared in the manner of His incarnation, yet His divine dignity also appeared in it; for though He was conceived in the womb of a poor virgin, yet He was conceived there by the power of the Holy Ghost. And His divine dignity also appeared in the holiness of His conception and birth. Though He was conceived in the womb of one of the corrupt race of mankind, yet He was conceived and born without sin; as the angel said to the blessed Virgin in Luke 1:35. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

His infinite condescension marvellously appeared in the manner of His birth. He was brought forth in a stable, because there was no room for them in the inn. The inn was taken up by others that were looked upon as persons of greater account. The blessed Virgin, being poor and despised, was turned or shut out. Though she was in such necessitous circumstances, yet those that counted themselves her betters would not give place to her; and therefore, in the time of her travail, she was forced to betake herself to a stable; and when the child was born, it was wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger. There Christ lay a little infant; and there He eminently appeared as a lamb. But yet this feeble infant, born thus in a stable, and laid in a manger, was born to conquer and triumph over Satan, that roaring lion. He came to subdue the mighty powers of darkness, and make a show of them openly; and so to restore peace on earth, and to manifest God's good-will towards men, and to bring glory to God in the highest; according as the end of His birth was declared by the joyful songs of the glorious hosts of angels appearing to the shepherds at the same time that the infant lay in the manger; whereby His divine dignity was manifested.

- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), *The Excellency of Christ*.

No Greater Condescension!

For the sun to fall from its sphere, and be degraded into a wandering atom; for an angel to be turned out of heaven, and be converted into a silly fly or worm, had been no such great abasement; for they were but creatures before, and so they would abide still, though in an inferior order or species of creatures.

The distance betwixt the highest and lowest species of creatures is but a finite distance. The angel and the worm dwell not so far apart. But for the infinite glorious Creator of all things to become a creature is a mystery exceeding all human understanding. The distance between God and the highest order of creatures is an infinite distance.

He is said to humble Himself; to behold the things that are done in heaven. What a humiliation then is it, to behold the things in the lower world! but to be born into it and become a man! Great indeed is the mystery of godliness. "Behold, (says the prophet, Isa. 40:15, 17) the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him less than nothing, and vanity." If, indeed, this great and incomprehensible Majesty will Himself stoop to the state and condition of a creature, we may easily believe, that being once

a creature, He would expose Him to hunger, thirst, shame, spitting, death, or anything but sin. For that once being a man, He should endure any of these things, is not so wonderful, as that He should become a man. This was the low step, a deep abasement indeed!

- John Flavel (1627-1691), *The Fountain of Life Opened*

The Folly of Mockers


Now, Macarius, true lover of Christ, we must take a step further in the faith of our holy religion and consider also the Word's becoming Man and His divine Appearing in our midst. That mystery the Jews traduce, the Greeks deride, but we adore; and your own love and devotion to the Word also will be the greater, because in His Manhood He seems so little worth. For it is a fact that the more unbelievers pour scorn on Him, so much the more does He make His Godhead evident. The things which they, as men, rule out as impossible, He plainly shows to be possible; that which they deride as unfitting, His goodness makes most fit; and things which these wiseacres laugh at as "human," He by His inherent might declares divine. Thus, by what seems His utter poverty and weakness on the cross, He overturns the pomp and parade of idols, and quietly and hiddenly wins over the mockers and unbelievers to recognise Him as God.

- Athanasius, *The Incarnation of the Word of God*

Shall we not Love Him?

Let me now conclude, my dear brethren, with a few words of exhortation, beseeching you to think of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Did Jesus come into the world to save us from death, and shall we spend no part of our time in conversing about our dear Jesus; shall we pay no regard to the birth of Him who came to redeem us from the worst of slavery, from that of sin, and the

His infinite condescension marvellously appeared in the manner of His birth. He was brought forth in a stable, because there was no room for them in the inn.

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 John 6:12

REFLECTIONS

devil; and shall this Jesus not only be born on our account, but likewise die in our stead, and yet shall we be unmindful of Him? Shall we spend our time in those things which are offensive to Him? Shall we not rather do all we can to promote His glory and act according to His command?

O my dear brethren, be found in the ways of God; let us not disturb our dear Redeemer by any irregular proceedings; and let me beseech you to strive to love, fear, honour, and obey Him, more than ever you have done yet; let not the devil engross your time, and that dear Saviour who came into the world on your accounts have so little. O be not so ungrateful to Him who has been so kind to you! What could the Lord Jesus Christ have done for you more than He has? Then do not abuse His mercy, but let your time be spent in thinking and talking of the love of Jesus, who was incarnate for us, who was born of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem us from the wrath to come.

- George Whitefield, *The Observation of the Birth of Christ*

O be not so ungrateful to Him who has been so kind to you! What could the Lord Jesus Christ have done for you more than He has?

Magnify God for the Incarnation

The incarnation is that great work of God in which the wisdom, goodness, power, mercy, and glory of God shine forth in a most excellent manner. What wisdom, goodness, and power are manifested in bringing a sinner back to a holy God by way of the most sublime manifestation of His justice; by a Person who is both God and man; through such a way of suffering; and by leading the sinner to such a felicity in ways which pass all understanding! All this the holy angels observe, and it is an element of their felicity to perceive the perfections of God in the work of redemption revealed by the incarnation. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). Mary perceived all this and said, "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His Name; and His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with His arm" (Luke 1:49-51).

One ought thus to meditate upon the incarnation, in order to discern clearly these and other attributes of God, approving of them with holy adoration and joyously magnifying God with the holy angels, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

- Wilhelmus a Brakel (1635-1711), *The Christian's Reasonable Service* 11

IN MEMORIAM

REV. PAUL DEN BUTTER (1938-2023)

On October 3, 2023, Rev. Paul den Butter, former pastor of the Toronto and Hamilton Free Reformed Churches, passed away at the age of 85 at his home in Veenendaal, The Netherlands. He was faithfully cared for by his loving wife, Marianne, as his health steadily declined over the last few years. He preached his last sermon on November 3, 2021. We extend our heart-felt condolences to Marianne and his daughters Joanne and Marilyn.

During his stay in Canada from 1975 to 1982, den Butter became known for a preaching that was authoritative, convicting, searching, discriminating and experiential – all based on careful exegesis. It had a peculiar attraction, even though it was often unpleasant to our “pious” flesh. I recall reflecting on his preaching on Sunday evenings and feeling a sadness that we had to wait for a whole week to place ourselves again under his faithful ministry. Not all in the congregation were always pleased with his preaching, although there was little or no ground for criticizing his careful exposition of the Word and logical development of its truths. What was not appreciated at times was his emphasis on man’s terrible plight, deceitful heart, and the need for a thorough transformation. His ministry, however, was blessed to not a few in our congregation. Many of our older members remember his sermons with thankfulness. Sermons like the one on Jesus weeping over Jerusalem left a deep impression on the congregation. We coveted his honest dealings with our souls.

Upon coming to Canada, Rev. den Butter was greatly influenced by the Puritans. Here he purchased and devoured numerous of their volumes. It broadened his horizons and deepened his appreciation of Reformed theology, which undoubtedly impacted his preaching. In later years he wrote many books, including a Bible study guide on the book of Joshua which was translated and published by Free Reformed Publications. We look forward to the imminent publication of an English translation of a book he wrote decades ago about the future of the Jews. Den Butter shared the hope of many Puritans and Second Reformation divines who expect a mighty revival for the Jews, based largely on Romans 11.

He participated actively in the meetings of the denomination, be it Synod or committee meetings. He was often elected to the executive of Synod, where his leadership was strong. He loved the “old paths” in which he was born and raised, but he was also well versed with the issues of the day. This combination is reflected in speeches such as his 1979 Church Day speech, “Has our Religion Outlived itself?”

As a pastor, he was at his best when there was an urgent need in the congregation. He showed himself to be vulnerable and deeply caring.



He was not a man of small talk. His large physique made him a somewhat imposing figure, which complemented his authoritative style.

When den Butter informed our consistory that he decided to ask for a second call from Middelharnis, a sister congregation in The Netherlands, we as consistory were devastated. On August 15, 1982, he preached his last sermons as our pastor for us. In the morning, he concluded a series on the Canons of Dordt. Recordings of especially these clear and edifying “doctrines of grace” sermons went far and wide in the form of cassette tapes and are now available on Sermonaudio. After his departure, we entered a seven-year period of vacancy, during which time Rev. A. Baars, the pastor in our neighbouring congregation, the Dundas FRC, served us faithfully.

Grief and sorrow did not bypass Rev. Den-Butter’s home. In 1987, his first wife, Grace, died at a young age. She was diagnosed with lung cancer while he was considering a second call from our congregation. After a period of loneliness as a widower, he married again. Marianne became his second wife and nurse

in the final stage of his life. Marianne adored her husband who was a spiritual blessing to her.

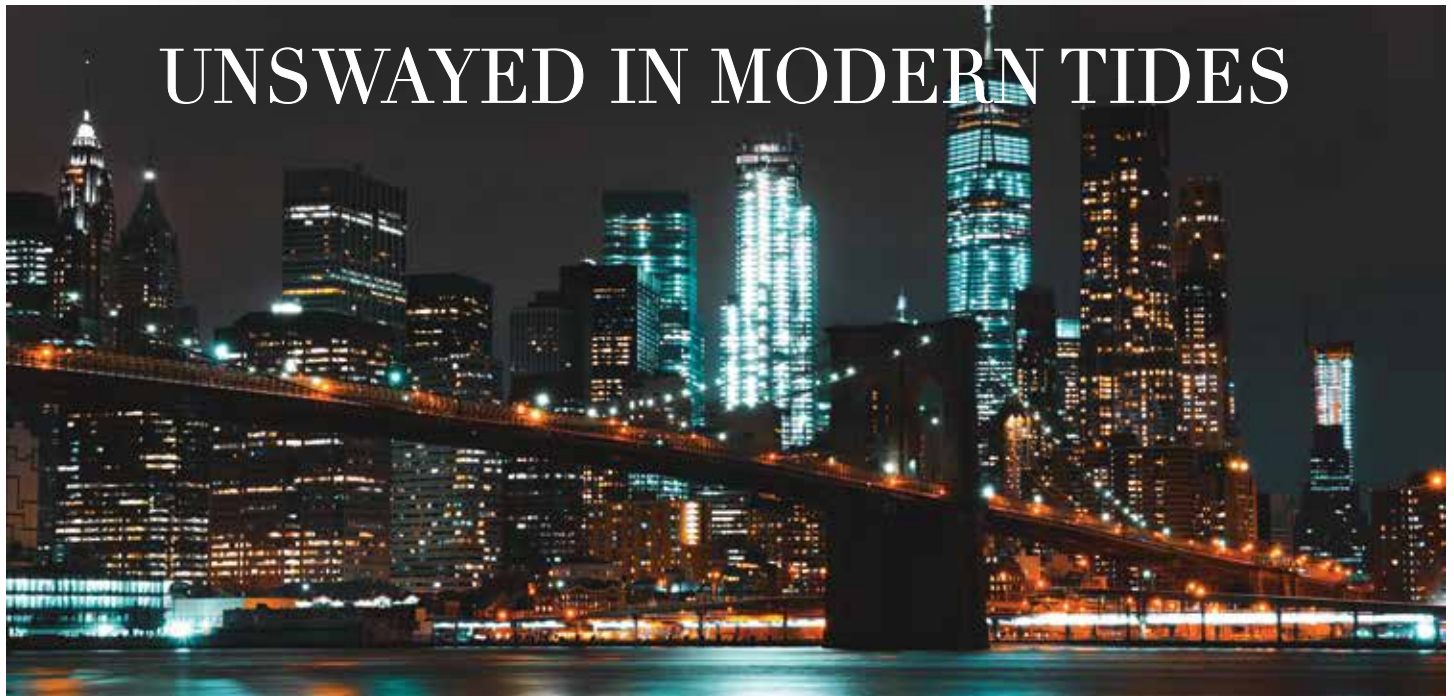
Dr. A. Baars led the funeral service on October 9, 2023 using Paul’s final address to Timothy as his text: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” Shortly after, Dr. Baars preached on the same text in Grand Rapids under the theme “Paul’s Swan Song” (October 25, 2023 – available on sermonaudio).

In his dying days, den Butter showed he was not just concerned about the failures of others, but also his own failures. The question weighed on him whether he had consistently and genuinely sought the glory of God in all his labours. His struggle is reflected in the text on his death announcement: Mark 9:24b, “Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.” His restless soul received relief and peace when his fellow labourer and friend, Arie Baars, preached a sermon the day before he died on Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He may now enjoy that eternal rest with his Saviour in heaven. May the Lord remember and comfort his grieving wife and (grand) children.

In conclusion, let us “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Hebrews 13:7). ¹

Mr. Connor Keuning is an elder of the Hamilton Free Reformed Church.

UNSWAYED IN MODERN TIDES



Our youth need a robust Biblical doctrine, personal devotion, and scriptural clarity to navigate the challenges of modern secularism, technology, and shifting societal norms.

Today's youth are in need of the family, the Christian school, and the local church to help them through these interesting, sometimes frightening times. What do they need today? Our young people need...

A Robust Understanding of Doctrine: The digital age has brought with it a deluge of information, opinions, and worldviews. Without a deep understanding of Biblical doctrine, many young adults are at risk of being swayed by every wind of doctrine. It is imperative that they have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the core tenets of the faith.

Personal Devotion and Prayer: As the world moves faster, there is a growing temptation to relegate personal devotions and prayer to the periphery. Young adults need encouragement and practical guidance on how to commune with God daily. We need more quiet time and fewer distractions. Sermons and podcasts may be great, but there is NO substitute for personal devotions and prayer.

Answers to Secularism and Relativism: The modern era has seen a rising tide of secularism and moral relativism. Young adults must be equipped to understand, confront, and compassionately respond to these worldviews with the truth of Scripture.

Christian Community and Fellowship: In an increasingly individualistic society, many are isolated and lonely. Young adults need genuine Christian fellowship and mentorship to grow

in their faith and withstand the challenges they face. In the years to come, we will feel the need for more contact, not less.

Vocation and Calling Clarity: As young adults make crucial decisions about their careers and futures, they need guidance on how to align their vocational choices with God's calling, how to navigate a secular workforce, and how to serve Christ faithfully in their professions.

Sexual Relationship Clarity: The shifting sands of cultural norms around sexuality demand that young adults have a biblical understanding of these topics. They need teaching on God's design for marriage, sexuality, and relationships, especially in an age of gender dysphoria and open homosexuality.

Help Engaging with Technology Righteously: The digital age brings with it both opportunities and pitfalls. Young adults need wisdom on how to use advancing technology for God's glory, how to avoid its potential snares, and how to discern truth from falsehood in the digital realm.

Understanding of Creationism: With evolutionary theories prevailing in academia, young adults need a solid grounding in the biblical account of creation, why it matters, and how to defend it.

Assurance of Salvation: In times of doubt and spiritual struggle, young adults must be anchored in the assurance of their salvation, understanding that it rests in Christ's finished work, not their own merit or feelings.

Preparing for Persecution: As Western culture becomes more post-Christian, there's a need to prepare young adults for potential marginalization or persecution for holding to biblical truths.

Above all...

They need a **vital saving interest in Christ**. Without this, all else is window dressing and delusion. This truth stands at the forefront of all their spiritual needs. Without this, all other religious pursuits and disciplines ring hollow. Young adults today, as with every generation, must recognize the paramount importance of a genuine, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ, in His two natures, His active and passive obedience, perfect life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection must be the cornerstone of our youth's faith. His redemptive work is the only way sinners can be reconciled to a holy God... at any age. Acts 4:12: *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

Our precious young adults must come to know the gravity of their sin and the dire consequences of remaining in unbelief. Only when we grasp the weight of our transgressions and the wrath we deserve can we truly appreciate the magnificent grace offered by Christ. They must also know that those that are "called by the Gospel are unfeignedly called" (Canons of Dort, Heads 3/4, Art.8). There is full and free forgiveness in Christ.

The local congregation, therefore, must prioritize preaching the Gospel message plainly and urgently. They must not be lowering God to their level but raising them to His in creative, God-honouring ways. There must be a clarion call to repentance and faith, urging young souls to flee from the wrath to come and find refuge in Christ. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, subsequent to this saving faith, will then lead them to grow in all areas of spiritual life. They must hear 100% Law and 100% Gospel, salvation and damnation, justification and sanctification. We must not withhold any of the full counsel of God's Word (Acts 20:26-27)

In essence, a vital saving interest in Christ is not *just one* of many spiritual needs; it's the *one thing needful* (Luke 10:42). It is the primary and most pressing of all and the only key to unlocking all the other needs' supply.

This requires the church to provide clear preaching, robust teaching, a genuine community, and opportunities for service and outreach. It is a call to know and believe the foundational truths of the Scriptures, ensuring that our young adults are grounded in God's Word and equipped to live out their faith in a rapidly changing, God-hating world. ①

Rev. J. Lewis serves as pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Pompton Plains, NJ. This article is taken from his September 7, 2023 blog entry: <https://between2gardens.substack.com/p/unswayed-in-modern-tides>.



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